

Miscellaneous Intelligence

RUMOURS that the recent ban on cyclamates stemmed from experiments on a single rat are wildly exaggerated. The mixture of cyclamate and saccharine was fed to twelve rats and half of them developed cancer of the bladder, caused, of course, by the cyclamate part of the tandem. The ban is thus supported by six rats. It is the dropping of monosodium glutamate by several major food companies that has been occasioned by an experiment with a single animal, an infant rhesus monkey, born prematurely, into which MSG was not fed but injected, at a concentration of 2,700 mg/kg.

ACTUARIES, accountants and advertising men are all, it is well known, better paid than scientists and engineers, and the richest of the three are the actuaries. Just how much joy is to be found in calculating the date of other people's deaths is shown by a salary survey conducted by the Institute of Actuaries (for England) and the Faculty of Actuaries (for Scotland). It is true that only 152 of their 871 members earned more than £7,000 a year, but of these a lucky 33 earned £14,000 or more. Young actuaries (under 30) can expect £2,600 as a mean, or £3,375 if they fall in the highest decile of their profession. The mean salaries for other age groups are £3,550 (age 30-34), £4,250 (age 35-39), £5,000 (age 40-44), £6,500 (age 45-54) and £7,950 (age 55 and over). The organizers of the survey demurely state that the last salary survey "did much to stimulate interest in and recruitment to the profession and it is intended to use the current figures to the same end".

THE groves of academe in the United States are thronged by so many postdoctoral students that it has taken a special survey to ascertain just how many. About 16,000 is the answer, half of whom are foreign. To judge by those who returned the questionnaire, 6 per cent of this learned corps labour in the disciplines of arts and humanities, 4 per cent in the social sciences, 55 per cent in the life sciences and 35 per cent in the engineering, mathematical and physical sciences. It is easy to understand why 56 per cent of postdoctoral astronomers in the United States should be foreigners, but how can the 63 per cent of chemists be accounted for? Or the 64 per cent of engineers? The psychologists are the purest of all; only a tenth of their number are not fellow citizens. (*The Invisible University*, National Research Council, Washington. \$10.)

THE law school of the University of California, Los Angeles, has received a grant of \$112,000 from the Ford Foundation to train lawyers in the fields of air pollution and land use. Los Angeles was chosen to receive the grant because its air pollution and land shortage are deemed as bad as anywhere. (*University of California Clip Sheet*, Vol. 45, No. 16.)

AFTER brilliant performances during the past three years the Leonid meteor shower has relapsed to ordinariness. According to preliminary figures from Dr David Hughes of the meteor group at the University of Sheffield the meteors on November 16 and 17 were only about twice the background rate. The Sheffield equipment, which usually detects about 900 meteors an hour, picked up only 2,400 an hour on November 16 and 1,100 on November 17.

Parliament in Britain

Concorde

MR ANTHONY WEDGWOOD BENN, Minister of Technology, said that the latest Anglo-French estimate of the development costs of Concorde is £730 million at January 1969 prices. This is now being revised to take account of the devaluation of the franc and certain adjustments to the programme. He said that he is satisfied, however, with the results of flight tests, and that prototype 002, which is being modified in preparation for supersonic testing, will resume flying early next year. Mr Robert Sheldon asked the minister, in the light of the continually increasing costs of Concorde, for an assurance that a statement will be made to Parliament before any further prototype is ordered or pre-production models are investigated. Mr Tam Dalyell made a plea for talk of cancellations to be kept at a minimum, and Mr Frederick Corfield said that delaying the next stage would further add to the costs.

In reply, Mr Benn said that as the tests reach their critical stage during the next few months, it will be necessary to balance the need on the one hand not to lose the impetus of the programme and on the other not to commit too many resources before it is known whether the aircraft will be successful. He added that he could not apologize to the House for keeping an eye on costs. (Oral answers, November 10.)

Higher Education

SEVERAL questions have arisen from the report of the Select Committee on Education and Science. In particular, Mr Eric Moonman and Mr Christopher Price asked whether the Secretary of State for Education and Science would institute a detailed inquiry into the Guildford School of Art. Mr Gerald Fowler replied that there are no statutory powers to do this, and there are no proposals at present for legislation to provide the Secretary of State for Education and Science with the necessary powers. Mr Edward Short said later that the government does not yet intend to introduce major legislation to implement any of the report's proposals, although they are being carefully studied.

Both Mr David Lane and Mr Richard Hornby asked what consultations are taking place at the Department of Education and Science about the development of higher education. Mr Gerald Fowler said that his predecessor had held discussions on this subject with the UGC and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, and that he hoped to continue these with other interested parties during the next year. He also indicated that the government would consider publishing a Green Paper, a White Paper or a White Paper with a greenish tinge as a result of these consultations. (Oral answers, November 13.)

Pollution

THE whole machinery for dealing with environmental pollution is being reviewed by Mr Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, but Mr Crosland did not comment on a suggestion from Mr Gordon Oakes that the Natural Environment Research Council should set up a research unit to study all major cases of environmental imbalance which may be the result of pollution. (Oral answers, November 11.)