

which the United States levies on imported plastics, international differences in standards and patent systems, lower capital costs and larger differences between raw material prices and selling prices in the United States, and the familiar bogey of Europe's inferior management. Not all these problems have quick solutions, but European companies can draw at least some cheer from the rumours that the profit rates of American plastics firms are falling.

The report makes some recommendations for strengthening European research and development. One of these is the creation of larger university departments of chemistry, chemical engineering and physics on the American pattern. The report also recognizes the need for closer links between academic and industrial research, and for government support for long-term programmes.

#### ENGINEERING

### Pressure Vessels Research

THE second volume of the *Report of the Committee of Enquiry on Pressure Vessels* (HMSO, 35s) contains the evidence behind the recommendations which were published earlier this year (*Nature*, 221, 403; 1969). The committee was set up in 1966 when demand for pressure vessels was high but was not being met by British industry. The committee was charged with recommending ways of improving pressure vessel technology, including standards, design and manufacture, and its brief covered structures such as heat exchangers and boilers but excluded the special case of nuclear reactor vessels. After 1966, however, demand fell and the British pressure vessel industry was better able to cope, but nevertheless the committee believes that urgent action is necessary if the industry is to maintain its position. The committee's most important recommendation, which the Ministry of Technology is asking the manufacturers to consider, is the setting up of a Pressure Vessel Authority to coordinate research and development and to keep an eye on standards and inspection methods. The second volume of the report provides the documentary evidence backing the conclusions published in January. It contains comparisons between British and foreign pressure vessel industries, surveys of the raw materials which are used, and details of the crucial inspection procedures.

Part of the volume is a summary of research and development, and the committee says the sum spent is satisfactory but adds that this does not imply approval of the way the money is used. For one thing, the committee criticizes the duplication of research effort which seems to be going on, and wants a collaborative research organization as part of the proposed Pressure Vessel Authority. According to the research and development summary (drawn up by the Reactor Materials Laboratory of the UKAEA and based on a questionnaire completed by 268 organizations), much of the research effort is concerned with work on current contracts rather than future developments. The impression is that research and development in the industry is a haphazard affair. Very few organizations know whether they are getting their money's worth from their research expenditure, which for the industry as a whole averaged £3.5 million a year between 1962 and 1966. The collaborative research organization

which is proposed, and which would carry out large scale work beyond the capabilities of individual organizations, would be along the lines of the Pressure Vessel Research Committee in the United States, financed by government and industry. But the report's conclusion that hardly any firms are using the publications of the American Research Committee, and indeed that its very existence is unknown to many, does not promise well for the future of a British analogue. The solution could be to finance the British counterpart from the pressure vessel industry alone. In the words of a steelmaker quoted by the report, "the pressure vessel industry will take greatest cognizance of results for which it has had to pay".

#### LINNEAN SOCIETY

### Nearing the Target

THE Linnean Society seems to have met with a warm response to the appeal for funds to rehouse securely its valuable collections and modernize its rooms in Burlington House. A total of £27,000 has been received or promised, and when the promise of a generous anonymous donation has been fulfilled the society will be near to its target of £55,000. The anonymous gift was promised on the understanding that the balance would be raised by the society's own efforts. This has now been achieved, and the gift can be claimed. It is hoped that the name of the anonymous benefactor will be revealed at the anniversary meeting of the society on May 24.

Apart from more than £8,000 from fellows, foreign members, honorary fellows and associates, the rest of the money has come largely from other scientific organizations, industry and commerce. The Royal Society has given nearly £5,000 specifically for the care of the Linnean collection of plant and animal specimens; a trust which is anonymous at the moment has given £2,500 and the International Union of Biological Sciences is expected to give a similar sum. British Petroleum Ltd has given £1,000 and the world of commerce has contributed at least £1,500. There have also been donations from several overseas organizations including Sweden, the home of Linnæus. There are hopes now that with continued efforts the final sum collected could exceed £55,000, so that much of what needs to be done to improve the cramped library and to make the Burlington House rooms a suitable meeting place for biological societies in general might well be possible.

#### TECHNICIANS

### No Mood to Negotiate

WITH wage awards that conform to the British Government's Prices and Incomes Policy increasingly the exception rather than the rule, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, which represents university technicians, is to strike in support of the technicians' latest pay claim. The union, which claims to have 8,000 of the 10,000-12,000 university technicians among its 100,000 members, has announced a one-day strike on April 29. The technicians, who received a 4.4 per cent wage rise in February 1968, are now asking for an interim award of £2 a week and have