

catatonia with probably irreversible mental damage.

In addition to the protest to Professor Snezhnevskii, the meeting also resolved to send a telegram to Dr Gluzman himself—the first time that this particular form of protest has ever been undertaken by the college.

Among those who spoke in favour of this action was Dr Denis Leigh, Secretary General of the World Psychiatric Association, who said that in his view the type of action envisaged by the college was welcome and much to be encouraged. □

## Oxford man wins large prize

PROFESSOR X has won for Dr Y from Oxford (who prefers to remain anonymous) a year's free subscription to *Nature*. Professor X is on 12 editorial boards and easily heads the list in *Nature's* competition (May 8); the runner-up could muster a mere nine appearances. □

THE effects of inflation on the prices of technical and scientific books are illustrated in this table of findings from a British survey. Eleven publishers submitted information for the survey, which was carried out by the Technical and Scientific Group of the Publishers Association. Each was asked to give the extent and price, on publication, of their new scientific and technical books (and new editions) published in the years 1972, 1973 and 1974. Where there were two editions

(eg, cased and paper) the cheaper was taken. In the case of 1974 they were asked to distinguish between publication in the first and second halves of the year. They were also asked to assign each book to a category, namely: A: books intended for purchase by undergraduate students; B: books intended for purchase by senior students, lecturers, practitioners, libraries, etc; C: books for which only a library sale is expected. The most rapidly rising cost was that of paper.

Year	Size of Sample	Total no. of pages	Total price (£)	Price/100pp (£)	% above 1972	
1972	157	44462	381.75	0.86	—	Category A
1973	140	39062	390.15	1.00	16.2	
1974(1)	74	21343	218.25	1.02	18.6	
1974(2)	49	12029	138.75	1.15	33.7	
1972	100	29297	457.95	1.56	—	Category B
1973	95	28831	483.53	1.68	7.7	
1974(1)	57	18511	333.95	1.80	15.4	
1974(2)	35	9657	179.70	1.86	19.2	
1972	31	12169	249.20	2.04	—	Category C
1973	45	18842	397.00	2.11	3.4	
1974(1)	23	8696	231.50	2.66	30.4	
1974(2)	10	4073	163.80	4.02	97.0	

# correspondence

## Deep in Egypt

SIR,—Having carried out surveys during and after the Second World War in Libya, Egypt and the Sudan, I was very interested to read the article (June 19) on the project for producing power by diverting Mediterranean water into the Qattara Depression by a canal through the Alamein area. Your correspondent was incorrect, however, in ascribing the initial surveys and ideas for this project to Professor Bassler, an ex-officer of Rommel's army; it is much older than that. In fact it dates back to the previous war, since it was in 1917 that Dr John Ball, the Director of the Egyptian Desert Survey, lent a small aneroid barometer to the officer in charge of a British Light Car Patrol who was going to travel in the area. The officer came back without the aneroid but with a reading for the Qattara Spring of some 60 metres below sea level—and presumably with a somewhat tarnished reputation as a surveyor!

Dr Ball did not, however, forget this odd result; and in 1926 he was able to send a professional surveyor, G. F. Walpole, to make a more detailed investigation, which revealed for the

first time the full extent and depth of this remarkable feature. Describing this and other investigations in 1927 in the *Geographical Journal*, Dr Ball then suggested that the depression might be used as a source of power by diverting Mediterranean water into it through tunnels. Six years later, when a complete topographical and geological survey had been made, he published a long paper in the same journal, giving detailed estimates of the sizes of tunnels required, the energy available and the length of time (several hundred years) that the project could last. Clearly the rate at which salt will accumulate even from sea water is very much slower than the rising tide of silt in the upper reaches of Lake Nasser, even though with modern engineering techniques much larger channels or tunnels can be envisaged.

Dr Ball, like Dr H. E. Hurst who organised the comprehensive collection of data about the Nile Basin on which so many projects were based, belonged to a small band of British surveyors and scientists who worked for many years in Egypt in the early years of this century. With the wisdom gained from long experience in the area added to their native wit and scientific training, they

wrote a number of far-sighted papers which those who are now suggesting new versions of their projects will do well to study.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WRIGHT

Effingham, Surrey

## English and editorial boards

SIR,—Mr Andrewes describes himself as a hack. Nothing in the wording of his letter (July 10) suggests that the epithet is justified, but there are many people around editorial offices to whom it is applicable. Instead of confining themselves to turning poor into passable English, they seem to delight in trying to turn straightforward English into jargon. In a proof that came last week an editor was trying to get me pompously to refer to myself as 'the author'. Proofs of two papers sent to a microbiological journal a few years ago had been so mangled that I withdrew them and published them as originally written in *Proc. R. Soc. B*. A friend had a recent paper to a nutritional journal turned in places into germanic near gibberish. And so it goes on, making people who recognise clear English think that all scientists write badly.