

presentation, but the chief benefit to be derived from the conference is undoubtedly the chance to talk to other people who are considering stepping out of the laboratory and into the business world, and to learn from those who have already made the move.

The chief reason why fewer British academic scientists start up their own businesses than their colleagues in the US is that the natural environment is not so geared to risk-taking. Academics are relatively unaware of the market potential for their research products, and few scientists seriously consider starting up their own businesses. This is the attitude of mind that the organizers of the conference are hoping to change, and they can point to the success of firms such as Oxford Instruments, which won a Queen's Award to Industry, as evidence of the rewards which may accrue to the entrepreneur.

The conference is being financed by twelve finance companies and merchant banks, who have each agreed to pay £100, and the Department of Trade and Industry has promised up to £500.

INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

Good Year

Procter & Gamble Ltd, the British member of the Procter and Gamble group, announced a net profit of £2.9 million for 1969-70 compared with £1.3 million for the previous year. Exports for 1969-70 amounted to £7.2 million. Turnover has increased from £61.6 million to £66.0 million, but the dramatic increase in profits has been reached in spite of the high cost of launching enzyme washing powders. The international group, comprising twenty-two companies of which eleven are in the United States, showed a net profit for 1969-70 of £88.3 million—an increase of 13 per cent over the previous year.

The British company has 300 graduate scientists in its total labour force of 4,460, a large proportion of whom are chemists or chemical engineers. Most of the research and development are undertaken centrally in the company's laboratories outside Newcastle upon Tyne, and pure research on such topics as molecular adsorption at interfaces and the properties of colloidal solutions provides the basic knowledge needed for the longer term furtherance of the company's interests. Scientists of all disciplines find their way into such groups as packaging research and development and product research. In the latter department, for example, technical brand managers have technical responsibilities for the company's existing and future brands and are responsible for optimizing performance and maximizing appeal. It seems that science graduates are rarely appointed to completely non-scientific functions although they may move in that direction as their careers develop.

The company says that its career development policy depends on strictly enforced promotion from within. In this way, it is hoped that graduates recruited at the lowest level can be efficiently trained in the management methods which were found by experience to be the best. The disadvantage of this policy, however, is that it can lead to excessive inbreeding because the expertise and differing attitudes of other companies are rarely allowed to filter in. More than 50 per cent of the deeply structured management of Procter and Gamble are graduates.

Parliament in Britain

Haslegrave Report

THE government has approved in principle the chief administrative recommendations contained in the Haslegrave report on technician courses and examinations. Mrs Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education and Science, said that she will soon begin discussions and negotiations with a view to implementing these recommendations. Asked by Mr G. Rhodes whether she accepts the recommendations on the functions and composition of the proposed Business Education Council and the Technician Education Council, Mrs Thatcher said that she accepts the proposal to establish the two councils, and that negotiations will begin fairly quickly with those most directly concerned with their administrative organization. (Oral answers, November 19.)

Strike-trainer Aircraft

THE British Aircraft Corporation and Hawker Siddeley Aviation have both submitted proposals for a strike-trainer aircraft for the Royal Air Force. Mr Frederick Corfield, Minister of Aviation Supply, who gave this information in reply to a question from Mr Michael McNair-Wilson, also said that the government is getting information on the Alpha jet which is being developed jointly by France and West Germany. Mr Corfield said, however, that he is very hopeful that one of the British proposals will be acceptable in every respect. (Oral answers, November 18.)

Admission Charges for Museums

MR WILLIAM VAN STRAUBENZEE, Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, denied reports that the government intends to introduce an admission charge of 4s for all museums and galleries. The institutions themselves, he said, are being asked to give their views about the amount of the fees to be charged. Asked by Mr Richard Leonard to give a categorical assurance that in no circumstances will charges be made for admission to the reading room of the British Museum, Mr van Straubenzee said that this is the kind of point on which the institutions have been asked to state their views.

Mr George Strauss also asked whether the anticipated revenues of £1 million from the imposition of admission charges to museums and galleries will be used to improve the facilities of the institutions and for purchasing new exhibits. But Mr van Straubenzee refused to be drawn. He said that the revenue will increase the resources from which all public services are defrayed. (Oral answers, November 19.)

Thames Flooding

LORD BOWDEN, principal of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, said in a debate on the London flood defences that if a storm of the same magnitude as that which caused flooding in East Anglia in 1953 occurred at high tide during spring tides, an area of London about 10 miles long and 2 miles wide would be flooded to a depth of 10 feet. The number of casualties, he said, would be at least comparable with the number of people who have been drowned in the floods in Pakistan. Lord Bowden suggested that the government should build the Thames barrage as soon as possible, and that the level of the embankment should be raised without delay. (Debate, Lords, November 19.)