

*Physics Abstracts* and the *Current Papers* at no more than the present costs; any further uses of the system would be a bonus. While there is no pressing need at the moment for mechanization, Mr. Smith said that at the present 10 per cent growth rate, now 40,000 new abstracts per year, and with a redefinition of physics, within 10 years there would be 200,000 more articles a year, an impossible number to handle by present methods. He is hopeful that when the present study ends in 1967 the Department of Education and Science will agree that a mechanized information system must be established before the present stream reaches flood level.

### Parliament in Britain

IN the House of Lords on June 30, Lord Byers pressed hard for an immediate further Government contribution towards the cost of the *Atlas* computer at the University of London. Lord Shackleton replied that this had been considered as part of a general review of requirements for computer time in London in the light of the Flowers Report, which the Government had adopted. Until the regional centre recommended by the Flowers Committee comes into operation, the available computer capacity would be short of the stated needs of the schools and colleges of the University of London. While the Government and the University Grants Committee would in principle wish to see the computing power available to the University of London increased, Lord Shackleton firmly maintained that the Government could not provide from available resources an additional grant for this purpose in the current year. He hoped that certain other proposals, including the early introduction of an IBM machine at University College, might ameliorate the situation.

IN answering a question from Lord Chorley regarding progress with research into the desalination of sea water on June 30, Lord Shackleton said that the programme being undertaken by the Atomic Energy Authority in conjunction with industry had now been operating a little more than twelve months. Experimental multi-flash distillation facilities were in operation at Winfrith and Harwell and an additional sea-water test establishment would shortly be completed at Troon. All these facilities would be used in efforts to improve design and to reduce capital costs. Recent work on reverse osmosis had opened up the possibility of producing an improved type of membrane which was to be tested, and engineering problems associated with the design and construction of plants using this process would be studied. A new prototype electro-dialysis testing unit was nearing completion.

The present programme was based on a planned expenditure of about £1.5 million over 3 years and expansion would depend on the evaluation of the technical results of current work. In this work of the Atomic Energy Authority, research and development and engineering design were very closely integrated, and thus major design studies had been made of desalination plants one order of magnitude greater than built hitherto and the possible combination of such units with nuclear power plants. There were greater hopes that the programme would lead, especially in association with nuclear power plants, to an additional source of water which would be at least as cheap as fresh water, taking into account all the equipment

required for pipes and reservoirs. In view of the pressing need for fresh water, however, it was too early to cancel any existing plans.

IN moving the second reading of the Overseas Aid Bill in the House of Lords on June 28, Lord Beswick said that the Bill provides authority for the Ministry of Overseas Development to use funds for certain specific immediate purposes, and the opportunity had been taken to rationalize and regularize the authority previously vested in the Ministry of Overseas Development by statutory instruments. The debate followed on one opened by Lord Todd on technical assistance to developing countries in January, and Lord Beswick affirmed the Government's belief that both Government aid and private investment had important parts to play in developing countries and that private investment was directly dependent on the creation of an infrastructure of the basic public utilities.

Total British aid had increased from £81 million in 1957-58 to £151 million in 1960-61, £191 million in 1964-65, and was expected to exceed £200 million in 1965-66; in the current year the target was £225 million. The cost-effectiveness of aid was secured by the greater co-ordination under a single responsible Ministry and by a careful scrutiny of the development programmes of individual countries. The policy of devoting a large proportion of available resources to technical aid should also assist. Dispersements on technical assistance had risen from £25 million in 1962 to £32 million in 1965. Lord Beswick also referred to the increase in contributions to multi-lateral agencies. The clause relating to the Indus Basin Development Fund Agreement was specially welcomed in the debate. The Bill was generally welcomed.

### University and College News:

#### Battersea College of Technology

DR. K. E. PUTTICK, reader in metal physics, has been appointed to the second chair of physics as from June 1.

#### Cambridge

THE following have been appointed to the three newly established chairs of engineering: Prof. J. H. Horlock (at present professor of mechanical engineering in the University of Liverpool); Prof. L. E. Goodman (at present head of the Department of Civil Engineering and Hydraulics in the University of Minnesota); A. H. Beck (at present reader in electrical engineering in the University of Cambridge).

#### Manchester

PROF. D. H. VALENTINE, at present professor of botany in the University of Durham, has been appointed professor of botany and director of the Experimental Grounds in the University of Manchester in succession to Prof. C. W. Wardlaw. When Prof. Valentine joined the University of Durham in 1945 as reader in botany, the Department had almost no accommodation, one lecturer, a research fellow and a few students. It grew slowly but steadily; in 1950 Valentine became its first professor and his first research student began her work. This led to a tradition of experimental taxonomy which was to give the Department a firm and well-merited reputation. His own work in this field, with its emphasis on evolutionary significance rather than mere classification, is well and widely known, and many botanists will think that it is fortunate that he is taking a prominent part in the production of *Flora Europaea*. Many of his former research students occupy university posts in various parts of the