

## OLD WORLD

# Departments Respond to Rothschild

LAST week it was the turn of government departments to give an account to the Select Committee on Science and Technology of the way in which they organize their own research. The select committee was clearly anxious to establish to what extent the departments are implementing the customer-contractor principle, and how accountable they are for the research they do—especially in view of Lord Rothschild's proposal to reallocate about £28 million of research council funds to the appropriate departments.

Inevitably it was this reallocation, and the basis on which it was advocated by Lord Rothschild in his contentious Table 4, which first came under scrutiny. But Sir William Pile, permanent secretary at the Department of Education and Science would only say that the £28 million represented Lord Rothschild's personal view of the value of the applied research which the research councils carry out.

Sir William said that the amount of research done by the DES as opposed to that carried out by the research councils—was quite small (see Table 1) and chiefly educational in character, so it would not be necessary for the department to appoint a controller of research and development to act as the "contractor". Two of the other departments expressed the view that a single controller would not be appropriate. Sir Philip Rogers, permanent secretary at the Department of Health and Social Security, envisaged two controllers for his department, because he thought that it would not necessarily be advisable for the chief executive of the Medical Research Council (whom Lord Rothschild would have as sole controller for the DHSS) to be the contractor for research directed, for example, to the improvement of the social services. And Sir Basil Engholm, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, said he thought that more than one controller would be essential in MAFF in view of its quite distinct interests in research on agriculture and fisheries, for example. In its memorandum to the committee, the Department of the Environment says that it has set up a body called the Research Contractors' Board which comprises the directors of the Department of Environment research establishments and the Director of Research Requirements, who in turn is part of its embryo chief scientist organization.

**Table 1** Expenditure on Research and Development by some Government Departments

	£ million
Department of Education and Science	0.47*
Department of Health and Social Security	9
Department of Trade and Industry	201
Department of the Environment	16
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	6

\*Excluding research council expenditure.

Sir Robert Marshall, Secretary (Industry) at the Department of Trade and Industry, said that the DTI was in the process of setting up seven requirements boards, each led by the appropriate DTI policy division, which would form part of the chief scientist organization and would commission work on the department's account in its own research establishments, the Atomic Energy Authority, universities and industry. The Department of Health and Social Security says that it intends to "appoint a chief scientist, on a temporary basis of from three to five years, together with a small nucleus of other scientists, part-time and also temporary . . .", and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has in mind "a chief scientist and two deputies who would have the responsibility, in conjunction with the policy and economic divisions concerned, of framing and keeping under

review the agriculture and food research programmes . . . whether carried out by the ministry's own research establishments or by the Agricultural Research Council".

Most of the witnesses said that the research done in their departments is accountable to the relevant minister, and Sir David Serpell, permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment pointed out that there is also accountability to parliament through the departmental votes. Sir Basil Engholm said that it was not his ministry's practice to lay a report on research and development before parliament because it was too intimately integrated with the work of the ministry as a whole.

Members of the select committee—in particular Mr David Ginsberg—felt that the research councils are, in practice, more accountable for their research work than government departments.

## EDUCATION

### Women's Liberation in Education?

STATISTICS released yesterday by the Department of Education and Science show that there were 13,000 more students enrolled for full-time further education courses in England and Wales in 1970 than there were the previous year. This increase, however, was partly offset by a decrease of 7,400 in the number of students following part-time courses. (*Statistics of Education; Vol 3, Further Education*, HMSO, £1.90.)

These statistics apply to non-university establishments—the polytechnics, colleges of education, technical colleges, colleges of art, agriculture colleges and other Local Education maintained establishments. The total numbers in further education establishments in November, 1970, were 3,181,200, which was a 3.2 per cent increase over 1969. This increase reverses the slight decrease experienced in the previous two years. The change comes mostly from a nine

per cent increase in the number of students registered for sandwich courses. But there was also a five per cent increase in students attending evening institutes. Of particular interest is the fact that ninety per cent of the increase in enrolled students was due to women. The report says that the increase in women students and a decrease in men reflects a trend that has been going on during recent years: in late 1970 there were 1,528,200 women and 1,653,000 men registered for courses. Between 1961 and 1970 the numbers of women students increased by 44.9 per cent while the enrolment of men increased by only 20.7 per cent in the same period.

Another trend that is evident is the increase in the average age of students in further education. In 1960 44 per cent of students were over 21, whereas in 1970 the number had increased to 50 per cent.