

sellers and publishers, in Great Britain so that the ratio of supply does not fall in the regions where the requirements are greatest.

If the 200 per cent total were to be re-allocated (a difficult but not insuperable task) according to present-day demands, many of the difficulties would be eased and indeed might very well disappear, provided the 'single copy' method of working is used intelligently. This point has been put on more than one occasion to the Board of Trade who, I believe, are shackled by Treasury restrictions.

With regard to the Survey's comments on British books, there is one misunderstanding which should be got rid of immediately: for books in this category paper is no longer a restrictive factor in so far as quantity is concerned. The Board of Trade in conjunction with the Publishers' Association maintain a reserve, known as the Moberly Pool, for 'educational' books: this has been gradually increased as circumstances allow, and it has been administered with the utmost fairness and with the approbation of all concerned. After fairly extensive inquiries, I have yet to find a publisher with a sound case who has been refused an allocation which he required for a book in the categories under discussion. There still are, of course, difficulties with paper in regard to quality and price.

The only other difficulty with material is in regard to cloth. This would appear to be a difficulty not of the basic essentials being unavailable but of the output of the Lancashire mills. Again, both with cloth and with boards there are reasons for complaining of quality and of price.

The production obstacles which any publisher must confront at present are very slowly easing in the field of printing, although a shortage of apprentice entrants as compositors during the war years has caused a bottle-neck which it will take some years to overcome.

In binding books the position is bad indeed. But the lack is not of material, apart from cloth, but of machinery: nearly all of it American. The Board of Trade has been helpful in every way, but the fact must be faced that the source of supply is limited in the beginning, so long as there are so few British types of machines suitable for the work which must be undertaken.

But the main difficulty with regard to all production hold-ups is the shorter working week and the policy which has been psychologically instilled into the minds of so many of the workers that they can expect more pay for less work. This factor cannot be overstressed, and until it is remedied we can expect no real improvement in the supply of scientific text-books.

JOHN GRANT

Oxford.

MAY I be permitted three comments on Mr. Grant's letter. With regard to his third paragraph, the original article did not suggest that too great a proportion of scientific text-books is being exported. It was stated "that a good case can be made out for the large percentage of book production which goes to export". It was emphasized, however, that this trade and reputation "are in danger unless our total volume of 'learned, scientific and technical' book production is increased, so that both the home and export markets may be better supplied"

On Mr. Grant's fourth paragraph, it was specifically stated in the article that no account was taken of books imported as single copies as this factor was not thought to be important so far as students are concerned. In fact, our experience is that it takes 8-10 weeks to get such books and often longer.

If binding causes great difficulties, have the publishers considered bringing out temporary editions of some of the most needed books in an unbound form similar to *Nature* or *Hansard*. Students to-day could be relied on to treat them with due care.

ROY INNES

Association of Scientific Workers,
15 Half Moon Street,
London, W.1.

International Exchange of Scientific Information

IN the editorial article in *Nature* of August 14, in criticizing a recent statement of the Atomic Scientists' Association, it is argued that collaboration between scientific men east and west of the 'Iron Curtain' may be undesirable, because it is likely "to promote, for the present, a one-way traffic to the disadvantage of the Western democracies". This view was expressed in the same words on July 14 by the editor of the *Economist*, who, professionally concerned as he must be with economic policy and its effect on foreign affairs, may be excused for including scientific ideas among the commodities available for exchange. But the same view expressed in *Nature* suggests a change in the traditional policy of the journal, which has always stressed the international aspects of science, and it shows strikingly the way in which military considerations can affect the outlook of scientific workers and lead them to adopt against their will a totalitarian view of their function. It is therefore necessary to inquire whether these military considerations really make it necessary to abandon the whole tradition of science, and to break off such contacts as are still possible with the scientific workers of Eastern Europe.

It is stated in the editorial that the man of science in totalitarian countries is essentially a servant of the State, and that it is treason for him to divulge any knowledge save as the State allows. But in fact this statement is true only in the opinions of the men who control the Government of the U.S.S.R.; we may be sure that most scientific men in the satellite countries would not take that view of their functions, and probably many outstanding men in Russia itself hold other views.

Our policy, then, of allowing the free exchange of ideas even across frontiers is one which our scientific colleagues in these countries will feel to be the right policy, and in which we shall have their sympathy. It should not be lightly thrown away through the fear that some small help might be given to their military science.

N. F. MOTT
(Vice-President,
Atomic Scientists' Association)

H. H. Wills Physical Laboratory,
Royal Fort,
Bristol 8.
Aug. 20.