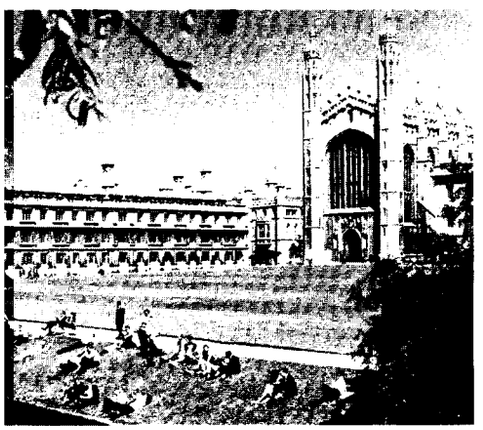
are unfailingly discreet about committee matters.

During the 1960's, the UGC stirred little controversy as it was able to hand out funds fairly freehandedly to an expanding university system. As budgets tightened in the 1970's, the



UGC generally followed a policy of fair if smaller shares for all. The present necessity of making painful choices was forced by Britain's economic woes and the Thatcher government's broad cuts in public spending. An impending decline in the university-age population resulted in calls for contraction of the system. It fell to the UGC to orchestrate the recessional.

The committee in early July sent out a letter announcing in round figures what each university can expect but, true to tradition, left it to individual institutions to determine how to apply the cuts. To each, however, UGC offered guidance on what programs should be cut, curtailed, or expanded. Science and engineering got favored treatment; in general, the more applied the discipline, the better. In biological sciences, for example, boosts were suggested for genetic engineering, and cuts for ecology. (Research is funded not by the UGC but by five research councils.)

Among the institutions that got off relatively lightly were Cambridge, Oxford, and Edinburgh. Consigned to middling misery with the majority was the sprawling University of London, apparently in part because support for the large number of foreign students there will not be forthcoming.

The big losers were Salford, Aston, Bradford, Keele, and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST). Mutterings of elitist bias were heard since these are new universities that typically evolved from technical schools. Aston and Salford may have suffered from being too close to other universities in Birmingham and Manchester, respectively. But their defenders point out that, at a time when the British are lamenting their own technological laggardness and high unemployment, Aston and Salford have superior records of placing graduates in jobs and of excellent relations with industry.

—John Walsh

Innovation Act After the Fall

The Reagan Administration is scornful of the idea that direct federal action can improve the innovation process in industry and has demonstrated its attitude by vigorously pruning funds for such efforts. When the House Science and Technology subcommittee on science, research, and technology held 3 days of hearings recently on the subject, therefore, the proceedings had something of the air of an inquest. But Administration witnesses insisted that they concur with the aims of such programs while rejecting their approach.

The focus of the hearings was the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980, which was enacted just before the Reagan election victory transformed the political atmosphere in Washington. The act, named for former Senator Adlai Stevenson and former Representative John W. Wydler, neither of whom sought reelection, provides support for various initiatives to promote innovation and technology transfer. The Department of Commerce and the National Science Foundation were charged with administering programs created by the law. Virtually all funds under the act for Commerce Department programs and much of those for NSF were knocked out by Reagan budget makers. A main target was funds earmarked for Commerce support of centers for industrial technology and other purposes. The Carter budget requested $8.8 million for Stevenson-Wydler-inspired programs in 1982. The Reagan revised budget asks nothing for them and that is what will be available.

The National Science Foundation fared better. The Carter 1982 budget called for a total $45.8 million for a variety of innovation programs; about $17 million survived in the Reagan revision. Included for 1982 is $9.5 million for industry-university cooperative research projects, $1.7 million for a program devoted largely to support of university-industry cooperative research centers (industry is providing more than $2 million for five such centers), and about $1 million for studies on innovation and technology transfer. Some $5 million is also left for a small-business research program that is not part of the Stevenson-Wydler package.

The Administration viewpoint was enunciated by Commerce Deputy Secretary Joseph R. Wright, who argued that technological innovation and the improvement of productivity are the responsibility of the private sector and will prosper when the economic climate is favorable. Wright said that the Administration has a comprehensive plan to restore such a climate. The main points of the plan are reductions in federal expenditures, regulatory reform, stable monetary policy, and tax policies that provide incentives for investment in plant and in more research.

There is, however, a "necessary and proper role" for federal agencies, said Wright. "We believe that this role has less to do with federal selection of specific types of commercial technologies for development and more to do with making sure that we are collecting the right type of pertinent data and properly assessing, analyzing, and communicating it to the private sector."

Wright said that the Commerce is reorganizing its departmental economic and policy development activities. Previously fragmented functions will be placed under the authority of a new, upgraded office, that of Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, so that the Commerce Department can make a greater contribution to fashioning economic policy within the Executive.

Congressional partisans of the recently built, now largely dismantled federal innovation apparatus appeared to take only mild consolation from this promised buildup of data gathering and policy-making capacities.***—John Walsh***