attention seems to have been given to methods for removing sulphur dioxide from stack gases, and the committee has examined 25 of these being developed in the United States as well as a number of methods being tried out elsewhere in the world. It says that only one of the processes has so far been installed in a large commercial installation, and it concludes that there is an urgent need for commercial demonstration plants, presumably supported with federal money, to test the feasibility of the more promising devices, probably at a cost of several million dollars. Among the committee's favourites are the limestone processes for removing sulphur dioxide—processes along these lines have been tried out in Britain since the 1930s, but it seems to be agreed that their efficiency and effectiveness leave much to be desired.

STUDENTS

Origins of Abuse

from a Special Correspondent

Palo Alto, California

PRESIDENT NIXON's disastrous description of American students as "bums", which has united both university staff and students against him, seems to have sprung from a single incident in his home state, California, and on a single individual's special pleading. The evidence for this is now clear. The fire that prompted the remarks did not even take place at a university and there is no incontrovertible evidence that it was caused by students.

During the momentous last week of April (when the President took the Cambodian decision), he received a letter from an American professor on a year's leave of absence for private research at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. The centre is an independent institution providing seclusion for internationally selected scholars in the social sciences. It is paid for by the Ford Foundation and located on a woody hilltop on Stanford University property. It has no other links with Stanford or any other university. The letter to President Nixon presented a rather exaggerated account of an arson attempt on the centre when it was deserted the previous weekend (Friday, April 24). It also described how as a result the fruit of a distinguished Indian anthropologist's 22 years research on a multi-caste village in southern India had gone up in smoke. The writer also speculated on the identity of the fire raiser or fire raisers, though the culprits were unknown and remain so.

Another American fellow at the centre, Professor J. Bunzel, who had been active against campus radicals at nearby San Francisco State University, denounced the incident on television as a personal attack by radical students against himself. He had not in fact suffered in the fire, which was rapidly controlled, causing damage to the studies of only three out of fifty fellows.

The principal victim, Professor M. N. Srinivas of the University of Delhi, has been most careful not to lay blame in any quarter, and certainly not on protesting students. The evidence is simply non-existent. There is evidence that the fires were caused deliberately (two took hold), but it seems unlikely that the arsonist will ever be traced.

In his letter of condolence to Professor Srinivas in the last week of April, President Nixon firmly pinned

the blame on dissident student elements. "To say they are simply evil does not make them go away." As Professor Srinivas freely admits, this has made it difficult for him to reply to the President without discourtesy. He achieved it on April 29.

A week after the exchanges with the President, and after his remarks on May 1 about "bums burning up books", and when it emerged that the incident at Palo Alto centre had achieved a notoriety out of all proportion to its significance, a letter signed by 33 of this year's 45 resident fellows was sent to the local newspaper, the *Palo Alto Times*, attempting to put the record straight.

The damage to Professor Srinivas's original material has proved less catastrophic than first supposed. About two-thirds of the data burned can be reconstituted by emergency measures already in hand and the rest is being replaced from India, and a research assistant is being specially flown in to help the professor. "I feared he would have to spend a further decade re-working his material," the centre's acting director, Dr Preston Cutler, said last week. This can be avoided. Dr Cutler's ultimate concern has been damage to the centre's principles of operation. "Our self image has always been wide open, hospitable and safe." Now the centre has armed guards on duty 24 hours a day on its open gates.

POPULAR ENTOMOLOGY

Year of the Locusts

WASHINGTON is now facing with some surprise an infestation of the periodic cicadas—popularly known as the seventeen-year locusts. The last severe onslaught of these insects was in 1953, and this one is being borne with some fortitude because the next will not be until 1987. The locusts have an extended life cycle in which the females each lay some 400–600 eggs in the branches of trees during June, and shortly after the birth the worms burrow underground to remain there for the next sixteen years and ten months. The males emerge from the ground first, climb up into the trees, and begin to sing after some four to five days (a high pitched humming which now characterizes the countryside around Washington) to attract the later emerging females, which then lay their eggs to restart the cycle.

Unlike the more commonly known and feared virulent locust, the cicadas—about an inch and a half long with large translucent wings—are harmless to man and only indirectly harmful to vegetation. They do not eat the leaves of plants in their short lifetime above the Earth, and their only deleterious effect upon the local ecology is the damage caused to the branches of trees by the holes punched by the females during egg laying. Although this can be a serious commercial problem for orchards, it is not more widely damaging.

Although Washington can expect relief from locust infestation for more than sixteen years, some areas of the American continent will suffer each year, for there are seventeen "broods" of periodic locusts, one for each year. Each brood seems to be part of the same species. But because any particular brood appears above ground only in its characteristic seventeenth year, it is reproductively and ecologically isolated from the others. The cycle seems to be maintained with high regularity and the occasional stragglers which emerge a year too