

early sixties. If the local authorities wish, as they should wish, to contain the cost of municipal services, they can only hope to do so by mechanizing demeaning jobs such as the collection of garbage—still one of the most quaint mediaeval survivals in modern British cities. If it is not obvious how the job is to be done, then the local authorities will simply have to spend money on the necessary research.

But will the unions stomach changes of this kind? Perhaps the most serious defect of the government's discussion on paper is that it does nothing to provide the unions with an incentive to act in the best interests of the industries in which they are involved. For the years ahead, this should be the central problem. Out and out syndicalism is not quite inappropriate, but the objectives have something to be said for them.

100 Years Ago



The New Postal Act

AT page 474 Mr. Reeks complains as to the working of the new Postal Act. It seems intended to obliterate the old parcel post. He says, "Herbarium specimens are not excluded." Perhaps so; but they are not included. The provisions of the new Act are limited to books, written and printed matter, genuine trade samples and patterns, so far as regards the two ounces for a halfpenny. All parcels other than books, &c., as described above, go at the letter rate of one penny for each half-ounce.

The postal card is the thin end of the wedge that will hereafter open to us a regular letter rate of a quarter of an ounce for a halfpenny. For instance: we may now send ordinary business communications up to two ounces, thus embodying the matter of twenty postal cards, for the halfpenny, if folded in a paper wrapper. An ordinary business communication of half-ounce weight goes for the halfpenny, if folded as a letter but left unsealed.

I ask, if Government will now take an open letter for a halfpenny, why not take it closed at the same rate? Common sense will hereafter equalise this disparity. The parcel post, however, is at present discontinued.

P. N. ROW

October 14

Science and the Government

THE reason that the Government has refused to aid "the expedition to observe the approaching eclipse" is, that it is perfectly assured that "men of science and culture" are nothing but a set of lying impostors, and would swindle the public out of thousands of pounds to take an observation which might be done for 10/ and much less. The nation is fast beginning to perceive that astronomy is a monstrous cheat—and the Transit of Venus has no more to do with the distance of the sun than it has with the number of fingers on my hand.

JOHN HAMPDEN

[We congratulate Mr. Lowe on his ally, merely remarking that the same Government which has refused the Eclipse Expedition has granted 20,000/ for observations of the Transit of Venus. Perhaps Mr. Hampden can explain the cause of this inconsistency on the part of the Government.—Ed.]

From *Nature*, 2, 494, October 20, 1870.

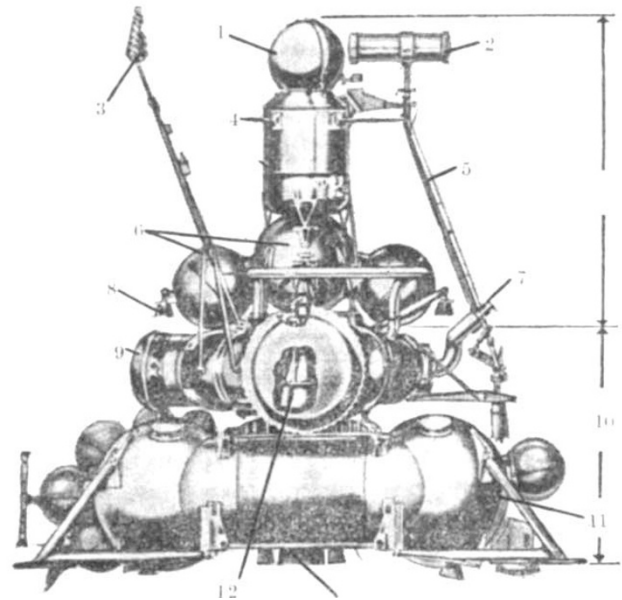
OLD WORLD

SPACE

Moves towards Cooperation

from a Correspondent

As the annual COSPAR symposium (in spring) gets duller and more specialized, the autumn congress of the International Astronautical Federation (of national rocket societies) becomes more lively. The most productive aspect of last week's meeting at Konstanz, Germany, was the discussion on the standardization of manned spacecraft docking, so that the craft of one nation could come to the rescue of that of another. For the foreseeable future only the United States and the Soviet Union are likely to have manned spacecraft in orbit, and so this amounts to a joint enterprise between the chief space rivals with far reaching implications.



The overall structure of Luna 16 (*Pravda*, No. 227, 1970). 1, Return craft; 2, drilling mechanism; 3, antenna; 4, instrument compartment of the rocket; 5, rod for drilling mechanism; 6, fuel tanks of the rocket; 7, telephotometer; 8, guidance nozzle; 9, instrument compartment of descent stage; 10, descent stage; 11, fuel tank; 12, rocket motor for journey from Moon to Earth; 13, descent stage motor.

The move has been endorsed by a letter from the Soviet Academy of Sciences to the American chairman of the Space Rescue Studies Committee. No Russian delegate attended the previous two meetings of the committee, but this year the leading Soviet space medicine expert Dr O. G. Gasenko took part, accompanied by one of the three Soviet cosmonauts present at the congress, Boris Yegorov. The academy letter undertook that there would be a picked Soviet delegation of four at the next full committee meeting, which will be held at the 1971 congress in Brussels. There is also widespread expectation that bilateral exchanges will be pursued during the visit of four Soviet cosmonauts to the Houston Manned Spacecraft Center in a fortnight's time.

Delegates to the congress also heard detailed accounts