

A SYMPOSIUM on "Synthesis" will be held by the Organic Division of the Chemical Institute of Canada at the University of Alberta, during August 31-September 2. Further information can be obtained from Dr. F. W. Bachelow, Symposium Secretary, C.I.C., Department of Chemistry, University of Alberta, Calgary, Alberta.

THE third international congress of psychosomatic medicine on "The Psychosomatic Approach to Fatigue" will be held in Paris during September 15-18. Further information can be obtained from the Société Française de Médecine Psychosomatique, Hôpital Cochin, 27 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Jacques, Paris 14.

THE inaugural meeting of the new Radiochemical Methods Group of the Society for Analytical Chemistry will be held jointly with the Microchemical Methods Group at the University of Kent, Canterbury, during September 16-17. Further information can be obtained from the Society for Analytical Chemistry, 14 Belgrave Square, London, S.W.1.

A TWO-DAY meeting, organized by the Mass Spectroscopy Group, will be held in the University of Birmingham during September 14-15. Further information can be obtained from R. M. Elliott, Associated Electrical Industries, Ltd., Scientific Apparatus Department, Barton Dock Road, Urmston, Manchester.

THE seventh international Machine Tool Design and Research Conference will be held in the University of Birmingham during September 12-16. Further information can be obtained from the Organizing Secretary of the Conference, Department of Mechanical Engineering, The University, Edgbaston, Birmingham 15.

A CONFERENCE on "Electrical Network Theory and Design" will be held in the University of Newcastle upon Tyne during September 11-18. Further information can be obtained from Dr. A. G. J. Holt, Department of Electrical Engineering, Merz Court, The University, Newcastle upon Tyne 1.

A CONFERENCE on "Instrumental Optics and Optical Design", arranged by the Optical Group of the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society, will be held at Chelsea College of Science and Technology during September 19-21. Further information can be obtained from the Meetings Officer, Institute of Physics and the Physical Society, 47 Belgrave Square, London, S.W.1.

A TWO-DAY conference on "Use of Rubber in Engineering Applications", organized by the Natural Rubber Producers' Research Association, will be held at the Imperial College of Science and Technology during September 15-16. Further information can be obtained from the Natural Rubber Producers' Research Association, 19 Buckingham Street, London, W.C.2.

THE second decennial conference on "Advances in Cell, Tissue, and Organ Culture", sponsored by the Tissue Culture Association and supported in part by the American Cancer Society, will be held at Bedford, Pennsylvania, during September 11-15. Further information can be obtained from Dr. V. J. Evans, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland.

THE sixth international conference on "Microwave and Optical Generation and Amplification", sponsored jointly by the Electronics Division of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the Institution of Electronic and Radio Engineers, will be held in the University of Cambridge during September 12-16. Further information can be obtained from the Joint Conference Secretariat, Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London, W.C.2.

A CONFERENCE on "Radiation Measurements in Nuclear Power", arranged by the Berkeley Nuclear Laboratories of the Central Electricity Generating Board in collabora-

tion with the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society, will be held at Berkeley during September 12-16. Further information can be obtained from the Meetings Officer, the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society, 47 Belgrave Square, London, S.W.1.

THE annual meeting of the Conference on Electrical Insulation of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council will be held in Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania, during October 4-5. Further information can be obtained from Mr. D. W. Thornhill, Staff Executive, Conference on Electrical Insulation, National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Independence for Universities

SIR,—Much of your leader of July 2, 1966, is timely and will find support in the universities. A few points call for comment, however.

The main point which will not find support is the suggestion that the vice-chancellors must represent the universities in the outside world, unless all you mean by that is that, in a given area, it is the local vice-chancellor who will be the main P.R.O. for his university. It is undoubtedly true that there was a body which could state the case for the universities, and this body should contain representatives of the committee of vice-chancellors as top administrators and of my Association as the actual teachers who bear the brunt of work-pressures with inadequate facilities in too many cases. At the moment anyone, whether he be malicious or well-intentioned, can make any criticism of the universities without drawing an official comment or explanation: this is sheer folly on the part of the universities, in my view. The fact remains, however, that the committee of vice-chancellors alone can never speak for the universities, nor would they claim to do so. Many apparently administrative matters are in the last resort dependent on academic decisions and the voice of the academic should be clearly heard in any public pronouncements.

May I add a few other points briefly? The 'really big' university, if that means the American-type mammoth organization, presents major problems of student/staff relations in the context of the British concept of university education. This Association did, it should be noted, submit to the Robbins Committee that there was room for some large universities in our system, but may not have meant by 'large' what you have in mind. As for the staff/student ratio, this does in fact differ very much from faculty to faculty and from subject to subject.

You raise a most important question at the end of the article. Robbins estimated the need for university places on the basis of student demand, because that was the only basis sufficiently documented at the time—and that is still largely true to-day. That student demand and national needs must sooner or later be reconciled is obvious, and my Executive has promised to prepare and submit to the University Grants Committee at a later date some observations on this and on possible methods of reconciling them. The main problem may be to avoid suggesting to the unfortunate sixth-former that he may be directed to study a subject which he has no desire to study. Much long-term planning (and publicity) is required to avoid universities and schools reacting to trends in such a way as to produce permanent imbalance of need and demand.

Yours faithfully,

K. URWIN

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