

Dr Robert W. Berliner said that Columbia had made a gigantic mistake. He said that the alleged plagiarism consisted of a sentence or two and an equation that is not nearly as special as is claimed. People at Yale, indeed, suspect that Dr Felig is the victim of a misunderstanding. He has been invited to return to Yale and has apparently agreed to do so. This week, Dr Felig was on vacation. Dr Roth, while sympathetic to the predicament in which Dr Felig initially found himself, expressed the view that it was careless of Dr Felig to go ahead with publication before the audit had been completed.

School computing

Money to spend

The British government's £9 million programme to promote the use of computers in schools is getting off to a slow start because of delays in appointing a director. To avoid the possibility of losing some of the money if it is not spent before next March, the Department of Education and Science (DES), which is putting up the funds, has already had to award some grants. About £500,000 of the £1 million set aside for this financial year has been either awarded or earmarked for projects which are as yet planned only in outline. The allocation of larger sums for projects which will define the emphasis of the four-year programme will have to wait for the new director whose appointment is expected to be announced in September.

The present programme has grown out of a plan of the previous Labour government to spend £12 million on developing the educational value of microcomputers. None of that money was spent, however, because of the change of government in April last year. After more than a year of deliberation, the present Conservative government announced last March that it was to renew the programme by spending £9 million over the next four years: £1 million is to be spent before March 1981 and £2.7 million is to be spent in each of the remaining three years. When it is fully underway, the programme is to be administered by the Council for Educational Technology for the United Kingdom.

The DES has yet to decide on the overall objectives of the programme because to do so it needs the advice of the director as well as a recently appointed advisory committee of civil servants, teachers and representatives of educational organizations. The advisory committee gave the matter some thought at its first meeting at the end of July. All members were agreed that the programme should aim to improve the use of computers in schools but there was a difference of opinion on what should be the long-term objectives of computer education. Some members believe that the aim should be to acquaint most school leavers with computers and their uses:

others believe that the aim should be to give pupils a grounding in programming and computer technology. Members plan to resolve the issue at the committee's next meeting in September.

Much of the work on computers in schools has been done by the Council for Educational Technology for the United Kingdom, which will administer the current programme when it gets under way. Other groups, which will no doubt be looking for funds, include Micro and Mini Computer Users in Secondary Education, a voluntary organization which is building up a library of software and guidance notes for teachers, and the Schools Council. The Schools Council hopes to receive grants to extend its existing work on compiling software and course notes on several subjects central to the school curriculum. Some of the packages it has already produced are designed to be of use in teaching history, economics, geography and even home heating, as well as chemistry, physics and biology.

Only about one hundred schools in Britain own their own computer and it is unlikely that much of the £9 million will be spent directly on increasing that number. One major constraint on the work funded under the programme will be that it should lead to results or suggestions for computer use which are within the financial limits of local education authorities.

Judy Redfearn

Soviet environment

Old hands back

Environmental protection is now a major feature of Soviet planning, and Moscow radio recently took to task Western newspapers (including the *Guardian*) which, it said, reported only the negative aspects of Soviet ecology. In response, the commentator drew specific attention to a speech of Academician N.P. Dubinin, delivered at this year's plenary meeting of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and which was later published in the *Vestnik* of the Academy.

Academician Dubinin is a leading Soviet geneticist, whose work, notably his book *Evolutionary Genetics* had been

suppressed during the Lysenko period. His address to the academy, entitled *Genetics and its significance for Mankind* covered a whole range of topics from plant-breeding to genetic engineering. Nearly half his speech, however, was devoted specifically to the genetic aspects of pollution, which, he explained, make up an important section of the Soviet Union's "Man and biosphere" programme, which is the responsibility of a special environmental Interdisciplinary Council of the State Committee of the USSR on science and technology.

In his speech, Dubinin stressed that much of the work in this field was taking place within the framework of the United States - USSR collaboration programme. By stressing the collaborative aspect, he was thus able to quote exclusively from US sources on the genetic hazards of pollution by mutagens, or to attribute to American authors the more pessimistic viewpoint that "at the present time science does not have at its disposal the means of solving this exceptionally complex problem". On the other hand he attributes to Soviet authors a "highly promising express test scheme" for studying the frequency of genetic mutation, tests based on leukocyte cultures and a method for determining gene and chromosome mutations in embryo mouse cells. The American J. V. Neel, however, receives due credit for his improved monitoring programme for observing the increase of mutations due to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs.

In a speech intended to review the positive aspects of Soviet genetics, open criticism of past policy would clearly be out of place. There were, however, one or two, interesting allusions to the Lysenko aberration. In speaking of the "adaptive norm", Dubinin specifically cited his own (erstwhile banned) work of 1948, and stressed the importance of establishing whether or not unfavourable genetic changes had occurred over the last 20 to 30 years. Soviet genetics, it should be recalled was effectively restored only in 1963 - 64. In a speech which the Soviet media singled out as the proper and positive way to report environmental genetics, such low-key criticisms, it appears, are quite in order.

Vera Rich

Frogs to eat



The edible frog (*Rana esculenta*), the basis of a number of French recipes for gourmets, is one of the species widespread on the mainland of Europe which have established themselves only with difficulty in the United Kingdom. The photograph is taken from a Nature Conservancy Council booklet, *Wildlife Introductions to Great Britain*, which is the report of a working party of the UK Committee for International Nature Conservation. The edible frog is apparently now established only in the counties of Norfolk and Sussex.