

and produced an outline scheme which was approved as a basis for negotiation in December. A working party consisting of five representatives from each of the three societies was then set up with Sir James Taylor as chairman, and will report to the councils of the three bodies as soon as they have a positive proposal. When this has been approved it will be for the members to decide whether they wish to support the scheme. It seems likely that some sort of announcement will be made at the annual conference of the Chemical Society and the RIC this April.

As far as other more specialized chemical societies are concerned, the idea seems to be that they should perhaps be included after the details of the collaboration between the Chemical Society, the RIC and the SCI, which have by far the biggest memberships, have been hammered out.

ENGINEERS

Jobs for the Girls

In spite of the enlightened attitudes of many countries, the opinion still prevails in Britain that engineering is not a suitable career for women. In France, one engineer in twenty-eight is a woman, and in Syria one in fourteen, while in Russia the figure is one in three. But in Britain, only one engineer in five hundred is a woman, which is nevertheless a great improvement on the situation a few years ago when the number was only one in a thousand.

Last week, the Women's Engineering Society, founded after the First World War when women first made their mark in this male preserve, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. At the same time "Women in Engineering Year" was launched in a concerted effort to break down the prejudice of teachers, parents, pupils and employers against women taking their place in a profession which needs as many eager recruits as it can get. Conferences, exhibitions, lectures and visits have been organized throughout Britain to demonstrate that engineering does not consist entirely of heavy and dirty work requiring massive physical stamina, and that women have a valuable part to play.

WOMEN ENGINEERS AS A PROPORTION OF ALL ENGINEERS
IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES (PER CENT)

| | | | |
|--------|-----|---------|-----|
| USSR | 31 | Germany | 2 |
| Norway | 10 | USA | 2 |
| Turkey | 10 | Italy | 1 |
| Syria | 7 | UK | 0.1 |
| France | 3.6 | | |

Inaugurating the proceedings at a lunch last week, Mrs Shirley Williams, Minister of State for Education and Science, remarked that there is much very delicate work to be done in, for example, electronics, aeronautics and design engineering, and there is no reason why a girl in engineering should be less feminine than a girl in home economics. The women engineers present, some of them with very senior positions, certainly testified to this.

Much of the campaign is aimed at encouraging girls to study applied science and their teachers not to throw up their hands in horror at the thought. At the same time, more boys need to be encouraged into the

applied sciences, and several schemes are already in progress to show engineering as an attractive prospect to all school children. The Department of Education and Science has produced the magazine *Project*, with lavishly illustrated articles on all aspects of engineering, for fifth and sixth formers. Since 1966, 22,000 copies have been distributed to schools each term, apparently interesting teachers as much as pupils.

A touring exhibition—Technology Today—showing what the everyday work of an engineer involves, has now been on the road for three years and visited hundreds of schools. The department is also organizing Engineers Days and Engineering Weeks which have already been visited by thousands of boys and girls. More than eight hundred schools are now involved in the Schools Council scheme Project Technology, designed to encourage boys and girls to devise their own engineering projects. Although none of the schools involved is exclusive to girls, the number of mixed schools involved has considerably increased since the scheme began, so that girls are being exposed to Project Technology and undertaking projects themselves.

Girls are obviously discouraged to some extent by the attitudes of employers, who often see women in the familiar role of potential mothers on whom all training is wasted. Those firms which do give girls the opportunity to prove themselves, however, find that they can make very good engineers. The electronics industry is now employing increasing numbers of women, especially working with computers, and in civil and chemical engineering efforts are being made to recruit more women.

FIELD STUDIES

Consolidation Ahead

THE Field Studies Council seems to have decided on a period of consolidation after the opening last year of two new field centres—the Drapers' Field Centre at Betws-y-Coed in Caernarvonshire, and the Leonard Wills Field Centre at Nettlecombe Court near Taunton in Somerset. According to the council's annual report for 1968, it now plans to extend and improve its present residential centres, and it is also helping in the development of some closely related activities. It has, for example, agreed to establish a Countryside Unit in Pembrokeshire and to act as the Countryside Commission's agent for providing educational and information services through guides, field excursions, lectures and leading organized parties.

Although the Field Studies Council is known principally for its educational work, it is becoming increasingly interested in encouraging research. A step forward in this direction is now being made at Dale Fort Field Centre in Pembrokeshire, where a new biology laboratory is being built. Thanks to a grant of £500 from the John Spedan Lewis Foundation, the laboratory will be equipped with saltwater aquaria and a constant supply of seawater, which the scientific director, Dr J. D. Carthy, says "will greatly increase the facilities for visiting research workers". At Slapton Ley Field Centre in Devon, it is hoped to develop a research programme on productivity studies. The Oil Pollution Unit at Orierton Field Centre in Pembrokeshire is monitoring polluted sites in Milford Haven, and data have been collected in Bantry Bay