

and Brentford Docks and Thamesmead, the new town now being built between Woolwich and Erith.

An important part of any future planning is the assessment of the river's existing qualities and characteristics—mostly provided for the conference by the *Thames-side Environmental Assessment* (GLC, 25s.). This assessment was made by a joint team from the Department of Architecture and Civic Design of the GLC and the riverside borough councils. This committee was set up by the GLC and the London Boroughs Association in 1966 and includes officers of the Port of London Authority and various commercial and amenity interests. Other working parties have been established by the GLC and the riverside borough councils, and the GLC has also recently set up a special subcommittee, the Thames Action Subcommittee, which will have the responsibility of encouraging increased use of the river within Greater London for leisure. Things do seem to be moving towards a more co-ordinated policy for the Thames—the test will be if all the interested bodies can pull together.

The fundamental problems of the river's tidal flow, flooding and pollution will have to be solved for the success of the elaborate schemes outlined at the conference, however well-intentioned they may be. The

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The river Thames at Greenwich (*Fairey Surveys*).

river seems to be getting cleaner, which is cheering news, and the leader of the GLC, Mr Desmond Plummer, spoke of £20 million being spent on the extension to the sewage works at Beckton. The GLC also appears to be taking very seriously the question of a barrier or barrage across the river. This would not only solve the flood problem but it would also improve enormously the amenities of the river (see *Nature*, 217, 800; 1968). The speakers at the conference gave the impression that they were in favour of a fixed barrage across the lower reaches of the river rather than a retractable barrier—Sir Alan Herbert was one who argued on behalf of this cause. The GLC has now taken over responsibility for carrying out a full-scale investigation of tidal flooding and its prevention, and models are being built at the Hydraulics Research Station at Wallingford. The support for a barrage was

really the most enlightened aspect of the conference. There was of course plenty of enthusiasm in other ways, but any new developments can hardly be attractive to Londoners and tourists alike until the tidal flow is controlled and the Thames returns to its former status as a river instead of its present one as a rubbish dump.

Intellectuals' Holiday Camp

THE University of Loughborough is already receiving encouraging response to its announcement last week of a new type of vacation course. Three weeks of courses are being arranged in July for technologists, scientists, managers, teachers and—here lies the novelty—for their spouses. Provision is being made for children so that families can be together while parents catch up on some mid-career training. The idea for family courses came from Dr Elfyn Richards, vice-chancellor of the university, and work started on the arrangement of the courses last autumn.

Twenty-four technical courses during the three weeks will cover such subjects as optics, ultrasonics, ergonomics, computers, statistics and management. Two educational courses are being organized, with co-operation from the Association for Science Education and the Schools Council Project in Technology. The first, on applications of knowledge, is designed for teachers of mathematics and physical sciences, and the second, on teaching materials science in schools, is being run with the blessing of the Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board co-ordinating committee. Both will relate technology in industry to school work.

Cultural courses for spouses, which make up the third series, will cover industrial archaeology, music, drama and new techniques of food production. The idea is that they should be stimulating rather than requiring previous knowledge.

Accommodation is provided on the campus for families at reasonable rates. For example, a man will be charged £10 for accommodation and a course fee varying with subject from £9 upwards. His wife will be charged £13 inclusive of cultural courses and children will cost from £4 upwards. Firms, bars and sports facilities will be available to parents, with babysitters, play groups and other forms of recreation on hand for the children. While hoping to provide all the facilities of a holiday camp, the university believes that its vacation courses will be more valuable than the description "intellectual Butlins" implies. The state of modern industry is such that scientists and technologists are continually being called on to travel and attend courses away from home. So it is not therefore surprising that these people are reluctant to give up their holidays for further study away from their families.

The courses at Loughborough this year are something of a pilot scheme, and if successful the idea will be extended to cover the major part of the summer vacation.

Hydrofoils at Leeds

A LARGE water tank which may solve some of the problems connected with high speed hydrofoils has been built at Leeds University. The tank is in the form of a channel through which up to 50 tons of water per minute can be circulated. In some respects it