

own interests, universities should now insist on this connexion, and take some trouble to show outsiders how research fertilizes teaching. For one thing, doing this would help to solve some of the pedagogical problems facing the universities. For another, it would help to bring some sense of realism to those who think the second-tier polytechnics will solve all the problems of higher education at a fraction of the cost of the universities. Most of all, however, a convincing demonstration by the universities that they value the link between teaching and research would help to fend off the attacks, which there are certain to be in the months ahead, on all those activities that are not somehow relevant to the process of keeping Britain solvent.

This is where technology comes in. Just as there is a danger that the pendulum will swing too far against research, so it may swing too far against what is sometimes called pure science. With the Ministry of Technology growing bigger and stronger with the passage of time, and the Department of Education and Science (which is responsible for financing university research) anxious to know where to get money for teachers' colleges, kindergartens and comprehensive schools, it is inevitable that things that smack of being technological should command attention and public support. The fallacy is that technology is not some kind of antithesis of science, but an application of science. To pretend, as some now seem to do, that a country can become prosperous by technology alone is a little like saying that a man can hoist himself off the ground by pulling hard enough on his bootstraps. If the universities were more sure of what they are for in the modern world, they would be able to exert an invaluable influence in this misconceived tug-of-war between science and technology.

But who are the universities? And who speaks for them? This is the root of the trouble. The University Grants Committee has become a kind of government department. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors is still feeling its way, and only time will tell whether it can be an effective initiator of the kinds of self-critical studies of the working of the university system which circumstances demand. (The chance that the Association of University Teachers, torn as always between the roles of trade union and professional organization, will be able to undertake such tasks is small but not to be dismissed outright.) Even within single universities, there is often no means of subordinating the autonomy of individual departments to the need for common policies on matters as innocuous as entrance requirements. If there were time for leisurely solutions, it would be tempting to think of radical innovations in the machinery of university self-government—elected vice-chancellors, for example. But the threats to the character and status of British universities are urgent, and, in the nature of things, the universities will have to make their own defence. It would be ironical if their freedom were to suffer in the months ahead simply because they have exercised their freedom in such a way that there is nobody to defend it.

A POUND FOR A POUND?

THE Consumers' Council is fighting a lonely but entirely just war with the Chancellor of the Exchequer over the decision that Britain should have a decimal currency in 1971. Decimalization as such is not at issue, of course—even the visionaries of the Duodecimal Society, dedicated to what they think of as a reform of the whole of arithmetic, would probably agree that Britain should enjoy the advantages of a decimal currency of some sort in the near future. The only dispute is whether the new coinage should be based, like the present, on the pound sterling as a unit, or whether the new coinage should be based on a unit equal to half the present £. The advantages of keeping the present unit are largely those of familiarity and continuity, although the Halsbury Committee held that overseas confidence in the British economy might be undermined by the disappearance of the pound sterling. The chief disadvantage is that decimalization based on the £1 unit will make it necessary to legislate for half-cent coins, each of them equal in value to 1.2 pence in the present system. By adopting £0.5 as the unit for the new coinage, a cent would have the manageable value of 1.2 pence, but it would also be possible to relate a great many existing coins to sensible decimal fractions of the new unit. In particular, the shilling and sixpenny pieces now in use would become, without change of value, the dime and the nickel of the new currency.

Obviously it is impossible ever to be sure which set of arguments deserves to win the day. It is also somewhat irrelevant of the Consumers' Council to make as much as it does, in its protest to the Chancellor, of the fear that decimalization with the pound sterling as a unit will give shopkeepers a chance to put up their prices; at the worst, that would be only a transitory effect. But it is entirely proper that the council should protest at the irrationality of the Chancellor's reasons for sticking to the £. It is not good enough for him to say that the government "chose to retain the £ only after a full consideration of the many arguments for and against", and then to fall back on the argument that the half-cent coin would be likely to disappear in the course of time. Even if the Chancellor is right in saying that he is counting on prosperity and not inflation to work this vanishing trick, half-cents are likely to survive for long enough to be a galling reminder of the durability of vulgar fractions in British society.

Those who worry about how the pence and half-pennies would vanish should take note of a C.S.I.R.O. training document on *Dollar Currency* prepared for "C" day when Australia went decimal and accepted the 1.2d. conversion: "It is imperative that on and after 'C' day cashiers, etc., should accept halfpennies, pennies and threepences only in some combination which is a multiple of sixpence. Halfpennies, pennies and threepences should not be given out in change".