

present. Professor W. V. Wallace, of the New University of Ulster and convener of the working party which drew up the report, also said that polytechnics and colleges of education must be given sufficient money to improve their staff/student ratio, and to provide better library and laboratory facilities. Without this, they will always be regarded as second class institutions.

Although the association has not offered the government a blueprint for higher education in the 1970s, it has at least said what it is not prepared to tolerate, and has handed out a few suggestions for saving costs. The AUT believes, for example, that there is some scope for more subject rationalization—"in certain subjects it makes sense to concentrate expensive staff, equipment and books in a few universities from the point of view both of teaching and research". But the AUT will predictably guard with some jealousy the staff/student ratio. Professor Wallace pointed out that universities cannot be expected to maintain their academic standards if the ratio is allowed to deteriorate, and he drew attention to the fact that courses in British universities are much shorter than their counterparts in many other countries.

## BRUCELLOSIS

### Paying for Clean Cows

MANY more dairy and beef herds in Britain should soon be certified free from brucellosis, an infectious disease which causes spontaneous abortions in cows and undulant fever in man. This, at least, is the hope of Mr James Prior, the Minister of Agriculture, who earlier this week announced a scheme which provides incentives for farmers to banish brucellosis from their herds.

The incentives take the form of additional payments to farmers whose herds are registered as free from brucellosis. They will receive an extra 1½d a gallon for their milk and a supplement of 37s 6d per animal will be added to their hill cow and beef subsidy. The payments are guaranteed for at least five years, by which time Mr Prior hopes that at least half the country's cattle will be "clean". The farmer may find that getting his herd registered is an expensive way of gaining these benefits—no compensation is offered for the infected animals which must be killed, and often new fences and equipment must be bought to keep the herd safe—but once his herd is declared uninfected insurance schemes are available which will make good any loss through reinfection.

Of Britain's 200,000 herds, 17,000 are already certified or qualifying as brucellosis free—a result of a voluntary brucellosis scheme set up in 1967. Since these are mainly large herds they amount to about one sixth of the animals in the national herd. However, it is estimated that another third are either free from or only lightly infected with brucellosis, and it is these that the new scheme hopes to attract. In the autumn of next year a compulsory eradication scheme, carried out on an area by area basis, is to start operating, and Mr Prior hopes that if owners of relatively free herds have come forward in large numbers a reservoir of clean cattle big enough to provide any replacements needed will have been built up.

## Parliament in Britain

### Queen's Speech

THE debate on the Queen's speech contained little indication that the new Parliament will be any more willing to debate science and technology than was the last. Although there was no mention of scientific affairs in the speech itself, the wide ranging debate that always takes place at the start of a new Parliamentary session gives ample opportunity for members to air their views on such subjects, but only Mr Airey Neave found himself disposed to take the plunge. He put in an impassioned plea for the Select Committee on Science and Technology to be allowed to carry on with its business, and he asked the government not to rush into any decisions about research establishments or to base its industrial research policies on the Green Paper published by the Labour Government. He also asked for the Atomic Energy Authority to be retained as a separate research organization.

On education, Mr Fred Willey, past chairman of the Select Committee on Education and Science, provided welcome relief from the bitter and protracted wrangles over Mrs Thatcher's decision to withdraw the circular requiring local authorities to submit plans for comprehensive secondary education. Mr Willey accused the Labour Government, of which he was a member, of making a "disastrous mistake" in creating a binary system of higher education. He hoped that Mr Van Straubenzee, the new Under Secretary of State in the Department of Education and Science, who was also a member of the select committee, will be able to exert some influence in getting some of the committee's recommendations accepted.

### Post-Apollo Programme

MR TAM DALYELL raised the question, in an adjournment debate, of Britain's cooperation with the United States on a space station and space shuttle service. He wanted some indication from the government of its attitude to the offer from NASA of a European share in the post-Apollo programme, and whether the estimate of between 200 and 300 million dollars a year, to be provided on a European collective basis, is unacceptable. Mr David Price, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Technology, said that the European governments concerned will be discussing NASA's invitation at the European Space Conference next week. Although no firm decisions are expected to be taken at the conference, Mr Price said that the British Government believes that there should be a multilateral European response to the policy issues involved, and the conference is expected to lay down formal machinery for handling discussions and eventually negotiations with the US authorities. (Debate, July 10.)

### Rolls-Royce

THE government has received revised proposals from Rolls-Royce for a more powerful version of the RB211 engine, and it is considering a request for financial aid to launch the engine. This announcement was made by Mr Geoffrey Rippon, Minister of Technology, in reply to questions from Mr Tam Dalyell and Mr Robert Sheldon, and the minister said that he would make a full statement later. He declined to say whether such aid would be considered unnecessary interference by government in industry. (Oral answers, July 6.)