

Foundation for Educational Research has finished its programme of evaluation.

Teaching languages at ordinary level (up to 16) has risen considerably during the past twenty years: the number of pupils offering Russian, for example, has increased nearly 600-fold. If the first modern language can be started in primary schools, it is hoped that more pupils will take a second modern language in secondary schools. Emphasis is now being laid on teaching the spoken language.

The growth of French teaching in primary schools has also led to a conspicuous growth of courses in colleges of education, and a handbook prepared in 1966 showed that French could be studied in 81 colleges. In recent years, language courses have also increased in further education, and it seems that some of the most successful courses have been those provided in direct response to an approach from a firm or firms in the area. Several universities now provide for the study and teaching of languages in new ways: for example, the report points out that in some universities the study and teaching of languages are linked with the study of linguistics, either within a unified centre or in a separate department.

## New IBP Chairman

DR W. FRANKLIN BLAIR, professor of zoology at the University of Texas, has been appointed chairman of the United States National Committee for the International Biological Programme (IBP). He succeeds Dr Roger Revelle, director of the Center for Population Studies at Harvard University. Dr Revelle was appointed chairman at the beginning of the three-year planning period for the IBP in 1964. Now that the IBP has moved into its five-year operational stage, Dr Revelle will act in an advisory capacity only, because of his commitments at Harvard and the National Academy of Sciences. Dr Revelle was recently appointed chairman of the academy's Science Organization Development Board and now acts, in effect, as Deputy Foreign Secretary of the Academy.

Dr Blair has been associated with the United States IBP programme from its beginning. One of his positions has been as co-chairman of the Subcommittee on Environmental Physiology. He has also organized the IBP integrated research programme on Convergent and Divergent Evolution. His main interest is vertebrate biology, particularly population genetics and the ecology and speciation of mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

## Drugs in School

DRUG dependence in young people under eighteen years of age in the City of Westminster has recently been investigated by a social worker under Dr J. H. Briscoe-Smith, medical officer of health for the area. The investigation, started in February 1966, was prompted because it was felt that the Health Department should have as much information as possible on the extent of the problem in the Westminster area, particularly as Soho lies within the city's bounds.

Much of the report seems to state the obvious, but it does at least prepare the ground for more extensive research. The aims of the survey were to estimate the size of the problem, whether gaps exist in the pro-

vision at present made and to see how local authorities might help. Of the fifteen head teachers of secondary schools interviewed, nine had experienced problems with pill taking by children in their schools. While about half the teachers felt that many of the young people in the fourth and fifth forms experimented with pills at some time, the others considered that this was a pattern pursued by only a small minority. It does seem, however, that the problem is more serious in schools in the "old" City of Westminster. It is also known that there are a number of young heroin addicts around Victoria Station and a number of boys who were known to be taking pills at school in the Westminster area are now heroin addicts.

Of nine youth clubs investigated, six of the larger ones reported a drug problem although it was only a slight one in three of them. Between April 1965 and April 1967, 74 young people were convicted at the Westminster Juvenile Court on charges of possessing drugs, but of these only eight were residents in the area. As the report emphasizes, this is complicated by young people passing in and out of the area, which is in the centre of London.

On the whole, head teachers were against lectures on prevention because they felt that this might draw attention to drug taking and thereby create a challenge for young people. Instead, they thought that lectures for parents might be a better idea. Most schools felt that teachers would welcome more practical information on the matter and a book is to be published later this year containing coloured photographs of pills to enable teachers to recognize them. Four Rotary clubs in the Westminster area are hoping to set up an advice centre for drug addicts, and the Men's Social Services Branch of the Salvation Army is providing a hostel for young boys on probation for drug charges. By setting up an information service, it is suggested in the report that this might assist other workers in the field such as general practitioners and probation officers. A social work service offered by the Health Department to help people with problems of drug dependency is also suggested.

## On the Nature Trail

OWNERS of land in Britain with areas of natural history interest should read *Nature Trails*, a handbook produced by the Nature Conservancy (distributed by Frederick Warne, Ltd., 5s.). This gives advice on the setting up of nature trails—the routes along which visitors can walk, with information provided by signs, posters, pamphlets and sometimes guides.

The first nature trail was set up in 1961, many more were instituted at the time of National Nature Week in 1963, and there are now about ninety of them. Some have been set up on national nature reserves by the Nature Conservancy; the Forestry Commission has some and others have been opened by county naturalist trusts and by private organizations and individuals. (A list of more than eighty nature trails can be obtained for 2s. from the Council for Nature.)

Where a good guide is available—and the handbook points out that a bad guide is worse than no guide at all—the tour can be varied according to ecological changes or the interests of the visitors. On the whole, a shortage of manpower makes guided trails rare; more common are the trails for which a pamphlet describes

points which refer to numbered stakes found at intervals along the route, which is marked out by arrows and signs. There may be displays giving further information about the important features of the environment. At Gibraltar Point Local Nature Reserve, in Lincolnshire, there is an information centre where voluntary wardens answer questions at the weekends.

At Alvecote Pools the National Coal Board has leased a disused Methodist chapel to the West Midlands Trust for Nature, and this has been equipped as a day centre, supervised by a committee of local teachers. It is used regularly by about twenty-five schools in the area. Nature trails are clearly very valuable as a supplement to biology lessons. The handbook points out that, although the trails are chiefly a teaching aid for younger children, they can help to illustrate and clarify examination syllabuses such as advanced level botany. Plant identification and taxonomy can certainly be made more real, but whether they can be taught painlessly, as the handbook claims, is less certain.

## A Catalogue of Earthquakes

THE International Seismological Centre in Edinburgh is beginning to fulfil what it sees as its main function, the publication of a regional catalogue of earthquakes. The centre, formed in 1963, last year issued its first regional catalogue, which listed earthquakes for the first six months of 1964. The catalogue is based on readings from a global network of 612 stations, and lists nearly 5,000 events thought to be earthquakes, arranged according to the geographical region in which they occurred. In addition, the catalogue contains details of 186 known or probable explosions, data which can be useful for the calibration of seismographs.

Computer processing of the raw data is essential for cataloguing work of this kind, but computer programmes are remarkably prone to teething troubles, and these seem to be the main reason for the 3½ year delay in publication. Some time lag is inevitable, it seems, because of the inaccessibility of many earthquake recording stations, and the time the data take to reach Edinburgh. Because the catalogue is intended to be a final record, replacing preliminary results published only months after the events, data from remote stations, some in the Antarctic, are included.

The director of the centre, Dr P. L. Willmore, is hoping to cut down the delay in publication to two years or eighteen months, now that the initial difficulties have been ironed out. Once the influx of data is under control and the catalogue brought up to date, the ISC expects to find time to analyse records from before 1964 and to produce catalogues of earthquakes occurring in the 1950s.

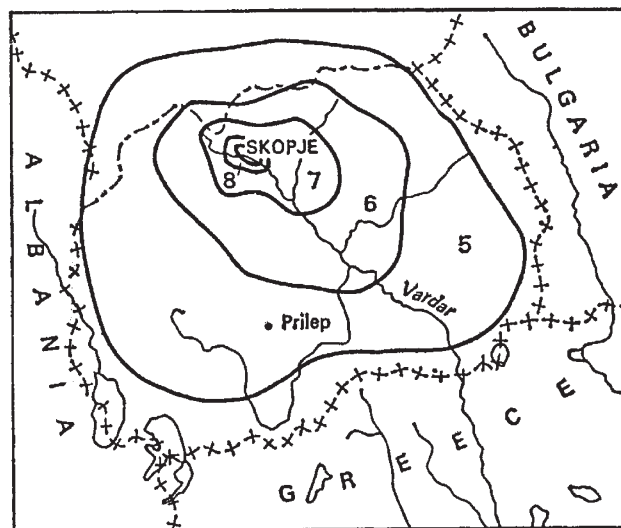
The most rapid publication of preliminary seismic observations and determinations of the epicentre of earthquakes is the province of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. These reports are especially useful to relief expeditions dispatched to assist at earthquake disasters where local lines of communication have been destroyed. In such cases, the times and locations at which shocks occurred can be invaluable.

On the other hand, catalogues like that produced by the International Seismological Centre find their

main application in long-term statistical investigations of earthquakes. Designers of large-scale structures which are especially prone to earthquakes—dams and tall office blocks, for example—like to know how susceptible the area they are building in is to earthquakes. Here the regional catalogue of earthquakes will help.

## Skopje Earthquake

AFTER the earthquake in Skopje on July 26, 1963, the government of Yugoslavia decided to investigate the causes and effects of the earthquake damage, so that the city could be rebuilt with better resistance to the stresses of any future earthquake. As well as calling in Yugoslavian scientists and engineers, the government sent a request to UNESCO for experts to advise them. The findings of these four investigators have now been published (UNESCO, 51s.).



Distribution of observed intensities for earthquake on July 26, 1963 (compiled by D. Hadzievski and A. Zátópek).

Mr J. Despeyroux, chief engineer of SOCOTEC in Paris, reported on building problems and Dr N. N. Ambrayseys of Imperial College produced an engineering seismology study of the earthquake. It was concluded that there would be no point in moving the city completely, but if new building developments are spread out around the city the risk will be minimized. In replanning the old city wide streets can be included to give good access to the centre. Special building codes for earthquake resistant structures are advisable, and controlled quality of structural materials, about which builders should be informed, would increase the safety of permanent buildings. Thirty per cent of the most important buildings in the city were left intact or were not irreparably damaged, those which were properly designed and constructed being the best survivors. Regulation of the River Vardar is important because it affects the seismic quality of the ground. Earthquake engineering and seismology are different, although related, subjects, and the former is neglected. Dr Ambrayseys suggests that a school should be set up in Skopje to train engineers and architects to post-graduate level in earthquake engineering, geotectonics