

used for several clients, there will be much to be said for not being among the first customers.

Anxieties like this apart, the publication of the code is to be welcomed, particularly because it has now become plain that the computer bureaux have an important part to play in the provision of computer facilities for companies not large enough to operate their own machines. It is therefore something of a surprise that earlier anxieties about the emergence of the National Data Processing Service seem to have been dispelled. The association now says that competition in this field is to be welcomed, but nobody can know whether this is merely an oblique reference to the snail's pace at which the National Data Processing Service is being established. On present form, the bureaux have nothing to worry about.

IBP

New Theme Song

THE US committee of the International Biological Programme under its new chairman, Professor W. F. Blair of the University of Texas, is taking the opportunity of the annual meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) at Ohio State University this week to drum up support for its plans. Though the plans are well conceived, funds are still chronically short and so, to some extent, is talent.

Since Dr Blair's accession to the chairmanship, the US committee has adopted a new slogan for its efforts—"Man's Survival in a Changing World". The IBP symposium at the AIBS meeting aims to illustrate this theme. Dr F. Sargent of the University of Wisconsin, who is himself involved in research on circumpolar peoples and the American Eskimos in particular, will contribute a paper. Dr F. E. Smith of the University of Michigan is to describe the involvement of the US IBP in environmental research and, in particular, the major project on large ecosystems. The chairman, Dr Blair, is taking the bull by the horns by considering "How International is the International Biological Programme?", and the practical approach is represented by Congressman George P. Miller of California, who has long been known for his active chairmanship of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics. It is too soon to know whether what seems to be a concerted publicity campaign will win friends, with money to spend, but Dr Blair is evidently full of hope.

INFORMATION

Computers on the March

PLANS are going ahead well for the introduction in January 1969 of a comprehensive computer-based information service involving all the significant published literature available in the fields of physics, electronics, electrical engineering, control engineering and computer science. The scheme, INSPEC (Information Service in Physics, Electrotechnology and Control), is being developed by the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) in cooperation with the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society and the Institution of Electronic and Radio Engineers in the United Kingdom, and the American Institute of Physics and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers in the United

States. Two large German organizations, and French groups, are also associated with INSPEC.

From January 1969, all the INSPEC publications—*Physics Abstracts*, *Electrical and Electronics Abstracts*, *Control Abstracts* and the associated journals in the *Current Papers* series—will be produced by computer controlled photo-typesetting. The publications will for the first time cover selected patents, reports and dissertations as well as additional journals to make the service more comprehensive. Computer science will also be covered and the abstracting service *Control Abstracts* will be renamed *Computer and Control Abstracts*. At the moment *Physics Abstracts* is published monthly but, with the wider coverage planned, it will come out fortnightly in 1969.

Current Papers, the classified listings of titles, authors and source references, will also change in format and coverage with the introduction of computer typesetting. The coverage will be more comprehensive and titles of two of the three publications in the series will change to reflect the new scope; for example, *Current Papers in Control* will become *Current Papers in Computers and Control*, and *Current Papers in Electrotechnology* will become *Current Papers in Electrical and Electronics Engineering*. The title of *Current Papers in Physics* will remain unchanged.

It is also hoped to use the computer store of information on magnetic tape in other ways—for example, for a Selective Dissemination of Information Service (SDI) and for information retrieval. An experimental SDI service has been in operation for some time now but only in the field of electronics. It is hoped to expand this into physics and control when the whole INSPEC service is under way next year.

The INSPEC project is supported to the end of 1969 by a grant from the Office of Science and Technical Information, a branch of the Department of Education and Science, of about £150,000. At the Institution of Electrical Engineers, the hope is to have a trial run of the new information service in parallel with the present system some time toward the end of the year before the official introduction of INSPEC in January. A system as sophisticated as INSPEC requires cooperation on an international scale, and for some time now the Institution of Electrical Engineers has been working in this field with American institutes. French and German organizations are now helping with INSPEC on a reciprocal basis—it seems there will be exchanges of magnetic tapes holding relevant data with similar information services in Europe.

SEISMOLOGY

The Kakhk Earthquake

THE earthquake which devastated a large area of north-eastern Iran last Saturday is already known to have killed more than 12,000 people and the final casualty figure is likely to be at least twice as great. Minor tremors are frequent in Iran and it is only 6 years since the earthquake at Qazvin, in which 12,000 people lost their lives. The occurrence of earthquakes in Iran is related to the general instability of the area. Iran straddles the system of mountain ranges which stretches from the Alps to the Himalayas and which was thrown up by the movement of Africa and India towards the Eurasian land mass. This movement is