

forthcoming British Standards Specification on the level of smoke from diesel engines. Apparently, most existing engines produce smoke at a rate well below that specified, so that the standard is unlikely to prove much use in reducing pollution in the future.

The society has not been the only body with the subject on its mind this week. In a joint statement with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, the Ministry of Technology announces that scientists at Harwell are to co-operate with their research staff at Warren Spring Laboratory, to investigate problems in "health physics" and the physical chemistry of pollutants.

Of necessity, Harwell has been concerned for some time with radioactive pollution of the atmosphere, and research teams involved in this work have acquired considerable experience of measurement of the properties of aerosols, estimation of maximum allowable concentrations, and other work common to the study of both radioactive and industrial pollutants. At the same time, it is expected that the application to the study of pollution of techniques developed at Harwell will elucidate the life cycles of pollutants, their deposition on various surfaces, and the effect of them on rain.

Last November, the Chairman of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy suggested that the United States Atomic Energy Commission should undertake pollution research. Nothing has come of this so far, but it is certain that any American effort would far outweigh that being made in Britain—the Harwell team will never have more than twelve workers. So it is perhaps a little disappointing that no research is to be undertaken into the ecological effects of pollution in Britain, which would not, of course, be covered by an American programme. No one can doubt the need for ecological research of this kind, in which radio tracers might be of great use. According to the National Society for Clean Air, photochemical smog greatly harms plants in America, and in Britain "it is a matter of common experience that some damage to roadside vegetation is caused by motor vehicle emissions".

## Clubs for Colloquia

MECHANICAL engineers in Europe, with help as well as encouragement from the Royal Society, have formed an organization to organize informal specialized conferences on theoretical and applied mechanics. Under the title of EUROMECH, the plan is to organize several conferences each year in various European centres. In future there will be a strict observance of the rule that no more than fifty people shall attend any one conference, although much will depend on the toughness of the chairman appointed to take charge of each of them.

The origins of this scheme lie in the International Congress of Applied Mechanics at Munich in 1964, when a number of the participants set out to organize smaller meetings at which specific subjects could be discussed. By this time a group of chemists had formed an organization with similar purposes under the banner of EUCHEM, chiefly under the prodding of Professor H. W. Thompson, foreign secretary of the Royal Society, so that the mechanical engineers had a useful precedent to follow, and the Royal Society

offered to provide secretarial services for both of them. The new development is that the EUROMECH has now been formed as a permanent organization, with a committee of four (elected from the member countries in rotation) under Professor G. K. Batchelor (Cambridge) and Dr. D. Küchemann of the Royal Aircraft Establishment as secretary.

In the immediate future, EUROMECH plans four conferences on the mechanics of liquids containing bubbles (Grenoble, April 23, 1968), thermoelasticity (Jablonna, October 2, 1967), aerodynamics of rarefied gas flows (Paris, February 7, 1968) and aerodynamics of flows with large velocity fluctuations (Prague, March 27, 1968). Apparently the organization is hoping to run its conferences on a self-financing basis, with participants usually paying their own expenses. Whether this self-denying ordinance will always enable all desirable participants to attend will presumably become clear as experience accumulates. Apparently the Council of Europe has already provided some modest help in this direction, and it is always possible that national academies may be able to provide some help from the funds which they are now accumulating in the cause of European collaboration. Another question outstanding is the extent to which the EUROMECH and EUCHEM will serve as precedents for attempts in other fields to provide some vehicle for communication smaller than a full-blown conference but bigger than a personal visit.

## Species in Stock

LAST week saw the publication of a useful little booklet, a revised "Directory of Collections and List of Species maintained in Canada 1967" (HMSO). This directory is one of a series published on behalf of the Permanent Committee of Commonwealth Collections of Micro-organisms. The organization, established in 1957 with headquarters in London, is under the auspices of the Commonwealth Science Committee and provides for the co-ordination and exchange of information on maintaining cultures between the member nations: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Ghana, Trinidad, the United Kingdom and lately Jamaica. It fosters the maintenance and expansion of cultures. Recently, for example, it provided funds to maintain a collection in Jamaica that would otherwise have been lost, and it tries, by way of the directories, to make the cultures accessible to anyone who needs them.

The directories of all the member nations, last published in 1960, are being revised during the next two years and the new Australian directory has already appeared (HMSO, June 1967). The information for the directories is collected by national committees which keep an eye on all the collections maintained and endeavour to make them as complete as possible. It is surprising therefore to find that the only species of algae listed in the Canadian directory is *Chlorella vulgaris*. Is there really no culture of *Chlamydomonas* anywhere in Canada?

## Grass Technology

BRITAIN has never really understood that plant breeding is a technology—this at least is the opinion expressed by Mr N. W. Simmonds, director of the Scottish Plant Breeding Station, in the station's annual