likely to continue. Another report, highly critical of the performance of the US delegation at last year's Unispace 82 meeting in Vienna, is about to be published and will argue that the failure to develop long-term domestic policy goals for space has damaged Washington's ability to use space technology as a tool of foreign policy. A prepublication draft of this report says the United States approached the UN-sponsored meeting warily and without enough preparation. The delegation's most obvious mistake was to try, on procedural grounds, to block discussion of the militarization of space — a tactic that merely antagonized other participants.

There were other blunders, too. The United States failed to soothe the fears of developing countries that the geostationary orbit was becoming congested by the satellites of the industrialized nations; nor did it allay anxieties that the confusion surrounding the future of Landsat would jeopardize the availability of remote sensing data. OTA warns that these errors will rebound against the United States, which depends on developing countries for the coordination of critical space systems, such as the allocation of frequencies by the International Telecommunications Union.

A call for the creation of a space commission to take a new look at space priorities may have attractions for scientists as well as for politicians. Professor Arden Albee, chief scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Pasadena, California, said it was clear that NASA's main focus was on big systems like the shuttle. He added: "Although its charter includes science, science has not received the level of focus it needs. If the commission resulted in a new look at the priorities of the civilian programme it would be helpful."

**Peter David**

Semiconductors

# British venture nears turning-point

INMOS, the government-backed British microchip company, appears confident that it will reach profitability during 1984 if market conditions improve, despite the revelation in last week's annual report that the company made a loss last year of £20.4 million. Sales revenues increased over the year from £2.14 million in 1981 to £13.7 million and are expected to be double this amount next year.

The company now has three very large-scale integrated circuit memory devices in production at its new factory at Newport in Wales. Dr Richard Petritz, Inmos's managing director, said in his report that during 1983 Inmos will market a 64K erasable reprogrammable memory (EPROM) that will be clearly ahead of its competitors in specification and capacity. The company is also working on a new type of microprocessor called a "transputer". The device is said to be based on a "radically different" design approach and the company expects it to meet the demand for massive computing power in fifth generation "intelligent" computers. The transputer will use a new programming language called Occam, now being evaluated. A company spokesman said that "excitement" about the transputer had been shown in several quarters, including some Japanese institutions.


The company's overall strategy is to develop products of very advanced specification and to hope that market demand follows. Inmos already claims 60 per cent of the world market for its very fast 16K static random-access memories (RAMs) and hopes for similar success with its new 64K dynamic RAMs. Static RAMs, though now a relatively small and specialized market area, are expected to find increasing applications in high-speed signal processing for military equipment and video systems. But Inmos will need to sell large quantities if it is to justify the high capital costs of its advanced fabrication equipment. Independent market opinions are less confident that Inmos will make headway against Japanese and United States competition with its dynamic access RAMs, where price may be more important than high performance.

The British Government's stake in Inmos is through the British Technology Group (BTG), which holds 75 per cent of the issued share capital. BTG's initial £50 million investment was made by the National Enterprise Board in 1978, when the company was set up by the Labour government. This was increased by an extra £15 million in January this year, but BTG, whose own future is being reviewed, is unlikely to be a further source of capital. Inmos says that it had always been foreseen that private sector investment would be sought during 1983-84, and Mr Malcolm Wilcox, a banker, was appointed chairman in January to carry out the task. With the major start-up costs of the Newport factory out of the way, and production on target, Mr Wilcox's job may just be possible.

**Tim Beardsley**

Cambridge science park

# Sowing a seed

THE relationship between the Cambridge Science Park and the University of Cambridge should be strengthened as the result of an interesting grant scheme proposed recently by Trinity College. Trinity, the park's founder and landlord, has announced that it will provide a total of £60,000 over three years to meet up to half the cost of employing two to three research staff for companies on the science park. The researchers would be full employees of the companies but would spend half their time in the university laboratories. This would give the companies access not only to the university equipment and libraries, which are already made available through Trinity, but also to the expertise of academics working on similar projects.

Trinity's involvement is to be purely financial. The researchers would have no academic relationship with Trinity, although it is hoped that they might teach in their university department. The projects would be arranged between company and university, with Trinity backing the most promising ideas.

The scheme has been met with restrained enthusiasm from companies on the science park. David Storey, managing director of LKB Biochrom, one of the earliest arrivals, sees the scheme as a step towards a better relationship with the university. The system is already working well, he says, but

*Trinity — flying a flag for research*

any further improvements would be good for industry. Storey says LKB could be keener if it were more involved in research.

In the short term, Trinity College stands to gain nothing from the arrangement but the goodwill of the science park and the university, but with only 56 acres of the 124 acre site developed, the investment of 0.5 per cent of the college's annual external revenue in public relations is a sound financial move. Many of the companies on Cambridge Science Park, such as Bethesda and LKB, are British subsidiaries of international concerns whose research and development is based elsewhere. Trinity hopes to tempt more of it to Cambridge.

**Melanie Kee**

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