Book reviews

Industrial and Environmental Xenobiotics, International Congress Series No. 440. Edited by J. R. Fouts and I. Crut. (Pp. 345; \$57.00.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam. 1978.

Conferences can be a good thing, and no doubt the International Conference on Industrial and Environmental Xenobiotics, held in Prague in September 1977, was a jolly affair, with much useful discussion over coffee. But there is no conceivable reason for publishing the 86 two- to four-page abstracts.

There are many important questions concerning metabolism and toxicity of industrial materials. There are the questions of neurotoxicity of solvents, of organophosphorus compounds, of heavy metals, of exposure to low doses of carcinogens, and mutagens. None of these questions gets any solid discussion.

Much of the meeting concerned itself with the areas of drug metabolism currently fashionable in biochemical laboratories. Rat liver microsomes were described and dissected in numerous papers. However, many of the papers have the musty air of matters already published elsewhere and often.

Eight papers deal with chemical and biochemical models of drug oxidation. The paper by Anders on dihalomethanes is of interest.

Twenty-four papers deal with various *in vitro* systems such as isolated rat liver cells and perfused organs.

Twenty papers are put in a section on occupational and environmental aspects. The good papers can mostly be found in their full form by reading the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology*, the *Archives of Environmental Health*, and related journals. The question is whether this volume is a useful compilation of papers. The answer is that the papers are too short to be a useful introduction to the field, and there is no balance in their selection.

The last section of 34 papers on Mechanisms of Toxic Action has an

interesting paper by H. Kappus on lipid peroxidation induced by halogenated hydrocarbons.

This volume cannot be recommended. It is better to stick to the journals and proper review papers.

A. E. M. MCLEAN

A Guide to Improving Food Hygiene. By Graham Aston and John Tiffney. (Pp. 144; £2.50.) Northwood Publications Ltd: London. 1978.

This is a comprehensive guide to the subject of food hygiene and should be read by managers, supervisors, training officers, nurses and doctors who may be concerned with food handling at home, or in the catering and food industry, both on the production line and in retail outlets.

After a discussion of the up-to-date legal requirements for the food industry, a review of the aetiological factors in food poisoning ensues, and the common bacteriological causes are discussed. There is a useful comparative table of the different incubation periods, symptoms and recovery times of these bacterial causes. The design of food premises and equipment required for them is covered, together with a discussion on cleansing techniques. The chapter on pest control provides a thorough account of common infestation problems.

For the occupational health physician, however, the book falls short in one important area; health standards and procedures for monitoring the health of food handlers on engagement and on return from absence. It is a pity that the authors were not able to get more detailed or comprehensive information on this important subject which is treated so cursorily in many food companies. One stool check, which is referred to as part of a pre-employment health assessment of a food handler, costs money and is unsatisfactory. Either stool checks are not required, or else three stool checks on alternate days are necessary, depending on the occupational health physician's

clinical assessment of the employee.

Having said this, I think that the book is essential reading material for any occupational health physician, to provide a broader understanding of the subject of food hygiene before deciding on health standards for food handlers in the company.

It would have been interesting to have a short biography of the authors to establish their area of professional expertise and experience and to understand from what standpoint they wrote the book.

D. M. MILLER

Social Security Law, 2nd edition. By H. Calvert. (Pp. 549; £6.85.) Sweet and Maxwell: London. 1978.

This book examines the legal structure which has been built to put government policies on income security into practice. The author's task is not to be envied, for the structure is a rambling one full of intricacies and continually subject to renovation, alteration, extension, and demolition!

Since the first edition appeared in 1974, the National Insurance and Supplementary Benefit schemes have been amended and consolidated. Industrial Injuries Benefits have been merged into National Insurance, Family Allowances have been replaced by Child Benefit, and a new State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme has been launched. All of these changes are reflected in this edition and the opportunity has been taken to rewrite parts of the book and to expand coverage. Mention should be made in particular of the new chapters on Industrial Injuries Benefits and Adjudication on social security matters and the greatly improved treatment of Family Benefits and Supplementary Benefits.

The resulting second edition is a much more comprehensive and comprehensible book than the first. In addition, the changes by the author (and his assistant) have helped to produce a better-balanced