

revenue was an increase in subscriptions from scientific fellows and associates, which is now under consideration. Benefactors, of course, continue to be generous; £125,000 was received recently for the building of a new primate house. The charge for admission to the London Zoo was increased in May from 7s 6d to 8s 6d for adults, and the question of further increases is under review.

The society has also been rigorous in making all possible economies, and at the annual general meeting on May 20 the secretary, Sir Solly Zuckerman, said that costs had miraculously been cut by 2 per cent during the past year, in spite of the many improvements that had been effected.

Sir Solly also said that the council of the society is hoping that by the end of the 1970s there will be an endowment fund to take care of all redevelopment needs. The Zoological Society evidently intends to continue to cherish its independence.

#### COMPUTER BOARD

### Finney for Flowers

NEXT month Professor Sir Brian Flowers is to relinquish the post he has held for four years as chairman of the Computer Board, in favour of Professor D. J. Finney, University of Edinburgh. Professor Finney, who is director of the Agricultural Research Council Unit of Statistics, has been a member of the Computer Board since it was set up in 1966 and is expected to continue the board's policy of promoting regional computing centres around the country.

One of the first tasks facing the new board is to see how much of the original idea of regional computing centres can be salvaged. As Professor Flowers explained last year, there seems no way of preventing a university selected as the centre for a region from taking up an unfair share of the computer's time. It is one thing for the Computer Board to urge a university to provide facilities for other universities, he said, but it is another matter to make a centre truly regional.

Professor Finney is unlikely to lead his seven man board far away from the guiding lines laid down by the original Flowers report, which chose London and Manchester to be the major computing centres in Britain with Edinburgh as a special centre based on a multi-access system; this would be later followed by a further concentration of special facilities into regions. But the extent to which the board will have to modify this scheme, as intimated by Professor Flowers when he opened the new centre at King's College, London, last year, is likely to depend on whether the development of more powerful computers can keep pace with the rising demand for facilities. Another decision facing the board is whether or not to introduce a system of charging for university computing.

#### MATHEMATICS

### 'Q' and 'F' a Bar to Prodigies

THE Joint Mathematical Council has joined the swelling ranks of those who are worried about the proposals for 'Q' and 'F' level examinations in the

sixth form. In a statement which is being sent to the Schools Council, the JMC has expressed concern that the proposals will hold back the mathematically gifted child and will exacerbate the shortage of mathematics teachers. But the council is prepared to admit that the scheme holds advantages for the average child.

The basis of the JMC's case is that if the present subjects of pure and applied mathematics are condensed into a single subject, the specialist mathematician will suffer. Even if sixth formers were allowed to study mathematics and statistics up to 'Q' level, the statement points out, the specialist mathematician could only devote two-fifths of his time to mathematics during the first year in the sixth form, and only one third in the second year. The JMC believes that so drastic an alteration of the present arrangements, whereby a student can spend two-thirds of his sixth form studies on mathematics, will lower standards in schools and make it necessary to lengthen degree courses.

The JMC believes that the working party which put forward the 'Q' and 'F' level proposals paid too little attention to the numbers of teachers that would be required to carry out its suggestions. Some two to three hundred extra mathematics teachers would be needed, the JMC believes, if further mathematics were to be taught as a separate subject. The council is also worried lest the centralized examinations proposed with the 'Q' and 'F' levels should cause mathematics syllabuses to ossify, and it believes that teachers should have some say in the way that courses are structured.

A way to make sure that the gifted student will not suffer, the council says, is to allow some students to by-pass 'Q' level. This would help to reduce cramming for exams in the sixth form and would help to maintain the standards of 'F' level examinations.

#### HEALTH

### Shutting Up Pandora

LIKE the Food and Agriculture Organization with its cheerful predictions of long-term food surpluses, the World Health Organization also has some good news to spread, chief of which is that the incidence of smallpox has fallen for the second year in succession to the lowest ever recorded. Another global eradication campaign, that against malaria, has now been extended to some four-fifths of the population in the world's originally malarious areas (*The Work of WHO 1969*. WHO, Geneva, 1970. 14s. \$2.25).

Less success has been had with plague and cholera which claimed as many victims in 1969 as in the year before. And yellow fever was back in Africa for the first time in six years. In the northern hemisphere, the 1968-69 influenza season started earlier than usual and the A2 strain of the virus, which caused the large outbreak in Hong Kong in 1968, was responsible for numerous epidemics. The upward trend of venereal diseases continued in many countries, though being less marked for syphilis than gonorrhoea, despite the evidence of studies showing that two-thirds of the venereal infections treated by private doctors go unreported.