

OLD WORLD

University Growth Rate to be Pruned

A LARGE expansion in school education and a reduction in the growth rate of higher education are the key points of the ten-year plan announced last week by Mrs Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education and Science (Education: A Framework for Expansion, HMSO, £0.315p).

A new nursery school programme will provide places for 90 per cent of all 4 year olds and 50 per cent of 3 year olds by 1981. Primary, secondary and special schools will all benefit from larger building programmes and teacher training is to be improved, but the growth in higher education will fall from the present 6.5 per cent a year to 5 per cent a year until 1981.

But although the expansion of higher education may be slower during the next decade than it has been since the Robbins report of 1963, the reduction is hardly a standstill. The number of places in the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Great Britain will increase from 463,000 today to 750,000 by 1981, the number divided equally between universities and other forms of higher education.

The polytechnics will expand fastest. By 1981 the polytechnic population will have doubled to 180,000 while the numbers in the colleges of education will increase by only 40,000 to 155,000. The universities, however, will take 139,000 more students than the 236,000 they teach today, an increase of 59 per cent.

The total of 750,000 places by 1981 is, however, lower than the 835,000 places set as the provisional goal for higher education in a Department of Education and Science (DES) document circulated two years ago.

Table 1 University Grants for 1972-77

Table with 3 columns: Academic Year, Recurrent grant\* £ million, Equipment grant\* £ million. Rows for 1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1976-77. Total recurrent grant 1,392.0, total equipment grant 129.5.

\*1972 prices

Mrs Thatcher's white paper included the long-awaited quinquennial settlement for the universities for the period 1972-77 (see Table 1). The grant for 1972-73 is now finalized at £1.7 million more than the provisional allocation



Mrs Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education and Science

made to tide the universities through the past year. A further £7.4 million will be paid in 1972-73 to compensate for inflation.

The target for student numbers in 1977 is now 306,000 full-time students,

Two Views of Nature

THE left-hand illustration is a reproduction of page 453 from the issue of Nature dated June 23, 1972. That on the right is a reproduction of the corresponding page from the photocopied version of Nature distributed (without

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301 samples were collected in various places in the United States in December and January 1971-1972. All cells produced DM5 if contained in flasks sealed with glass wool, allowing restricted exchange of gases with the surrounding air (Table 1).

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BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES Possible Role of Repeated Nucleotide Sequences in DNA in the Evolution of Life Spans of Differentiated Cells. This life span of cells from tissues which do not regenerate can vary by a factor of forty to fifty between species for a given tissue. It seems probable that this is a function of different rates of the same molecular process rather than of qualitative differences in the aging process in cells of different tissues.

with places for part-time students to the full-time equivalent of 15,500, making a total of 321,500 students occupying 310,000 university places. This figure compares with a provisional planning estimate made by the University Grants Committee in May 1970 of 331,000 students occupying 320,000 places.

By 1977, 254,000 of the 306,000 full-time students will be undergraduates, 47 per cent of which will be arts students and 53 per cent science-based students. The present balance is 55 to 45 in favour of science students.

To meet the increased numbers, the government is to allocate £29 million for the 1974-75 building programme and increase the number of residential places to about 13,000 by 1975. No new universities will, however, be built in the current quinquennium, although the UGC will advise the government on whether an early decision in principle is needed to establish new universities in the 1980s.

The overall effect of the government's plans will be to increase the percentage of 18 year olds entering higher educa-

agreement with the publishers) from Moscow to Russian scientists. The article in the right-hand column was by Dr Zhores Medvedev. It is not known whether sales of HMSO books in the Soviet Union have been substantially increased by this extra insertion of an advertisement.

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