

The conference approved these proposals, and placed particular emphasis on its endorsement of the statement by the education minister that the criterion for any change-over decision should be an improvement in standards.

Broadcasting Abroad

LARGELY at the initiative of the Ford Foundation, plans are being canvassed for the setting up of an International Broadcasting Institute intended to ensure that the fullest use is made of technical innovations such as Earth satellites. The institute has a distinguished backing, with sponsors such as Dr J. Wiesner in the United States, and Mr Kenneth Younger and Professor Asa Briggs in the United Kingdom. A draft constitution is now circulating, and was indeed discussed in detail at a meeting in New York two weeks ago. The immediate problem is to find financial support for the enterprise, and several foundations have already been approached. To begin with, the institute might consist of a director supported by a small office staff and with a brief to define the field in which a more fully equipped institute might operate. For several reasons, one of which is that non-profit organizations are well treated by the taxation authorities in the United Kingdom, the official headquarters of the institute are likely to be in London.

For the time being, at least, the nucleus of the new institute thinks of itself more as a research organization than a pressure group. It would tackle a variety of problems, such as the way in which broadcasting (principally of television) might be used to provide educational services for developing countries and the legal questions which might arise in broadcasting from one country to another, possibly by means of satellites. Whether the institute would try to engage directly in the issue of just how the new international agreement for INTELSAT should be negotiated is another problem. It also remains to be seen how the institute will be able to define its relationships with bodies, official and otherwise, already operating in this field. Broadcasting networks in Britain and the United States seem to be cool but not hostile.

Social Medicine

THE only research unit of the Medical Research Council devoted to social medicine is just settling down in its new quarters at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Professor J. N. Morris, formerly the director, becomes honorary director of the unit on his appointment to the chair of public health in the University of London. The unit, consisting of a staff of eleven doctors, statisticians and social scientists as well as clerical staff, moves with him.

Three main topics are being investigated by the unit, which is using the same general methods of statistical analysis, individual and clinical studies for each. Heart disease, particularly coronary thrombosis, has been under examination for about twenty years, with three aims in view: first to discover causes, secondly to find individuals who might be particularly susceptible, and finally to attempt to reduce the risks for these individuals. Using the discovery that high cholesterol levels in the blood point to thrombosis, experiments are being carried out to see if lowering

these lipid levels in the blood reduces the incidence of thrombosis among otherwise healthy people. Trial groups in Edinburgh, Prague and Budapest are co-operating in this project. A study is about to be made of men in the civil service to see what effects exercise may have on the incidence of thrombosis. The unit has already established that occupational exercise has a protective value.

In its former home in the East End of London the unit involved itself in local affairs by beginning a survey of juvenile delinquency in that area. No obvious conclusions could be drawn from variations in housing backgrounds, and apparently similar schools produced widely differing delinquency rates. Attitudes within the schools may play an important part, but have yet to be studied. It is hoped that statistical and clinical analyses will lead eventually to a reasonably simple test that can be used by magistrates and probation officers to discover the likelihood of a first offender becoming one of the hard core of delinquents.

Operational research into various aspects of the Health Service forms the third activity of the unit. At present the quality and effectiveness of medical care in different types of hospital are being assessed. Why is it, for example, that teaching hospitals are more effective than others? In this field of everyday medicine it is important to discover causes for variations in the success rates, and a large scale survey of prostate treatment is now being made.

Connective Tissue Clubs Connected

AT the joint meeting of the French and British micropolysaccharide clubs, held on September 29 at the Institut Pasteur, Dr Robert, the secretary of the French club which initiated this first joint international meeting, proposed that a European Federation of Connective Tissue Clubs should be formed. This was agreed: Professor Kuhn of Munich pledged West German participation. Under the federation the existing national clubs will of course retain their identity and local interests, as well as participate in international meetings. This arrangement should improve on the present situation in which European workers meet each other, if at all, as visitors in the USA. Discussions are now under way in the hope that the return Anglo-French meeting in 1968, to be held in Britain, will be the first full meeting of the new federation.

At the Paris meeting the magnificent hospitality of Professor Delaunay and the French club provided a perfect background for much productive discussion. Seventeen communications, two of them full lectures by Dr J. T. Dingle and Professor J. Montreuil, were given during the day, on the chemistry, metabolism, morphology, embryology and pathology of connective tissue and its components.

The federation, by arranging regular international meetings, should provide new impetus for the European biochemists, pathologists, electron microscopists and many others involved in the expanding field of connective tissue research.

Human Physiology

THE National Institute for Medical Research seems particularly anxious to make known its work on the