

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

Change of Role

THE industrial training boards have been under attack from several sides ever since they were set up in 1964. Small firms complain that they do not get value for the money they have to pay out on levies, many complain about the complex system of grants and levies and, perhaps most important, the financial instability of many of the boards has been demonstrated by the recent floundering of the Construction Industry Training Board. But at least one, the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB), has shown willingness to change, and other training boards are likely to follow suit. The EITB has drawn up a set of proposals for simplifying the present system of levies and grants, and for changing its own status to that of an advisory body.

The chief reason for these proposals is that the EITB believes that the present system of blanket levies and grants will have achieved its main objectives by 1973, and that the training boards should become advisers rather than heavy-handed persuaders. There can be little doubt that the system set up by the Industrial Training Act in 1964, in which training boards essentially extract money from all the firms under their particular

ambit and then reimburse them for expenditure on industrial training, has improved the level of training over the past few years. But there is still a real need for advice to firms on how to meet and identify their individual training needs.

The EITB therefore proposes to exempt from levies all those companies on its register whose payrolls are less than £25,000, and to develop its advisory role at the expense of the general grant scheme. But the board still recognizes the need for maintaining an adequate supply of transferable skills, increasing the supply of skills that may temporarily be in short supply—for example, systems analysts—and for encouraging firms to institute their own training schemes, particularly where this involves high initial outlay. How the EITB intends to achieve these objectives is less than clear from the proposals put forward so far. The board does suggest, however, that grants should be placed into two different categories: specific grants for those skills that are of concern to the engineering industry as a whole, and general grants for all other training. Small firms which pay no levies would be eligible for specific grants, but not for general grants. These proposals have now been circulated to the engineering industry, and a more detailed scheme is likely to be formulated by spring 1972.

Parliament in Britain**Euratom**

If Great Britain becomes a member of the European Economic Community, the British government should pay compensation for the existing scientific information made available by entry into Euratom. This request was made to the British delegation to the negotiations in Brussels last January, but Mr Nicholas Ridley, Under Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry, said that the request was turned down. The British delegation replied that although Britain intends to play a full part in Euratom, it believes that the request for compensation is not justified. (Written answers, February 1.)

Satellites

MR DAVID PRICE, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Aviation Supply, said that on January 28, 1971, 2,139 objects were in orbit around the Earth. Of these, 419 were satellites. On the same date, there were seven probes in orbit around the Moon. Of the 429 satellites, 304 belonged to the United States and 105 to the Soviet Union, and of the seven lunar probes, three were launched by the United States and four by the Soviet Union. (Written answers, February 1.)

Influenza Vaccination

ROUTINE use of influenza vaccine is unlikely to prevent the spread of influenza, according to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization. Mr Michael Alison, Under Secretary, Department of Health and Social Security, said that the committee advised the Secretary of State for Social Services that the vaccines currently available give short-lived protection to about 40–60 per cent of the individuals vaccinated. Administration of vaccine to the whole community would therefore be an expensive operation of dubious value. Moreover, doctors have been advised that the committee believes that vaccination may be indicated for the protection of persons suffering from certain chronic diseases in whom influenza might aggravate their disability. (Written answers, February 2.)

Fowl Pest

MR JAMES PRIOR, Minister of Agriculture, said that the provision of compensation or other government aid to farmers who have lost their stocks because of fowl pest would reduce the incentive to maintain a high level of vaccination among flocks. He therefore rejected a suggestion put forward by Mr Edward Bishop that the government should revise its policy of not providing bridging aid. (Written answers, February 5.)

Miscellaneous Intelligence

It now seems probable that there will be a revival of scientific relations between the Royal Society of London and the Chinese Academy of Peking. Some eager Fellows of the Royal Society are already wondering how to pack their bags. Old China hands are warning them that it is best to prepare for unexpected circumstances, boredom chief among them. One distinguished visitor to China has sad tales to tell of waiting in the same hotel for days on end for the interpreter who failed to show up.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY has an enviable reputation among American universities for its bravery in setting up so-called campuses abroad, and an enviable reputation among connoisseurs of English country houses in having acquired the lease of Cliveden, the old Astor home, from the National Trust as the British outpost of Stanford. The students seem to be careful lodgers. The swimming pool is out of bounds.

ALTHOUGH the troubles at Rolls-Royce may have emerged only recently, there have been signs of impending trouble for a long time. In retrospect, many journalists will be struck with the suddenness with which the company ostentatiously said nothing—and would say nothing—about

the use of carbon fibres in aero engines almost exactly three years ago. Visitors to the World Fair in Osaka (Expo 70) will no doubt have been surprised to see how faithfully this modesty was reflected in that exhibition.

TAMARAWS (*Anoa mindorensis*) can breathe again. The latest report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN Publication No. 18) says that the species is probably out of danger, thanks to the collaboration of several agencies in the Philippines including the Department of National Defence, the Special Forces team of the Philippine Constabulary, which lent some people and a jeep, and the Superintendent of the Sablayan Penal Colony, who gave the conservationists somewhere to stay. Spin-off so far includes the formation of the Philippine Wildlife Conservation Foundation, a radio programme called "It's a Beautiful World" put out on Wednesdays, and the sighting of twenty-four tamaraws in various groups. Without doubt the most remarkable achievement is a veritable change of habit—"tamaraws are no longer so shy . . . the animals seem to realize that they can now safely stay in the open, thanks to the campaign . . .".