

## Short Notes

### CSII on Ice

THE Centre for the Study of Industrial Innovation is in danger of dying from neglect. Negotiations between the centre's directors and the Cranfield Institute of Technology, which it was hoped would lead to the centre becoming a department of industrial innovation at the institute, have scarcely moved in the past nine months.

A recent meeting between Mr George Teeling-Smith, the centre's director, and Dr Henry Chilver, the Vice-Chancellor of Cranfield, means that discussions are still continuing, but the centre has effectively been out of operation since January of this year.

Mr Teeling-Smith said this week that it is "disappointing that it is taking so long" for any changes to take place. "We have lost so much impetus that effectively we will be starting from scratch again." At present CSII has nothing to do except sell back copies of its reports on industrial innovation, which include an assessment of the spin-off benefits from Concorde, an appraisal of the industrial research associations and the publication of the results of the Project Sappho studies on industrial innovation undertaken at the University of Sussex.

### Dumping at Sea

A BILL to control dumping at sea has just been introduced to parliament. To date dumping has been limited by voluntary agreements between industry and government. Over the past seven years this has been quite effective but the bill will formalise the voluntary arrangement, making it necessary to acquire a licence to dump any material in the sea, and introducing heavy penalties for offences.

If the bill is passed Britain could be the seventh country to ratify its signature to the Oslo convention agreed in February 1972, which dealt with dumping in the north-eastern Atlantic. This convention requires ratification by seven countries to come into force. The bill will also enable Britain to ratify the London convention, concluded in December 1972, which was a global convention on similar lines to the Oslo convention. This requires ratification by fifteen countries to come into force, and Britain will probably be only the third country to ratify it. It is not, however, as immediately important to British fishing as the Oslo convention, which is concerned with the sea around the British Isles.

The basic determinant on which the decision to grant a licence will be based is the effect of the dumped material on fish. Certain substances which persist in the environment are blacklisted,

and licences for their dumping will never be granted. These include mercury, cadmium, and DDT. For dumping of other materials, including arsenic, lead and fluorides, a special licence is required, and the materials must be dumped in deep water, at least 150 nautical miles from land. Factors such as the concentration and form of the material and the area in which it is to be dumped will be taken into account in the issuing of all licences.

Dumping at sea is responsible for only 5-10% of shore-generated marine pollution. The main sources, streams and pipelines, are not affected by this bill, but will be dealt with in another bill to be published shortly, concerned with many forms of pollution including atmospheric and noise pollution. Neither does the present bill cover atomic waste, which was dealt with by the act of 1969, nor with pollution from ships, which was discussed last month in a convention in London.

### Solar Energy in Australia

AUSTRALIA is expanding its interest in solar energy business with some enthusiasm. Last week a Solar Energy Studies Unit was formed by CSIRO under the direction of Mr R. N. Morse, formerly chief of the CSIRO Division of Mechanical Engineering, and immediate past president of the International Solar Energy Society.

CSIRO has had an interest in solar energy for almost twenty years, and solar heating of water is already in use to the extent of saving Australia 5,000 tonnes of coal a year. Solar heated air is also used in some industrial drying processes, while experimental timber drying kilns are already being tested.

The new unit will look at the most promising applications of solar energy for Australian conditions. Feasibility studies of short and long term projects will be undertaken, focusing current CSIRO fundamental work on solar energy collections, heat storage media, energy measurement and thermal transfer problems.

Mr W. L. Morrison, Australia's minister for science, announcing the appointment said that "the use of solar energy on a wide scale for domestic and industrial heating could help substantially to offset increased costs of fossil fuels in the future".

### Developing Research

THE National Research Development Corporation is alive, well and even flourishing. This is the message contained in the corporation's annual report published last week (available free from NRDC, 66 Victoria Street, London, SW1).

The NRDC has come in for some criticism recently, particularly at the

hands of the Select Committee on Science and Technology which recommended that the corporation's structure needed "urgent financial review". This criticism was included in the select committee's report (published in September) on the closure of Tracked Hovercraft Limited, an NRDC subsidiary.

Dr Basil Bard, the corporation's managing director, said last week that the forecast for the future is encouraging with a net surplus for 1972-73 reported of £529,000 compared with £178,786 the previous year. The total income of the corporation went up from £7.4 million to £8.7 million.

One of the problems which the corporation is faced with, according to the report, is that of "maintaining in industry, in the universities and in other sources of invention, a knowledge of the corporation's existence and of the facilities it is able to provide for promoting innovation in industry".

Dr Bard said that in the past year uncertainty about the corporation's future had been replaced "by an increased awareness of the need for a body like the corporation, which has encouraged us in our belief that we have an important part to play in providing financial aid for the development and commercialisation of significant UK innovation". This, however, does not take any heed of the select committee's views.

### Comet Kohoutek Disaster?

DR D. W. DEWHIRST of the University of Cambridge warned a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society last week that members should be cautious in their public statements about Comet Kohoutek. Little is known about the factors that govern a comet's brightness, he said, and the prediction that Kohoutek will be a bright object in daylight may be over-optimistic. According to his calculations the brightest that the comet will be as viewed from Britain is magnitude -3 (on January 3) which is about as bright as Venus. Perhaps Dr Dewhirst has recalled that the failure of the Leonid meteor shower to live up to expectations in 1899 was described by the meteor scientist C. P. Olivier as "the worst blow ever suffered by astronomy in the eyes of the public".

### More Mobility

SIR HERMAN BONDI's task force to encourage the mobility of scientists is nearing the end of its appointed task. Its report is being written at present and will be submitted to the Lord Privy Seal at the end of the year or in January.

There is no news of what the report contains but it is highly unlikely that the work started by the task force will be allowed to come to an end with the publication of the report in the Spring.