local medical societies have enormous influence over doctors and over state legislatures and courts. Thus they can facilitate doctors' boycotts of hospitals that charge too little, prevent physicians from working on a salary instead of the more lucrative fee-for-service basis and decide whether to encourage or to discourage advertising.

Regulation of these professional groups is traditionally the job of the states. But, FTC argues, it is hard for state authorities to rule against these powerful groups. Many consumer groups believe that the influence of these professional associations is connected with their powerful political fund-raising ability. In May, a bill introduced by Thomas A. Luken (Democrat, Ohio) that would place a moratorium on all FTC action against the professions had 155 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. According to Congress Watch, a public interest group, those 155 co-sponsors had received \$599,000 in campaign contributions from AMA, \$191,000

from the American Dental Association and \$41,000 from the ophthalmologists. By October, the bill had 221 co-sponsors.

A more limited measure was attached to FTC's authorizing legislation last May by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. It would declare that FTC has no jurisdiction over state-regulated professionals and their professional associations. This measure may well remain in the final Senate bill.

William Rial, president of AMA, is unsparing in his criticism of FTC's allegedly blundering intrusion into the medical profession which, he writes, is "threatening the future of medical practice in this country". The drain on medical societies' resources because of FTC administrative procedures, Rial says, "can hinder these groups from performing their most important functions. . . The standards of quality established by the American Medical Association and other medical societies . . . are being undermined by a federal

agency that possesses no medical qualifications." AMA spokesmen point out that FTC has investigated some professional groups only to find nothing at all wrong after a great expense of time and money. An AMA spokesman in Washington says the profession is already feeling the chill of the FTC order. Local cost-containment groups, he says, are afraid to meet "for fear FTC will investigate them for price-fixing".

But this seems to be just what FTC wants. It cites the case of fees for eye glasses and optometry, where the agency won the right to promote advertising. In a short time, the price of eye glasses and contact lenses fell by as much as a half. The cost of health care in the United States continues to rise in double figures, even though inflation now stands at approximately 6 per cent. FTC is not promising that it can lower the overall costs but it now has a licence to try to do so.

Deborah Shapley

Commonwealth agriculture

More journals mean more food

The Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (CAB) are among the first beneficiaries of the British government's new International Organizations' Act passed early last year. Incorporation under the new act has given CAB full international status and thus removed some of the previous obstacles to legal agreements between the bureaux and national governments. Hence a new station for the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control in Kenya can now go ahead because the Kenyan government has a legal entity with which to sign a contract. The new act also means that CAB member governments, which contribute to the financial upkeep of the bureaux, need no longer fear that part of their contribution will end up in the British exchequer. CAB employees, most of whom work in Britain, no longer pay income tax.

After nearly 30 years gestation, CAB was finally born in 1930, since when it has grown into a major international information service for agricultural scientists. It offers three basic services — identification of biological specimens, advice on biological control and the publication of agricultural abstracts and some primary journals. Three Commonwealth institutes — those of entomology, helminthology and the mycological institute — provide identification services. The Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control, the only CAB institution based outside Britain, provides advice on biological control from its headquarters in Jamaica. The four institutes and a further ten bureaux prepare abstracts of the literature in their own specialities and conduct literature searches for enquirers.

Until 1975, CAB had been largely financed by contributions from member

governments. Since then, however, the publishing activity has been made self-financing by substantially increasing the charge for journals. The biological control service also earns half its keep from contracts. But the identification and taxonomy services are financed from member governments' contributions.

Of the £6 million needed to run CAB each year, £4.5 million is now earned, mainly from journal sales and charges for literature searches. (CAB's abstracts data-

This weevil, *Elaeidobius kamerunicus*, should save Malaysian agriculture around \$115 million a year if things go according to plan. The weevil (actual length 4 mm) has been introduced into Malaysia from West Africa and has already greatly increased the fruit production of Malaysia's oil palms and eliminated the need for hand pollination of the trees. Since its introduction in 1981 the weevil has spread throughout the Malaysian peninsula and increases of 20 per cent in yield have been obtained. As a spin-off from this work, based on a study by Dr R.A. Syed of CAB's Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control, growers in West Africa are now keen to find means of controlling oil palm pests biologically — since the continued use of insecticides will inevitably limit the effectiveness of the pollinating weevils.

base is now available on-line on the world's major host computers.) The remaining £1.5 million is provided by member governments which contribute roughly according to their means. Thus, Britain makes the largest contribution of about £400,000 (or just 30 per cent of £1.5 million), Canada, Australia and New Zealand come next and many of the smaller Commonwealth nations contribute only a little.

Member nations are entitled to a quota of free journals depending on the size of their contributions, and to a slightly discounted rate for extra journals, on-line services and advice on biological control. Non-member nations may also take advantage of CAB's services — but they must pay slightly over the odds. The identification service, however, is free for all, members and non-members alike.

The United States and Japan, two non-member nations, have in fact made greater use of CAB's services than any other nation. Thus, CAB are open to the criticism that many developing countries are subsidizing services which the developed countries are best equipped to use. That criticism was reinforced when CAB made their abstracts available on-line on the world's major host computers, all of which are in the industrialized north.

At a conference in 1980 to review CAB's work and celebrate their golden jubilee, developing countries expressed a wish for greater access to CAB's services but also their appreciation of them. For although the developed countries may benefit most — Britain as the host country most of all — CAB often provide developing countries with their only access to the world agricultural literature or to advice on agricultural pests. The alternative for developing countries — to finance their own identification and biological control services and establish their own libraries — would in most cases be prohibitively expensive.

Judy Redfearn