

Cost Considerations in Systems Analysis.

GENE H. FISHER.

Elsevier, New York, London, Amsterdam, 1971. xiv + 334 pp. £5.50.

Cost is not the most fascinating of subjects, except perhaps to accountants, and despite Gene Fisher's laudable attempts to liven it up (by including for instance Hoffnung's celebrated tale of the bricklayer and the barrel of bricks—here attributed to Charles Hitch) this book is not the Portnoy's Complaint of systems analysis. It is nevertheless an excellent read. Fisher combines good sense and readability. He writes of systems analysis in the defence field, drawing on many years experience at the Rand Corporation. The best indication I can give of style is to quote. "It is often said that money isn't the only thing in life—but that it is well ahead of whatever comes second. The reader could probably think of several close competitors, but actually the statement is deceiving. Money is not first, or second, or third in a list of the important things in life. Money is a means for attaining some of the important things. To the extent that it actually can procure them, money can be a proxy for them, and dollar costs can then be used as a meaningful measure of real costs." This seems simple, yet how frequently is the point misunderstood. The book contains, among other things, excellent chapters on estimating relationships and cost models, two core topics. Altogether a fine book to recommend to your manager—and most of you would do well to read it yourselves.

TONY FLOWERDEW

Computers in Transport Planning and Operation.

ANTHONY WREN.

Ian Allan, London, 1971. 152 pp. £3.00.

Anthony Wren is a leading exponent of the use of operational research and computers in transport planning and what he has done is to write about what he knows. In fact he knows a lot of useful (or potentially useful) things which have not been assembled together before and he has written about them in a condensed, but clear and systematic way. Almost all of this book will be invaluable material for operational research or management science students or practitioners who wish to move into the area of transport planning.

It is unfortunate, however, that marketing considerations seem to have dictated that the book be aimed at a wider audience than is likely to be naturally interested. This, presumably, is what has led to the all embracing (and very misleading) title and to the remarkable claim in the preface that the book is aimed at both transport management and at systems analysts. One hopes that