

NEWS AND VIEWS

favour of European collaboration in higher education and science. Such a dedicated and even impetuous common marketeer could hardly have let the opportunity slip, but that is not to suggest that Mr. Crosland exaggerated the potential benefits of collaboration. The United States is an example of the advantages of scale, while the several needless inadequacies of the contacts between individual European scientists and academics are almost tangible proofs that there is plenty of improvement to be brought about. The practical difficulty, however, is to decide precisely what should be done.

To avoid duplication is an obvious goal much cherished by the purse-masters, but probably also an illusion. It is hard to stifle a man's interest in his chosen subject by pointing out that somebody elsewhere is also working on towards the same objectives. Indeed, the most likely benefits of welding the European nations into a tighter intellectual community would be a greater stimulation of separate research groups towards common objectives. This would often mean a greater concentration of people in potentially rewarding fields of research. Collaboration is not a way of saving money but a way of making faster progress. Moreover, it does not require the creation of institutions, successful though places such as CERN have been, but the provision of means whereby people can be exchanged more easily between one place and another. If science profits, so also will the travel agents.

COAL-TIPS

THE pile of waste that slid into a Welsh valley a week ago and which buried two hundred people, most of them children, was a man-made phenomenon. If the need to dig coal had been less pressing, or if those who dug it had known more about soil mechanics, there might have been no catastrophe. It is natural, now, that people should resolve that this kind of accident should not happen again. The National Coal Board will no doubt be careful to see that its remaining coal-tips are well founded. But the safety of coal-tips is not the only cause at stake. It will be easy to slam that stable door for good. Next time it will be a dam that bursts, as that at Fréjus did seven years ago, or a passenger ship that sinks at sea. The lesson to be learned is not that the villages must be made safe from coal-tips, but that technical operations of all kinds must as far as possible be proof against catastrophe. One way is to ensure such a surfeit of technical competence that dangerous jobs are done by people able to see the dangers in advance. But it is also necessary to take what steps there are to minimize the risk of man-made catastrophe. To ask whether coal-tips are really necessary would be a way to begin. And certainly there is a case for asking why, in Wales, the coal-tips should be sited on the proud slopes of noble mountains, and why the people should inhabit the ditches that run between.

Plan for Food

SOME details of the forward planning of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have now become available. A draft of the "indicative plan" covering the two decades immediately ahead is to be discussed at a meeting in Rome on October 31, 1966. The underlying objective is to assemble a collection of extrapolations of the predictable tendencies likely to influence the balance between food and the population in the years ahead. One of the most illuminating features of the work so far accomplished is a preliminary calculation of how rising incomes in advanced countries, and the improvements of diet which tend to follow prosperity, may increase the difficulty of ensuring an adequate supply of food for everybody.

The indicative plan assumes that the population will continue to increase in the years immediately ahead much as it has done in the recent past, which means that the population of the world will increase from about 3,500 million at present to 5,000 million in 1985. If the extrapolation is valid, most of this extra population will appear in countries which are under-developed by present standards. These simple calculations, now familiar, entail the assumption that the simpler methods of birth-control now being introduced in several countries will make no appreciable dent on the population. At this stage, greater optimism would probably be imprudent.

The potential influence of prosperity is based on the forward economic plans of various countries, industrialized and otherwise. With fairly cheerful assumptions about the rate of economic growth, the average income of under-developed countries will increase from \$133 a year at present to \$255 in 1985, but in the same period the rate of economic growth in industrial countries will carry the average income from \$1,300 to \$3,000 a year. Because it now seems fairly well established that the under-developed countries will not be able to meet the whole of their extra requirements of food out of their own increased production, imports on an increasing scale will be necessary. But imports have to be paid for. Thus it is not surprising that the planners have singled out the importance of finding ways in which under-developed countries can pay for imports out of their own resources. More trade is one classical solution. It will not therefore be surprising if one of the first results of the forward plan is a re-examination of the machinery for trade with and among under-developed countries.

For and Against Cow Green

IN a flurry of allegation and counter allegation, the Bill promoted by the Tees Valley and Cleveland Water Board to build a reservoir at Upper Teesdale received its third reading in the House of Commons last week. The M.P. who cried "Object" at the first attempt to read the Bill refrained on the second occasion, and the Bill had an unopposed third reading. It appears that the opponents of the Bill are saving themselves for the debate in the House of Lords which will follow. Per-