

and better faculty housing as added inducements to keep young faculty members with growing families in Cambridge.

## Efficient Analysis

SCIENTIFIC co-operation has for too long overlooked unnecessary and inefficient duplication in an area basic to both research and industry—the standardization of methods of analysis. In an attempt to halt some of this duplication, at least within the United Kingdom, the Analytical Methods Committee of the Society for Analytical Chemistry notes in its annual report (*Report of the Analytical Methods Committee 1967*) that it has finally reached an agreement with the British Standards Institution whereby the BSI will in future refer to the committee any requirements it may have for standardized methods of general application required for use in British Standards. Until now nearly all of this work has been carried out by both the BSI and the committee, because of lack of liaison between the two bodies. Since the two organizations often overlap on both objectives and personnel, both depending as they do on volunteer help from analysts and scientists in outside laboratories, this step is long overdue. Welcome as this move is, however, it would be even more valuable if it started a trend towards more co-operation with standardizing bodies in other countries.

Among the work completed by the committee during the past year was the critical review of sedimentation methods carried out by the Particle Size Analysis Sub-committee, due for publication shortly. This review contains a detailed description of the more than 30 methods referred to in the sub-committee's classification published in 1963, but unfortunately it has not yet been able successfully to carry out collaborative tests on all these techniques. A survey of the most widely used techniques suggested that the Andreasen pipette method is one of the most popular, followed by the photosedimentometer. The majority of the remaining techniques seemed to be used primarily by the scientists who devised them.

## Industrial Triangle

If fine words can make any difference, the merger between the Cambridge Instrument Company and George Kent, Ltd, should be a certainty. Both companies talk fondly of each other, and the Industrial Reorganization Corporation supports the merger. But the intervention of a third party—the Rank Organization—which started things off by bidding for Cambridge, has so far upset the plans. The Board of Cambridge has firmly rejected the Rank offers, announcing its preference for Kent. Rank has responded by increasing its offer, and Kent came back with an offer matching that of Rank, together with the moral support of the IRC. The IRC says that “the creation of the Kent/Cambridge group is likely to bring greater benefits to the British instrument industry than if Cambridge Instruments were acquired by Rank”. But the IRC offered no financial inducement to Cambridge shareholders, merely promising that if the merger goes through, funds will be made available to support the rationalization of the British instrument industry.

This raises some interesting questions. If the battle shows signs of going Rank's way, will the IRC step in and back its words with hard cash? The Kent offer, which started out to match exactly that of Rank, has begun to look less desirable since the Kent share price fell on the market. Meanwhile, Rank has been buying Cambridge shares, and the continued optimism of Cambridge and Kent seems now to be sustained by the thought that the Cambridge board and its friends control 40 per cent of the shares.

It would be a great pity if the Kent bid fails, or if Rank obtains a sufficiently large minority holding to make itself a nuisance. The Kent-Cambridge merger does make very good sense industrially. The Cambridge Instrument Company, established in 1898 by a son of Charles Darwin, is an efficient company in British industry which is otherwise rather short of them. Its most glamorous product is undoubtedly the ‘Stereo-scan’ scanning electron microscope, but it also makes a comprehensive range of medical and scientific instruments. Its most recent major product is a kidney machine, for which the Ministry of Health has already placed orders. It also makes multi-channel physiological recording machines, electrocardiographs, pH meters, water quality monitoring instruments, a range of electrical instruments and industrial indicators, controllers and recorders. Significantly, its weakness in industrial control instruments is George Kent's strength. The combined company would be the biggest scientific instrument manufacturer in Britain.

Rank has already turned down a suggestion by the IRC that it should put its own instrument division, Taylor-Hobson, into a combined company with Cambridge and Kent. If Rank had agreed, the IRC would have been prepared to sponsor the combined company. The Rank refusal was predictable enough—it diversified into scientific instruments in order to widen the basis of the company, and would therefore have been distinctly unwilling to narrow it again. In recent years its hotel, catering and cinema chains have not proved very profitable—most of the money has come from the Rank Xerox division. Cambridge would obviously be a great prize. For the greater benefit of the UK instrument industry, it is to be hoped that Rank does not win it.

## IBP in the USSR

THE Soviet national programme for the International Biological Programme (IBP) just published (*USSR Participation in the International Biological Programme*, Leningrad, 1968) opens with two apologies, or, more accurately, one accusation and one explanation. It is, of course, a year late. It points out that the formation of national sub-committees for the seven sections is incomplete because the scope of the UM Section (use and management of natural resources) was only announced in 1967 in the IBP Central Office's publication, *IBP News*, No. 9. “The most difficulties the Soviet National Committee had were with the UM Section”, it says simply. Another difficulty was in forming the committee's secretariat. This was only achieved at the beginning of this year (see *Nature*, 218, 312; 1968).

The most impressive section is that devoted to terrestrial productivity (PT). The aim is not only to define the biological productivity of the wide range of terrains represented in the Soviet Union, but to compare pro-