



Dissolved oxygen in the Thames at low water (continuous line) and at high water (broken line) between July and September, 1967.

alternate weeks at high and low water at twenty-nine sites covering ninety miles of its course (see Figure). But even if the present rate of improvement is maintained, it will be many years before anglers find it worth their while to unpack their creels on London Bridge.

The Greater London Council, which is charged with preventing pollution of the Thames, in fact puts more effluent into the river than any other organization, so that it can congratulate itself on the way improvements in sewage treatment—£20 million is being spent at the Beckton sewage works alone—are taking effect. But the report emphasizes the need for continued surveillance of trade effluents. In the past four years, the council has increased the analysis of trade effluent samples from 15,621 samples a year in 1964 to 38,804 in 1967. Of the 38,804 samples taken in 1967, 7.7 per cent were unsatisfactory and some of them extremely so. Thus one effluent contained 430 mg per litre of cyanide, or 43 times the maximum permitted concentration, and another contained 4,620 mg per litre of formaldehyde, 230 times the permitted concentration. Needless to say, the pleas of indicted traders were almost invariably that the pollution resulted from accidents. The council says, however, that it intends to maintain its vigilance. But overall, the percentage of unsatisfactory trade effluents fell marginally from 8.9 per cent in 1966 to 7.7 per cent in 1967.

The improvement of London's air since the 1956 Clean Air Act has been even more impressive than the cleansing of the Thames. In 1967, the average concentrations of smoke and sulphur dioxide were 55 and 161 microgrammes per cubic metre respectively, compared with 65 and 175 microgrammes per cubic metre in 1966 and 190–200 and 230–235 microgrammes per cubic metre in 1955–6. As a result of these improvements, newly cleaned buildings—St Paul's and the National Gallery for example—should stay clean for decades.

Those who know the clouds of smoke about the Bankside power station on the opposite side of the river, less than half a mile south of St Paul's, may be forgiven for asking what point there can be in cleaning St Paul's. During 1967, a special survey of this problem was carried out, and the report says that in southerly winds, the air by the cathedral is not abnormally polluted and that highest concentrations of

sulphur dioxide occur in the air at St Paul's when the prevailing winds are from the east. The Bankside smoke plume seems to have been exonerated.

WATER POLLUTION

Another Lead Balloon

POLLUTION does not appear to be the World Health Organization's strong point. Its recent report on environmental pollution was flaccid (*Nature*, 221, 404; 1969) and no doubt its successor, *Water Pollution Control in Developing Countries* (Technical Report Series No. 404), published last week, will receive a similar unenthusiastic welcome. The new report is the outcome of a meeting, in December 1967, of seven members of a WHO expert committee on water pollution control, one representative from the Economic Commission for Europe and one from Unesco. They, in turn, have based their recommendations on the reports of an inter-regional seminar organized by WHO in New Delhi in November 1967 at which fourteen countries were represented. At best, the report contains straightforward, sensible stuff; it provides an insight into the situation in particular countries and it may also provide personnel in these developing countries with a broad but not detailed plan of attack on the management of water resources and the control of pollution.

This said, however, the report is unremarkable and not very original. Thus it states that, in any country where the demand for water is increasing and water pollution is reducing usable water resources, the only rational way to protect the public health is the organization of water pollution control as part of overall planning of the water economy. The first step is to record existing resources of both surface and underground water. The next is to predict the future needs for water—first for urban, industrial and agricultural uses, and second for recreation, power generation, transport of wastes and so on. If it looks as though future needs will exceed resources, then provision should be made to make good the deficit by water and waste-water treatment, and by storage, conservation, recovery and re-use.

Equally uninspiring is the section on water quality management. The committee concludes that the way in which polluted water is treated depends on the way in which it is to be used or disposed of. On the one hand, it recommends that developing countries should favour low-cost systems which do not require complex machinery for treating sewage and industrial wastes; for example, irrigation, stabilization ponds and oxidation ditches. But in the same breath, the report states that, in selecting methods for treatment of sewage, considerations of public health should always come before those of cost.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

Echo of Todd in London

FEARS that the Todd report on medical education (*Nature*, 218, 121; 1968) might be pigeonholed will be partly allayed if the suggested revisions of the regulations for the London MB and BS degrees get off the ground. Liberal beyond expectation, the suggestions—outlined by a sub-committee on the medical