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SCIENCE

Confrontation

The Organization for European Economic Cooperation was established to help coordinate the economic development that Marshall Plan funds were intended to stimulate. One technique used by OEEC has been an annual review of the economic policies of each member country. Now OEEC has become OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development); Canada and the U.S. have become members; and the technique of the annual review has been extended to periodic examination of the educational policies of each country that are of concern to all member countries. The first educational confrontations were kid-glove affairs, but the second round has started off with a sharper and more penetrating analysis of scientific and engineering education in the U.S. The OECD examiners were Sir John Cockcroft, Churchill College, Oxford; Ingvar Svennilson, University of Stockholm; and A. H. Halsey, Oxford. They visited many U.S. campuses; talked with representatives of government agencies, foundations, and scientific and educational institutions; and read much documentary information concerning education in the U.S. Among the conclusions with which they confronted the U.S. representatives at the hearing recently held in Paris were the following.

High school students have too little instruction in science; too few college students specialize in science and engineering; and too few college graduates in these fields proceed to graduate study.

High school students and their parents have remarkably uncertain, even chaotic, information concerning higher education and how to achieve a good match between college requirements and offerings and student abilities and interests.

There should be more graduate fellowships, for the primary problem in any effort to increase the number of graduate students is lack of financial support, not a shortage of qualified graduates.

The quality of teaching is declining, especially in liberal arts colleges; federal government policies that have placed great emphasis upon research have contributed strongly to this trend.

Poor teaching, inadequate equipment, and insufficient research opportunities in liberal arts colleges that have good students place serious limitations on the number of future scientists.

Probably the best planning for mass higher education to be found anywhere in the world is the California program which admits any graduate of a California high school to a junior college, the top third of the high school graduates to a state college, and the top eighth to one of the University of California campuses.

Unless we overcome our mistrust of cooperative, national planning and action, higher education in the U.S. will not be able to meet the needs and demands of the next 10 years. If we are to meet these needs we must resolve the "government by stalemate" that results from congressional and congressional-executive differences on educational policy.

These criticisms constitute friendly advice from an international agency that has an effective record of improving economic conditions in its member states and that is dedicated to the proposition that improvements in scientific and technical education are a major means toward this end.—D.W.