

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### War of Attrition

MR. ANTHONY CROSLAND, Secretary of State for Education and Science, is unrepentant about his decision to raise university fees for overseas students. In a debate in the House of Commons on February 23, he defended his position with some skill, though he may have been rash to describe some Vice-Chancellors as "near hysterical". He also seems to be clutching at straws by quoting support from local authority associations; it would have been surprising indeed if they had supported the general increase in fees which Mr. Crosland offered as an alternative to the increases for overseas students, since any general increase in fees would fall most heavily on the local authorities. And if Mr. Crosland can find time to raise the matter informally and without commitment with the local authorities, people are bound to ask, as Mr. Nicholas Scott did in the House of Commons, why it was impossible to consult the Vice-Chancellors at all. Mr. Crosland was aided by a subdued Opposition, perhaps because some Conservatives felt their alliance with inflamed student opinion downright unnatural.

For all the fine words, universities have seemed slow to take action, beyond bombarding the minister and their M.P.s with telegrams. The University of Bradford, with 194 overseas students on its books, is prepared to remit fees to overseas students who are already at the university and can show evidence of hardship. Most of the other universities are waiting for a clarification of the position before they take any action. From Mr. Crosland's point of view, all that would seem necessary to forestall action would be to keep the arguments imprecise. Whether this is what happened at the meeting between the Vice-Chancellors and Mr. Crosland on February 28 is not clear, but in the circumstances the meeting could hardly be more than a trudge around well prepared positions. Another meeting will follow on March 7; so far time seems to have been spent in deciding exactly what an overseas student is, and how Mr. Crosland's hardship fund will work.

A lesson in good timing was supplied by the Fulbright Commission, which announced on the morning of the meeting a cut in the number of Fulbright Scholarships tenable both at American and at British universities. The decision, taken as a direct result of the increase in fees, is intended to share the extra cost between British and American scholars. Instead of 211 British postgraduates going to American universities in 1967-68, there will be 194. Similar steps may also be expected from Europe, where there are more British students than there are European students in British universities. In the European Economic Community it is the policy to encourage the movement of students even during undergraduate courses. Britain, as a candidate for Common Market entry, will not seem to have behaved diplomatically.

The fury caused by Mr. Crosland, of course, does not consist wholly of moral righteousness; the Vice-Chancellors, after all, favour a general increase in

student fees. Face to face with the Department of Education and Science, the universities have found that much of their freedom is a polite fiction, preserved by the University Grants Committee. What is surprising is that this should have come as such a shock to them.

### What Macnamara said

THE view that what is called the technological gap between the United States and Europe is more a matter of management than technology was one of the themes in a speech by Mr. Robert Macnamara, United States Secretary of Defence, at Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi, on February 24. Newspaper reports of Mr. Macnamara's diagnosis of the reasons why scientists leave for the United States provoked an angry reply last week-end from Mr. Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Education and Science in the United Kingdom.

On the disparity between the United States and Europe, Mr. Macnamara said that "it is not so much a technological gap as a managerial gap . . . The brain drain occurs not merely because we have a more advanced technology here in the United States, but rather because we have more modern and effective management. God is clearly democratic. He distributes brain-power universally. But he quite justifiably expects us to do something efficient and constructive with that priceless gift. That is what management is all about—it is the gate through which social, political, economic, technological change—indeed change in every dimension—is rationally and effectively spread through society . . ."

Mr. Macnamara went on to say that Europe could not close the gap by boycotting American technology, by high tariffs, or by prohibiting investment. Restricting emigration would not help either. There was no future in the establishment of a defence industry "on the dubious economic theory that only through massive military research and development can a nation industrialize with maximum speed and benefit". In the long run, Mr. Macnamara said, only education could help. "Europe is weak educationally and that weakness is seriously crippling its growth. It is weak in its general education; it is weak in its technical education; and it is particularly weak in its managerial education".

He went on to say that in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, fewer than 20 per cent of schoolchildren remain at school after 15, but that 45 per cent of American children were still at school at 18. In the United Kingdom, he said, "there are some 336,000 students enrolled at university level. Only 10 per cent of college age people stayed on for higher education, with seven per cent in Germany, seven per cent in Italy, and fourteen per cent in France. But in the United States, said Mr. Macnamara, there were four million college students, amounting to 40 per cent of the population of college age.

What seems to have irritated Mr. Crosland most is the suggestion that the uniform distribution of brain-power is all that matters. "One thing that God does not distribute equally is wealth." He said that the reason that "brains move from every country of the world to America is that America . . . is the richest country in the world and can pay much for brains". The brain drain, he said, was now a serious matter of