

on which decisions are eventually to be based ought first to be the subject of wide and free debate".

The council also speaks plainly on the matter of finance. The council's objective of bringing the environmental sciences to a position which, with only a modest growth rate, will allow it to keep pace with the demand for basic knowledge about the natural environment has not yet been achieved, and the council claims an average level of funding about one-third higher than last year is required (just under £14 million). With cuts in research expenditure in the offing the council also warns that too sudden a reduction of growth is likely not only to waste previous investment and cause a loss of confidence, but also to damage, possibly irreparably, the attainment of the balance between the demand for knowledge and the research capability to meet it.

The council's new committee structure is outlined in the report, the changes being made because the council felt it was becoming isolated from important issues and from the directors of its institutes. Five preparatory groups for the fields NERC covers have now been given the task of thoroughly investigating policy issues before they are put to the council; the groups bridge the gap between the various institutes, but they have no executive power, the actual implementation of these policies, once approved by council, being the province of the institute director and his advisory committee. NERC feels this structure is both more flexible and better able to clarify the issues involved than the old system of eight standing committees whose terms of reference were too narrow to consider interdisciplinary policy problems.

The council's working party on computers has concluded that the cost of hiring computer time for the council is approaching the cost of buying computers; NERC expects to spend £3 million on computers over the next five years, but no decision to buy has yet been taken, pending discussion with the Computer Board and the Inter-Research Council Computer Review Committee, set up to plan and coordinate computer use by the councils.

Of the council's £14 million expenditure, £975,000 went on research grants at universities and other institutions, and £1.52 million on grant-aided laboratories and units. Among the council's own establishments the Institute of Geological Sciences received the largest amount (£3.36 million), with the Nature Conservancy and British Antarctic Survey getting £1.96 million and £1.76 million respectively. The total spent on NERC's eleven establishments was £9.89 million, the field with the largest expenditure being Marine Sciences at £4.29 million.

CIVIL SERVICE

Fulton Fulfilled

THE announcement last week of the restructuring of the Scientific Civil Service has the full approval of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. This step towards implementing the Fulton recommendation of a unified structure throughout the Civil Service has been long awaited by the IPCS and Mr Colin Waters, the Institution's Assistant Secretary, said this week that they were very much in favour of the reorganization and that they would like to see more of the Fulton recommendations on career management and prospects implemented as soon as possible.

The details of the merger of the Scientific Officer, Experimental Officer and Scientific Assistant Classes into the Science Category are given in Table 1. The old nine class structure is replaced by a streamlined five class structure that becomes retroactive to January 1, 1971. Of the other Civil Service categories the Administration Category has already been reorganized while discussions on the future of the Technology Category are still in progress with a decision expected at the latest by early 1972. The Civil Service Department stresses that the restructuring will increase efficiency and improve promotion prospects. Lord Jellicoe, minister in charge of the Civil Service, said that "the way is now open . . . for us to push on with improved career management to ensure that the individual scientist as well as the Service benefits from the full and timely

development of talent". Mr William McCall, General Secretary of the IPCS, said last week that the new structure "represented worthwhile improvements over the arbitration tribunal's award" (see *Nature*, 232, 594; 1971).

The IPCS is now keen to make further progress towards a unified grade structure within the Civil Service and is hoping that the Science and Technology categories can be merged in the near future. The Civil Service Department is not enthusiastic at present about further merging of these categories although it has agreed in principle to the Fulton recommendations of a unified structure. A spokesman for the CSD said this week that the department agreed to the principle of exploratory negotiations to examine the practicability and desirability of a unified grading below the under-secretary level. He also said that one of the problems associated with merging the present three categories would be the determining of salary scales by comparison with pay in outside organizations—a practice that the CSD is committed to. The IPCS, however, is now committed to changing the system following the recent pay tribunal. Mr Waters pointed out that the difference in salary between the Science and Technological Categories—a Principal Scientific Officer at the top of the scale earns £108 less than his equivalent in the Technology category, an inconsistency soon to be magnified in a pay review for the Technologists—cannot be perpetuated after the merger.

Table 1 New Civil Service Science Category

| New grades | | Existing grades | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Science Category | Scientific Officer Class | Experimental Officer Class | Scientific Assistant Class | |
| Principal Scientific Officer (£3,100-£4,100) | Principal Scientific Officer | Chief Experimental Officer | | |
| Senior Scientific Officer (£2,303-£3,255) | Senior Scientific Officer | Senior Experimental Officer | | |
| Higher Scientific Officer (£1,810-£2,350) | | Experimental Officer | | |
| Scientific Officer (£1,120-£1,900) | Scientific Officer | Assistant Experimental Officer (over 21) | | Senior Scientific Assistant |
| Assistant Scientific Officer (£550-£1,395) | | Assistant Experimental Officer (under 21) | | Scientific Assistant |