

PLANS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

IN opening a debate on technical education in the House of Commons on March 3, Mr. David Price drew attention to the increase in the number of students attending sandwich courses. This had risen from 4,000 in 1956 to 22,000 in 1964, and the number of day releases had risen by 196,000 to 574,000 in the same period. The number of students taking advanced courses leading to recognized qualifications at grant-aided establishments had risen from 90,000 in 1958 to 158,000 in 1964. After asking for a much greater breakdown of the figures given in the National Plan, Mr. Price urged the need for management studies in technical colleges. He thought there should be, first, a general type of course aimed especially at the established manager whose educational background might be poor; secondly, he recommended courses to keep current management in touch with new management thinking and techniques; and, thirdly, courses giving instruction in particular techniques. Sir Edward Boyle hoped that the Government would make every effort to keep the figures given in the National Plan suitably up to date, and thought there was probably a need in the new business schools for a good 2-year postgraduate university course in business education of a high intellectual level, though it should not be too academic.

In replying on the debate, the then Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, Mr. R. E. Prentice, said the National Plan hoped by 1970 to achieve a total of 70,000 students taking higher education courses compared with the figure of 50,000 recommended in the Robbins Report for 1973. Some 5,000 students were taking more specialized courses in management and about 8,000 were taking other professional examinations which included management as part of the course. In November 1964, about 276,000 people were getting day release, about 31 per cent of the boys and 7 per cent of the girls. The programme for 1966-67 was to cost £27 million and this would also be the figure for the 1967-68 programme. The National Advisory Council on Education in Industry and Commerce had been making four relevant studies; a study into the size of classes; another into buildings; one into the administrative methods of procedures; and a study of the organization of courses. These were at different stages, but the first study was complete and the report was being discussed with the local authority associations and others concerned. The position would also be improved by the raising of the school-leaving age in the 1970's, the impact of the Industrial Training Act, the

expansion of the system of further education and the expansion and improvement of the youth employment service. In a written answer in the House of Commons on March 8, the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Mr. R. Crossman, stated that new arrangements were urgently needed to give an impetus to research in the environmental field. The task of reshaping existing towns, building new cities and meeting the needs of a fast-growing, mobile population demanded a vigorous, comprehensive and sustained programme of research. The failure in the past to sponsor research in this field meant that the data needed for sound policy decisions were lacking. It had been decided, therefore, to establish a Centre for Environmental Studies where practitioners and research workers, both at home and abroad, could discuss problems and settle research needs. The Centre would also be an important channel through which research contracts could be placed with universities and institutes. The Centre would be established as an independent educational trust. It was intended that it should be financed partly out of money voted by Parliament and partly from outside sources, and the Ford Foundation had agreed to make a substantial donation to the Centre over the next 5 years. Lord Llewelyn-Davies, professor of architecture in the University of London, had accepted an invitation to become chairman of the Governing Body of the Centre.

On March 9, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that after careful examination of the issues involved the Government proposed that the closed period for public records should be reduced from 50 to 30 years. In reaching this conclusion they had had full regard to the recommendation of the Advisory Council on Public Records that the period should be reduced only to 40 years. The Council had found it difficult to decide between 40 and 35 years and had coupled its recommendation in favour of a reduction with a further recommendation that scholars undertaking research relating to matters falling within the period should have more liberal access to official records, including Cabinet records. The Government concluded, however, that a clean-cut closed period was to be preferred and that the period of 30 years would be reasonable. While the Leader of the Opposition agreed that a specific closed period was preferable in principle, he was not satisfied that reduction to 30 years was justified, mainly because of possible embarrassment to politicians and civil servants. The Government, however, did not think that the risk was significant.

EDUCATION AND THE AVIATION ESTABLISHMENTS

IN December 1964 the Electronics Research Council established a working party, under the chairmanship of Sir Nevill Mott, to examine the educational role of the Ministry of Aviation's establishments. Previously the Council's Working Party on Solid State Devices had recommended that the functions of the Ministry's establishments should be reviewed in order to determine what aspects of the special knowledge of their scientific staff could possibly be made available to students in higher education.

Obviously the establishments have much to offer in physics, electronics and related subjects, and the talents of the staff could be made available through secondment to universities and through students working at the establishments. The working party was therefore also

asked to examine and consider the role of the universities in ensuring that students receive education which fits them for work in research, development and production in the subjects mentioned.

The earlier working party had also concluded that the establishments could—and should—play a greater part in helping civil developments in the electronics industry. It had recommended, in particular, that the possibility should be explored of establishing viable applied research units at selected universities. Such units, it was hoped, would provide incentives and opportunities for a few university departments to contribute in the field of solid-state devices, and would encourage students and post-graduates to make careers in applying solid-state physics to industry.