

The group at Konstanz indicates clearly enough, however, that the practicalities of the meeting are for them of secondary interest. It will be interesting to see how far their case is met by the statement of policy on which the Executive Committee is now working, and which will refer not just to the Madrid meeting but to general issues of politics in scientific meetings.

#### PLANNING

### Art Galleries under Pressure

A REAPPRAISAL of public policy towards art galleries in Britain may spring from the controversy which has been raging for the past month over the proposed extensions to the Tate Gallery in London. The Government has now announced that it is considering holding an inquiry into the whole business—the fourth there has been into the gallery's affairs. An inquiry in itself would be a good thing—it should divert public discussion from the architectural merit of the present portico to the more important problems of future organization and economics of the Tate Gallery in particular and the national collection of paintings and sculpture in general. The most serious danger is that if the inquiry is not handled carefully, the issue could become a wrangle. A decision is required urgently by the Tate's trustees—they have been kept waiting quite long enough for the extension they would now like to build and must naturally be worried that the Government may change its mind about the £1 million promised for the extensions. (The ups and downs in the building of a National Theatre are not encouraging.)

The present controversy came to a head with the publication of plans for the extensions at the beginning of February. What the architects suggest is that the gallery should be extended to twice its present size by means of additions at the back and that the late Victorian portico should be replaced. The cost would be about £2 million and the result would provide space for showing about 700 more works of art as well as improved facilities for the staff, research and conservation, and a public restaurant overlooking the River Thames. The trustees admit that the scheme is a compromise.

They have ruled out alternative schemes such as a multistorey extension at the back of the present site and a new building on one of the adjacent sites occupied by the British Army. They admit that the extensions would provide room only for 15 years.

The plans had the blessing of the Royal Fine Art Commission and the Westminster City Council. Trouble came when the Historic Buildings Board of the Greater London Council rejected the scheme at its meeting last October, chiefly on the grounds that the loss of the portico would ruin not only the gallery, built in the 1890s to the design of Sydney Smith, but also the appearance of the riverside frontage along Millbank. It was argued that although the gallery is architecturally not very exciting, it is a welcome contrast to the tightly packed drab commercial buildings around it and on the other side of the river. The GLC has in fact no powers of veto, and decision rests with the Minister of Public Buildings. The stand to save the portico has, however, been supported by impassioned pleas from the public, and the Historic Buildings Council has also added its weight to the campaign. Lately, the controversy has developed with more reasoned discussion about the

whole future of the gallery. The most supported lobby is for keeping the Tate's present building intact (possibly with an extension at the back) and for building a new national gallery of modern art somewhere else.



The trustees have answers to these suggestions on administrative and economic grounds. Even if one of the army sites were free, they say that the cost of a new gallery (reckoned to be £12 million) would be prohibitively high. But it is unlikely that a new gallery would cost as much as this. The real question to be answered is what strategy should be worked out for the continuing development and support of the national art collections.

#### EDUCATION

### Bright Future for Awards

MISGIVINGS about the future of the Council for National Academic Awards are disappearing fast. During the four years since the council was established as an autonomous body, the number of students on CNA A degree courses has gone up and up. As indicated in the council's report for 1967–68, 6,343 new students enrolled in September 1968—an increase of 37 per cent over the figure for the previous year. This brings the total number of students attending CNA A first and higher degree courses to 15,656 compared with 10,687 in 1966–67. More than 1,011 degrees were awarded during the year, of which 104 went to students at the four polytechnics—Borough, Northern, Regent and Woolwich. No information is available on the number of failures, but this will no doubt be remedied later by the Department of Education and Science.

The council now offers just over 200 courses in a wide range of subjects, operating in fifty colleges in England, Wales and Scotland. Sixty-eight of the courses lead to honours and ordinary degrees, ninety-one to honours degrees only, thirty to ordinary degrees and twelve to MSc. Fifty-six new courses proposed by colleges in 1967-68 were approved and, as usual, many of these are in fields which are not traditionally covered by the universities. For example, four degree courses in librarianship and information science have been introduced, and so have a part-time course in the sociology of education designed for teachers and other workers in the educational service; a course in textile marketing; and a sandwich course in public administration, in which the cooperation of local government is being sought. Keeping pace with the development of the polytechnics, the council has also approved a degree course in environmental engineering, which will involve collaboration between scientists, engineers, architects, public health officers and industrial managers. Similarly, a course has been approved in engineering geology and geotechnics which will bridge the areas of interest of civil engineers and geologists. Traditional subjects are also being given a face-lift: thus students of French are being given an opportunity to acquire a wide understanding of the country through a study of the language, politics, economics, geography and culture of France. Following on its move away from traditional mathematics, the council has also approved an honours degree in statistics and computing, the course showing "a significant orientation of mathematical studies toward areas of increasing industrial importance". New MSc courses deal with such subjects as diesel engine design, molecular science of materials and operational research. The council has also approved the first four-year course leading to an honours degree in education.

Although the council is usually associated with first degree courses, it is interesting that 109 students were enrolled for higher degrees in 1967-68—more than double the number in 1966-67. In the years ahead, this statistic will be closely watched by those anxious to see whether the twenty-six new polytechnics will really become free-living organizations.

#### INFORMATION

### Finding Out about Metals

In spite of duplication of effort in the production of abstracting and indexing journals in metallurgy and related fields, many would-be users cannot easily get at the information contained in them. This is one of the implied conclusions of a detailed survey prepared for the Office for Scientific and Technical Information by the Aslib Research Department (*Metals Information in Britain*, Aslib; January 1969). The need for more centralization of information services was expressed at a meeting convened by OSTI in 1967, but at the time there was no basis for an assessment of the scope of a centralized service.

The authors of the survey, which this deficiency has inspired, Brian Vickery, Margaret Slater, Alexandra Presanis and Pamela Fisher, defined the metals field widely so as to include both producers and users of metals—not only iron and steel manufacture, for example, but metal used in the building industry as

well. To make the survey manageable, it was limited to individual members of seven British metallurgical institutes. The members (home and overseas) number some 38,000, but the total population surveyed was less because of overlapping membership. The response to the questionnaires sent out was poor and the authors of the survey had to be satisfied with 1,570 British respondents.

Nothing in the results of the survey will overturn common preconceptions. The most frequently sought information was in the categories described as metal constitution, properties, behaviour or specification and in metal production, method and process. Personal contacts were found to be of more than average importance in the categories described as metal use or application, commercial availability, metal production economics and equipment—possibly an indication of the lack of accessible documentary sources in these categories. Among the users' comments which received considerable support were that it would be good to have one central information source in Britain, that there is a lack of a good metals handbook, that the abstracting journals need combining or unifying, that the time lag in abstracting is too great and that there is a need for more information on standards. Abstracting journals most frequently mentioned by the British respondents were the *Journal of Iron and Steel Institute Abstracts*, *Metals Abstracts* (or its predecessors), and the *Nickel Bulletin*.

#### SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS

### Cataloguing the Hoards

AN illustrated guide to the British collections of scientific instruments is being prepared by Dr Mary Holbrook with a grant from the Leverhulme Trustees to the British National Committee for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine. Although books have been written on the makers of British scientific instruments, there is at present no handbook concerned with the instruments themselves. Subjects such as astronomy, navigation, time measurement, optics, alchemy, photography and so on will be considered, provided the instruments were made before 1800. It would be impossible because of size to include the collections of the large national science museums; for example, the collection of instruments made for the children of George III, which is now at the Science Museum in London, needs a catalogue to itself. Dr Holbrook intends to concentrate on the museums at universities, observatories, schools and in Government departments. Museums which belong to private companies and antiquarian societies and private collections will be included. The scope of the collections will be described and cross-indexing will permit the location of instruments by type and maker. The details of the individual pieces will not be given unless they are of special interest; the aim is to provide only the main characteristics of specific instruments, their makers and their present whereabouts.

Part of the challenge in compiling a handbook of this kind is the difficulty of tracking down the private collections. Obviously much persuasive and persistent letter writing will be required if the contents of all the collections are to be revealed. How many private collections exist and where exactly they are to be