

relationship between Oxbridge and the schools has set up strains elsewhere, so that an attempt to provide another special solution for the Oxbridge problem may seem a perpetuation of an existing misfortune. But this may be only half the story. Sir Desmond Lee is the principal architect of the Schools Council's proposal, now abandoned, that the sixth form curriculum for most British schoolchildren should consist of two principal courses of studies and a number of "minor" courses. Mr Morrison, on the other hand, is an advocate of a broad curriculum based on five subjects (see *Nature*, **215**, 1329; 1967). Perhaps the Schools Council has found a way of making the principal gladiators settle their scores before tackling the more general problem of the universities as a whole.

Money for Authors

AFTER years of campaigning, it looks as if British authors may yet receive royalties for their books borrowed free from public libraries. So far there is no proposal for legislation, but authors have become more optimistic in the past few months. The problem of paying royalties to authors—the Public Lending Right, as it is called—has been bubbling away for several years now, with occasional bursts to the surface when events help or hinder the cause. Another bubble burst last week with the publication of a pamphlet, *The Arts Council and Public Lending Right* (6d., post free from the Arts Council).

This sets out the council's interest in the subject and outlines a scheme it proposes for a Public Lending Right (PLR). When the council set up its Literature Panel in 1966, one of the first steps was to appoint a special working party and its report was approved and adopted by the council in 1967. Because the money needed would have to come from public funds and government legislation would be necessary, the council has formally submitted the report to the Department of Education and Science. It is anybody's guess if and when the Government will promote the necessary Bill. It could possibly make the next parliamentary session, but authors fear that PLR will hardly rate among the top priorities.

Authors have long been aggrieved that there is no equivalent of the Public Performing Right to cover the lending of books from public libraries. Composers, publishers and authors receive fees for the performance of any work, musical or dramatic, in addition to the sale of the original publication. In effect, authors believe that Public Lending has become the equivalent of Public Performance. They feel that the recent development of the public libraries, which now lend about 500 million volumes a year, has taken place without anything approaching commensurate return to the producers of the books. A recent survey drew attention to the plight of some authors. Few earned anything like enough money to live on from their writing alone. It is also argued that organized lending radically affects the economics of book publishing. One library book may survive 200 issues (with one re-binding) from which the author would receive one single royalty payment and the publisher a comparable sum, from the original sale.

Earlier schemes have involved payment to authors by libraries based upon the number of times the book is issued, and the money has been obtained from small

charges to borrowers. Librarians were, however, opposed to that scheme, two Government Bills were defeated and the subject was omitted from the 1964 Public Libraries Act. Librarians argued that to charge borrowers was an abandonment of "free" public libraries; that any payment to authors by libraries would involve administrative costs to the detriment of book stocks; and that the development of public libraries helped, not hindered, book producers.

In the new scheme, a system would be devised on the Danish model, using book stocks as its basis, rather than book loans as found in Sweden. It is proposed that a Library Compensation Fund Committee should be established to administer a compensation fund, which would be supplied by an annual grant paid to the committee from public funds. The size of the grant would be related to the total annual expenditure of Public Library Authorities on books. Payments to authors and publishers would depend on the stocks held in public libraries. It would be impractical for all libraries to send returns of stocks, so it is proposed that only sample libraries (three in England, for example) would send figures. These stock figures would be compared with the total of stocks held by all libraries. The fund committee would work out which books qualified under the scheme and it would then calculate the rate of compensation payable per volume.

The scheme appears to be more easy to operate than earlier suggestions, but reservations about the scheme remain. The sample of libraries, only three per year, is very small and hardly representative. Only public libraries are represented, not all libraries. Stock taking by the sample libraries will still be difficult, especially now that many libraries no longer keep such detailed records. How will the fund committee decide which authors should benefit?—British copyright books include a number not written by British nationals. Computerization of records for administering the fund might be possible now that books published since October last year have a standard book number, but this would exclude the thousands of books published previously. These points will all have to be thought out in detail by the Department of Education and Science if the scheme is to work.

New Abstracts

A NEW abstracts journal, *Metals Abstracts*, has begun its monthly appearance with an issue for January 1968. The journal is published jointly by the Institute of Metals, London, and the American Society for Metals, Cleveland, Ohio. It replaces the *Review of Metal Literature* and *Metallurgical Abstracts*, the respective publications of the two societies, which will now cease. Overlap between them was in fact considerable, and the new journal is a rationalization which should benefit both its producers and its users.

Metals Abstracts aims to provide a complete coverage of the world's metallurgical literature, and will in fact contain almost twice the number of abstracts that appeared in the British *Metallurgical Abstracts*. Industrial users in Britain may regret, however, that its price to them has also increased; the former will cost £116 (\$280) a year, while the latter cost £20. For libraries the cost of *Metals Abstracts* will be £41 (\$100) and for members of the societies £10 (\$25). Monthly and annual indexes will be provided for additional fees.