IN BRIEF

EEC research

The European Commission has recently sent proposals for a new European science and technology policy to the Council of Ministers. In a communication called *The Common Policy in the Field of Science and Technology*, it suggests a new structure for cooperation and some areas where collaborative research should be increased.

Since 1973, energy has taken 64% of the Community R&D budget. The proposals say that this balance should be redressed and suggest that a new programme of forecasting and assessment in science and technology (FAST) be set up. FAST will be a collaborative effort between research groups in Europe and international bodies with an initial budget of 4.4 million ua (1ua=£0.66).

ICRF sues for libel

Lawyers for the UK Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) have recently issued writs for libel against Daily Mirror Newspapers Ltd. The legal action has arisen over an article published in the *Sunday Mirror* on 14 August, questioning whether some of the £23 million which the ICRF has invested could be put to better use.

The ICRF replied to the article in a statement issued on 15 August which explained that such a high level of investment was necessary to support long term research. The decision to sue for libel was taken after the *Sunday Mirror* refused to publish an apology.

Engineering inquiry

Following hard on the heels of the UK

Department of Education and Science's (DES) discussion paper *Industry, Education and Management is Education, Engineers and Manufacturing Industry*, a report prepared for the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) under the direction of Dr Joseph Pope, Vice Chancellor of Aston University. Like the DES publication, the BAAS report is the outcome of an investigation into ways of encouraging able professional engineers to enter British industry.

The report puts some of the blame for industry's ills on the low status of engineers, which discourages young people from entering the profession. It recommends that universities and polytechnics accept candidates without 'A' level physics. More women should also enter engineering.

THE principal mountains of California, the Sierra Nevada, run in a north-south chain. They are unbroken by highway crossings for 165 miles of their greatest height. Within this vast area, about 40 miles wide by trails, are two National Parks, Kings Canyon and Sequoia. North of Kings Canyon Park is the equally splendid Sierra National Forest. The flank of the Sierra lying east of the summit crest is outside the park boundaries, and within Inyo National Forest. Much of the terrain outside the parks has been designated as Wilderness Area, administered by the US Department of Agriculture. Happily, there is collaboration between the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture in administering this scenic treasure, which in recent summers has swarmed with knapsackers. In 1976, for example, it received 1.1 million visitor-days of use.

"The Earth was created by the assistance of the Sun, and should be left as it was". So, we are told, said Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé. Much of the Earth is no longer as it was, but Chief Joseph's concept is still the guiding principle for managing wilderness. Detailed instructions of the observation of this principle are given to human invaders at the entry points to the wilderness, which are monitored. Yet there are anomalies. One of them is the presence of saddle horses and pack mules, whose excretory reflexes seem to be stimulated while wading through streams. These animals, however, are allowed to mar the wilderness; they have a strong hold on western American traditions.

Another interesting problem is that pet dogs are permitted in wilderness

areas that lie outside the boundaries of national parks. I have just returned from the John Muir Wilderness Area and its visiting dogs. One of the most prominent breeds was the Labrador retriever, a dog that

Wilderness areas

THOMAS H. JUKES

enjoys jumping in a mountain lake to fetch a piece of wood. The name of the canny Scotsman, Muir, has been given to many other California landmarks, including schools, a hospital, a national monument and a famous trail. Perhaps Muir's wilderness area should be re-named for his dog, 'Stickeen'. An even better idea would be to exclude the dogs, so that native mammals would be less harassed.

A further anomaly: hunting, in season, is permitted in wilderness areas of national forests, but not in national parks. Sharpshooters lie in wait just outside the park boundaries

to pick off deer that heedlessly step outside the demilitarised zone. The official instructions issued to wilderness users remind them, almost plaintively, that target practice with firearms is illegal, but hunting is not.

Our camp was evidently in the territory of a marmot. These beasts usually greet intruding hikers with a shrill whistle, and then scurry into holes. This one walked into camp, apparently to be photographed, after which it fixed us with a withering stare, and refused illegal offerings of food. Another frequent visitor to camps is a raucous bird, Clark's nutcracker. Now I know that the regulations say that the entrails of fish should be carefully buried at least 100 feet from water, but Clark's nutcracker would much rather devour them on the spot, and I could not resist his supplication. Next morning, at daybreak, he awakened me in the whitebark pine just above my head with a loud scream to demand breakfast.

At timberline, about 11,000 feet, the flowers make a mockery of all amateur and professional gardeners. Last week, in Pioneer Basin, it was the time for blue, mauve and pink penstemons: small blue-and-white lupines, golden bush potentillas; rose epilobium, and both large and tiny yellow monkey flowers. Eastern brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) in the high lakes scorned, for the most part, the offerings of anglers. There were some splendid afternoon thunderstorms, the nights were clear and star-filled, and the mornings blazed with sunlight. In general, the visitors, with their small tents and bright clothing, were heedful of Chief Joseph.