

in industry". It sounds difficult, not to say uncomfortable. "Academic escapism" is practised by "university dons who interpret academic freedom as an excuse for escaping from the social responsibility of deploying some of their great talents to help find practical answers to the research and engineering difficulties that face our industries". This sin is secretly practised, Mr. Benn added coyly, in some well known ivory towers.

The unfortunate thing about the performance is that Mr. Benn is selling technology by arguments which do not reflect its real value. This is rather like backing a horse because it has a pretty name; it may be an amusing way of losing money, but serious punters recognize that it is rather silly.

Vibration Analysis

THE use of an on-line digital computer in the analysis of sound and vibrations is to be sponsored by the Science Research Council with a grant of £55,000 to the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research at the University of Southampton. The high resolution analysis of random signals is becoming increasingly important in a number of applications and in particular in the design of mechanical equipment of all kinds.

Brain Drain Return

LORD FULTON, the retiring Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex, has made public some cheering figures about the origins of the academics recruited to the faculty at his university in the past few years. He says that 60 per cent of the faculty has worked for a time overseas and that 38 per cent of the 229 university teachers recruited in the past two years were working in posts abroad at the time of their appointment. Altogether, 53 of these 86 prodigal sons were working in the United States and Canada, and the University of Sussex can boast that no fewer than 21 of the teachers recruited from abroad were citizens of the United States. Lord Fulton, in his address to the Court of the University, said that these figures show "the international traffic in scholarship as well as the need for caution before jumping to conclusions about the losses which are sustained by this country". With becoming but convenient modesty he did not raise the possibility that the attractions of the University of Sussex to academics working abroad may be greater than those of at least some other British universities.

Micro-Information

WITH the intention of encouraging the still fuller use of devices for copying documents, the Office of Scientific and Technical Information at the Department of Education and Science has laid out £32,691 to create what it calls a National Reprographic Centre at the Hatfield College of Technology. There will be a handful of people under the County Technical Librarian, Mr. G. H. Wright, who will collect and disseminate information about new copying systems and also to assess the merits of systems and equipment available in Britain. At this stage it is not intended that the Centre should undertake the development of new pieces of equipment, although this is not entirely out of the question. The Hatfield College of Technology has been holding courses on information retrieval for some years, and in 1965 Mr. B. J. S.

Williams at the college was asked by the Office of Scientific and Technical Information to carry out a study of information retrieval based on microforms.

Mr. Williams says that the work of the Centre is made topical because "for the first time it is going to be cheaper to copy journals and reports than to buy them". He reckons that the cost of materials and of processing in the production of a piece of micro-film containing up to 60 pages of text and known alternatively as a "microfiche" or a "microform" is unlikely to exceed 6d. (£0.025). He points out that government departments in the United States have done much to encourage the use of these devices, chiefly by circulating official reports in this form. He thinks that in three or four years, microfiches will also "catch on in Britain".

In practice, the Centre at Hatfield intends to work closely with comparable organizations in the United States and the Netherlands. In the United States there is a Library Technology Programme supported by the American Library Association, and in the Netherlands there is the microfiche Foundation at Delft. So far, more seems to have been done to improve the effectiveness of copying methods than to deal with some of the legal problems which arise from their use. The copiers acknowledge that steps will eventually have to be taken to deal with copyright problems, and in particular to arrange that copyright owners receive some kind of royalty for what is copied, but there is as yet no experience to suggest how this should be done and in any case there is always the awesome prospect that any substantial change in existing practice will require amendment of copyright legislation. The technological problems are much easier.

Newcastle Perplexed

A SENSE of muted protest pervades the report of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Dr. C. I. C. Bosanquet. The "alternating spasms of extravagance and parsimony" to which the universities are subjected by the "kaleidoscopic changes of Government policy" involve them, he says, in as many changes of fortune as a player of 'Monopoly'. He suggests that this is probably inevitable, but says that in return for the flood of information which the universities send to the Department of Education and Science and the University Grants Committee, they might well ask the Government to give them earlier information and fuller explanations of their changes in policy.

Expenditure for the financial year ending on July 31, 1966, amounted to more than £4.5 m, and capital grants of almost £1.7 m were given for building projects starting in 1965-66 and 1966-67. The university now has 4,412 undergraduates, and 730 graduates, and intends to expand to 6,000 students by 1972, if the finances are forthcoming. There would seem to be a good case for this expansion, with the decision not to build a new university on Tees-side. Newcastle has been distinctly lukewarm about the project from the beginning, and Dr. Bosanquet regrets that its conditional support has been quoted as unconditional support.

The most interesting new addition to the university during the year is the MRC Reproduction and Growth Research Unit at the Princess Mary Maternity Hospital, under Dr. A. M. Thompson. It was previously at