

Parliament in Britain

Student Costs

MR GERALD FOWLER, Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, said that the cost per student in British universities was £1,408 in 1968–69, compared with £1,317 in 1964–65. The equivalent figures for students in colleges of education are £885 and £821 respectively. Mr Fowler pointed out that much of the capital expenditure included in these calculations is intended to provide for future expansion, not for present numbers. (Written answers, February 5.)

Ice Pollution

THE British Antarctic Survey, a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council, will undertake a study of the Antarctic ice sheet later this year. Announcing this, Mr Fowler said that ice will be sampled at various depths, to provide a history of atmospheric precipitation over the last thousand years. The study should also indicate the extent of global pollution by long-lived substances. Results are not expected until 1971. (Written answers, February 3.)

Carbon Fibres and Lasers

MR JOHN MORRIS, Minister of Defence for Equipment, said that the possible use of carbon fibres in fighting vehicles is being investigated by government research establishments and by industry. It seems, however, that except for specialized applications, carbon fibre material offers no advantage over conventional materials, and their use is therefore not justified. Mr Frank Hooley, who had asked what studies the government is making on carbon fibres for defence purposes, also asked the Secretary of State for Defence to publish a White Paper on the military applications of laser technology. Mr Morris said, however, that, although defence research takes full account of laser technology, it would be inappropriate to publish the details. (Written answer, February 4.)

Computers

MORE than 5,200 computers are in use in the UK, and Britain ranks roughly on a par with the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan in computer usage. This estimate was given by Lord Delacourt-Smith, Minister of State, Ministry of Technology, and he added that manufacture of computers in the UK has increased by 24 per cent since 1966, while computer exports have increased by 20 per cent. In the year ended September 30, 1969, the total value of computers made in Britain was £143 million, and total exports were more than £55 million. (Oral answers, Lords, February 3.)

University Places

MR GERALD FOWLER said that he could not agree with the suggestion put by Mr Christopher Ward that thirty new universities must be built in addition to the expansion of existing institutions, in order to accommodate students in 1980. He said that there is considerable room for expansion in many existing institutions of higher education, and no decisions have yet been taken about providing new institutions. Mr Fowler strongly denied any intention to push up entry standards for higher education as the demand for places increases. (Oral answers, February 5.)

Miscellaneous Intelligence

SOME 2,200 works on cancer are published yearly in 30 languages, according to the *Annual of Czechoslovak Medical Literature*, which makes no apology for contributing to the proliferative growth. The annual was compiled "in the memorable year 1968 which marked"—how could anyone forget it?—"the fiftieth anniversary of the independent state of Czechs and Slovaks. This year intensified our belief in the value of the individuality of small nations among other nations, well grounded in every branch of culture and science. We must, and wish to, compensate for our inadequate material forces by our spiritual strength".

GLOMAR CHALLENGER, the research vessel sponsored by the JOIDES consortium of American oceanographic institutions, has steamed nearly 50,000 miles since the project began in August 1968 and has recovered four miles of oceanic sediment from 149 holes drilled at 84 sites in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Atlantic and Pacific. Core samples are available for study by any qualified scientists in the world.

THE consumption of spaghetti immediately after hard physical exercise increases muscular efficiency three-fold. This remarkable finding is reported in the organ of the health service of the Italian army, *Giornale di Medicina Militare*, 3, 273; 1969.

THE hazards of independent discovery are not confined to the scientific world. This month the Amsterdam publishing company of Elsevier has launched a new journal called the *International Journal of Bio-Medical Computing*, while from across the street the North-Holland Publishing Company has simultaneously issued the first number of a journal entitled *Computer Programs in Biomedicine*. The most pressing task of the new journals will doubtless be to compute each other's circulation.

THE world that faced with equanimity the late Dr Philip Blaiberg's book *Looking at My Heart* is to be burst upon in April by Dr Christian Barnard's side of the story, which will tell of his "deeply religious conviction that it is his destiny to save human life". To help convey the message Dr Barnard has enlisted as co-author Mr Curtis Bill Pepper, whose previous works include *The Pope's Back Yard* and *An Artist and the Pope*.

THE Wattle Research Institute of the University of Natal, South Africa, has clearly established that the Brown Mirid (formerly known as the Brown Jassid) wreaks more havoc in wattle than does the Large Green Wattle Cicadellid (formerly known as the Large Green Wattle Jassid). Wattle is also prone to attacks from the ballooning Wattle Bagworm, the Wattle Emperor Moth, the Large Wattle Chafer, the Wattle Looper and the Small Wattle Lappet Moth. What'll whittle the wattle away next?

It is little wonder that the Society of Cosmetic Chemists of Great Britain is buoyed up with joyous expectation because at its last meeting "the speaker finished by giving hope for the future indicating that the study of coalescence rates for the different droplets by measuring change in particle size distributed in time offered promising scope for further research".