for instance, a scheme for shortening the length of the college course to produce a BA qualification somewhat similar to our proposed Dip.HE. It is interesting to be told that teacher education is now regarded as the largest single enterprise in American higher education. Clearly, many of the problems in this field, with the teacher training curriculum, teaching practice arrangements in schools, and in-service training closely parallel our own.

The report will thus be of interest to anyone concerned with the planning of secondary or higher education. Reading it, I could not help but feel profoundly thankful that Britain is a relatively small nation with a public examination system and entry requirements to higher education subject to some degree of central control and hence an equivalence of standards.

W. H. DOWDESWELL

Glimmer of hope

Priorities for Action: Final Report of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, with Technical Notes and Appendixes. Pp. x+243. (McGraw-Hill: New York and London, October 1973.) \$4.95.

THE ability of the British to look into their future by looking into the American present has been disturbed by the advent of instant communication, through which the American present influences not only their future but also their present. They therefore face the paradoxical situation that while in the sphere of mass higher education they have not yet caught up with the United States of the 1950s, they share in the disillusionment and graduate employment problems of the 1970s. "A traumatic loss of sense of assured progress has occurred (page 6) the world over, and as a result the British are in danger of accepting their inferiority to the educationally developed nations permanently and disastrously. The report, with its dispassionately balanced outlook, provides an effective antidote to this policy of despair.

"In 1870, the issue was the modernisation of higher education—how to adjust to industrial and agricultural expansion, to political populism, to the rise of science. To-day the issue is more the humanisation of higher education—how to respond to the greater aspirations of more individuals for a higher quality of life, how to adjust to the social facts of more affluence and more leisure, how to incorporate into higher education the rise of the creative arts." (page 21.)

"One of the interesting—and, to some, surprising—discoveries of recent times has been that quality and quantity are

not necessarily inconsistent with each other in the academic world". (page 27.)

"We have suggested special admission provisions for disadvantaged students where their ability and the special assistance of the College will make possible their meeting, in full, the academic standards of the college within a reasonable period of time and certainly by graduation. Remedial work will be necessary." (page 37.)

"Planning for the future of higher education should be on a contingent basis, subject to constant re-examination. . . . The technocratic planning analysts are bound to be wrong." (page 80.)

Finally and rightly, the report quotes Ashby's remark about the need to preserve the "thin clear stream of excellence" (page 30). But are we always sure that in pretending to protect excellence we are not protecting privilege?

The editor has restricted me to 400 words, and within that compass I cannot do justice to this remarkable report. The purpose of the disconnected quotations above is to persuade politicians and civil servants, industrialists and businessmen, academics and students, to read this remarkable report whole and to take heart from it.

L. R. B. ELTON

Pacific problems

Nature Conservation in the Pacific. Edited by A. B. Costin and R. G. Groves. Pp. xvi + 337. (Proceedings of Symposium on Nature Conservation in the Pacific of 12th Pacific Science Congress held in Canberra, August–September 1971.) (Australian National University Press: Canberra, April 1973.) \$12.50.

LIKE most other conference proceedings, this book has taken an unconscionable time to produce. Yet since Dr Lee Talbot says on page 261 that "relatively little progress on conservation problems has occurred in the South-east Asian region" since the Bangkok Conference of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 1965, perhaps this does not matter much. Nature conservation problems seem to be either static or dynamic in the wrong direction. For Dr Talbot goes on to add that most of the same problems that existed in 1965 are still problems, some of them considerably aggravated, while a whole range of new problems have appeared.

Although the subjects covered by the symposium are wide ranging, the eastern Pacific is almost wholly omitted, the northern Pacific is grossly underplayed, and Australia and its neighbouring region bulk as large as one would expect from the locale.

Many of these papers are excellent, but I wonder whether it is useful to the scientific community to have them all

printed, after an undue delay, in book form? Would it not be better to have an abstracting service for these conferences and symposia, widely circulated soon after the event, and enabling people interested in particular papers rapidly to get a copy?

RICHARD FITTER

Drug receptors

A Guide to Molecular Pharmacology-Toxicology. Edited by R. M. Featherstone. Part 1: pp. xiv+425; part 2: pp. xiii+426–811. (Modern Pharmacology: 4 series of Monographs and Textbooks, vol. 2.) (Dekker: New York, September and November 1973.) Part 1: \$29.50; part 2: \$18.75.

MOLECULAR biology, it is said, owes its origins in no small part to the application of novel physical and chemical techniques to biological problems. These books are intended to go one step further, by describing how several of the newer techniques of molecular biology are being used to solve interesting and important problems in pharmacology and toxicology. They contain a collection of 21 chapters by a total of 30 authors, each chapter devoted to model systems, methodology, or both. As the editor says, there is no great thread of continuity among the chapters and none was intended. Nevertheless, the books are aimed pretty squarely at proteins as drug receptors: witness the contorted sausage on the dust jacket and the categorical statement on page 308 that "whenever a drug receptor has been identified, it turned out to be a protein". (Workers on actinomycin beware!) This no doubt explains why there is no treatment of molecular interactions between drugs and nucleic acids, which to my biased view seems rather a pity.

In part I the first three chapters, on model membranes, sugar transport receptors and ultrastructural studies, provide a useful and balanced introduction to the next four which are largely concerned with receptor identification and isolation, the prospects for which are succinctly stated in the quotation from Professor Burgen at the head of chapter 4. Here is a mine of valuable information about progress in several important areas which will commend itself to many a graduate student embarking on research. There follow three chapters concerned with conformational changes induced in proteins by drugs, the molecular pharmacology of acetylcholinesterase, and enzyme kinetics in the service of studies on structure-function relationships.

The scope of Part 2 is broader, with more concentration on the application of physical methods and mathematical