



The reported distribution of locusts in Africa and Arabia during June and early July 1968 (from Desert Locust Information Service). Egg-laying or eggfields ○; hoppers ●; adults, immature ×; adults, mature or partly mature \*; adults, maturity unknown +.

only killing with bait and, despite help from the Anti-locust Research Centre and teams from Pakistan and Egypt, time has now run out and the swarms are beyond control.

Discouraging reports are also coming in from West Africa. Swarms of desert locusts have been sighted in northern Mali and Niger. In 1961, spraying in Morocco broke the swarm cycle of the desert locust in West Africa and from then until last year swarms were not seen in the area. Last year, swarms were controlled by the former French colonial organization, Organisation Commune de Lutte Antiacridienne et de Lutte Antiavian (OCLALAV), but some locusts must have escaped. Although the Information Service had few reports of swarms in Algeria it seems virtually certain that locusts which escaped last year's control, bred in southern Algeria during the winter and have returned in swarms to Mali and Niger. Unless the control now in progress is effective, the desert locust looks like re-establishing its swarm cycle in West Africa.

## In Defence of the Ångström

A GROUP which includes most leading spectroscopists issued this week a statement about the adoption of SI units. Their case is that two units banned by the SI system, the Ångström and the  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , are so convenient that they should not be dropped. The full text of the statement is as follows.

"The Inter-Union Commission for Spectroscopy was established by ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions) in order to ensure full cooperation between spectroscopists in chemistry and astronomy and physics, and possibly other fields. In particular, it was felt that questions of notation should not be decided by any single Union, but only after consultation between all parties within the framework of an Inter-Union Commission.

"Recently the question of the adoption of the SI System of Units (Système Internationale) has been brought to the attention of the members of the commission. While all the members of the commission are strongly in favour of most of the recommendations

embodied in the SI system, it is felt that the proposal that the units Å and  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  should be abandoned is most unwise, since they have been used from the beginning of spectroscopy and all the immense literature in the field employs these units (which are metric). The enforcement of such a change could undermine the respect for the SI system as a whole and thus spoil an otherwise good idea. At any rate, after consulting many spectroscopists, the commission has come unanimously to the conclusion that no one should be forced by any journal to abandon the Å and  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . Most of the members of the commission would go further and recommend the indefinite preservation of these two units in spectroscopy, since both are metric and of a very convenient size.

"The importance of the Ångström as a unit is, moreover, not confined to spectroscopy. It is a very convenient unit for interatomic distances and chemical bond lengths, and its elimination in this connexion is undesirable."

The statement, issued under the aegis of the Inter-Union Commission for Spectroscopy (which represents the International Astronomical Union, the International Union for Pure and Applied Physics and the International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry), is signed by twelve eminent spectroscopists. They are, for the IAU, A. H. Cook, B. Edlen, J. C. Phillips and M. J. Seaton; for the IUPAP, G. Hertzberg, A. Kastler, M. Migeotte and W. C. Price; and for the IUPAC, V. A. Fassel, R. N. Jones, R. C. Lord and H. W. Thompson. It is probably fair to say that resentment about the demise of the Ångström unit has been simmering ever since scientists realized that it was to go; but this is the first time that the opposition has received such strong institutional support. Chemists may now be encouraged to set up their own barricades—in defence of the calorie.

## Fuel Economy

BRITAIN is about to be the first country with a computerized statistical model of an entire sector of the national fuel economy, though quite how it is used