

and many important sources remain unedited and inaccessible. The present work is devoted to filling the gaps in a crucial chapter in the history: the re-creation of astronomical science in the early Islamic period. Characteristically, the documents derive from another transitional period, that of the twelfth-century translations from Arabic, which sometimes yielded a Latin text, but which often, as in this case, remained in the Hebrew.

The present work presents two edited texts from the same source in the tenth century; one of them is almost certainly by Abraham Ibn Ezra. The same material served as a source for a variety of later surviving texts, some in Latin, one of them edited. The particular interest of this family of texts is that their source dates from a period when Ptolemaic methods were being introduced into an astronomical tradition which had hitherto been based on Indian sources. The two traditions were incompatible, both in their theoretical structure and in their accepted data; and the partly successful efforts of Ibn al-Muthannâ to reconcile his refractory materials provide information on the materials themselves and on the level of competence of the author and of those who later used his text. English translations of both texts, and technical notes enabling the reader to reconstruct the astronomical arguments, complete the edition. J. R. RAVETZ

WHERE TO FIND OUT

Aslib Directory

Edited by Brian J. Wilson. Vol. 1: Information Sources in Science, Technology and Commerce. Pp. viii+920. (Aslib: London, 1968.) 126s.

THIS new edition of the *Aslib Directory* will be warmly welcomed because it is more than ten years since the last edition was published. Unlike the earlier edition the new one is appearing in two parts. So far only the first part has appeared: that covering sources of information in the fields of science, technology and commerce. The volume covering law, medicine, social sciences, history, geography, theology, and the arts generally is yet to be published. Whereas the 1957 edition concentrated principally on fairly well developed libraries and information services, the new edition has much more emphasis on organizations as sources of information. In addition to industrial firms and research and trade associations, it covers professional and learned societies, university departments, technical colleges, government departments and laboratories and a host of other laboratories, so that it is extremely wide ranging in its scope. There are also sections on the Ministry of Technology industrial liaison centres, and on national, regional and local schemes of library co-operation. Interpretation of subject coverage is very broad: one can discover where to obtain information on subjects as far apart as the husbandry of clovers, compulsory purchase, geodesy, locusts, the rainwear trade, pet foods, picture postcards and police rattles.

The entries are arranged geographically in alphabetical order of postal towns. Details given include the scope and stock of the library of each institution and an indication of publications produced. There is a name index which includes all the names of the organizations mentioned in the text and also those of named specialized collections. A detailed subject index concludes the book. This is particularly useful because the secondary interests of organizations have been indexed as well as the primary interests.

The directory overlaps with other directories to some extent; for example, *Industrial Research in Britain* (Harrap; sixth edition, 1968) and the *Directory of British Associations* (CBD Research, Beckenham, Kent; second edition, 1967). A library with all three would have a very good coverage of sources of information in science and technology in Britain. SARAH BUNNEY

CORRESPONDENCE

University Government

SIR,—Pflaum and Miller in their letter from New Zealand concerning university administration suggest that, since the series of articles in *Nature* on university government did not call forth a reply from your readers, no possible changes in the government of British universities are contemplated (*Nature*, 219, 1292; 1968). Because this is far from the truth I would like to reply to their letter as follows.

All aspects of university administration and finance are under continuous discussion but let me limit myself to the main topic raised by Pflaum and Miller, namely, representation on the senate or academic governing body of the university. In many cases the members of the senate of our universities are almost exclusively the professors and heads of departments. Often the non-professional staff are also represented but they will claim, with justice, that on a numerical basis they are very much under represented. There is, therefore, a demand that the senate should be more representative of the staff as a whole. A further demand comes from the students who in nearly all cases will be seeking representation on the senate for the first time.

The question of student representation will almost certainly be hotly debated in the coming session. One's impression is that the staff on the whole feel that to grant such representation would be wrong since the senate is the body charged with responsibility for all academic matters, including courses and appointments. Since there is no suggestion that students should share the responsibility for these activities it would really seem a sham to allow students to join the senate. This is not to say that students should not participate in various senate sub-committees or that they should not have representatives on, say, the council of the university or other bodies which are concerned with matters other than those specifically connected with the maintenance of academic standards.

As to the proper representation of staff on the senate, this seems to me impossible as long as all professors automatically serve on that body. To have a senate consisting of all professors and a reasonable representation of the non-professional staff would lead to one which was too large to serve any useful function. However, as long as heads of departments are responsible for their virtually autonomous departments and report directly to the university I see no possibility of removing them from the senate. An alternative which I much prefer is that departments should be grouped into schools which are made up of semi-autonomous departments. The chairman of each school is then elected in a proper manner by the staff of the departments which make up the school. The chairman of the schools would then be responsible for positive decision making in the university and would serve on the senate but the other professors would not necessarily do so. The senate could then truly represent the whole of the academic staff and could be a suitable body to look after all the academic interests of the university.

I am sure that many of the universities in this country are experimenting along these lines. Far from complacency there is much thought going into these matters, but nobody can be sure that he has the right answers, for what we are all striving for is positive direction within the democratic framework and this is always difficult to achieve.

Yours faithfully,

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