

Letters to the Editor

Edward Fiddy [Letter, *J. Opl Res. Soc.* 29 (7)] knows as well as every other member of the Society, that the trouble is that no-one is prepared to write the kind of paper that members want to read. (Sorry... with the exception of the promised paper from British Leyland.) But there are quite a lot of people ready to write the kind of paper that members do not want to read.

The sort of journal that members wanted was clearly established, by readership survey and exhaustive discussion, in the early days of the editorship of Ray Cuninghame-Green [see *Opl Res. Q.* 21 (1)] and is set forth in the declaration of editorial policy still published in every issue of the Journal. At that time, 1970, the Editor and Publications Committee created a variety of mechanisms to ensure a flow of suitable papers. To little avail. Ray set out to edit the journal strictly in accordance with this policy and the result was very nearly a corpse.

When Brian Haley took over the editorship, his first task was to revive the corpse and he has been widely acclaimed for having succeeded in doing so. However, like other Frankensteins before him, in reviving the corpse Brian has not created a living, breathing embodiment of O.R. but a strange, mis-shapen creature which no-one can recognize as the O.R. they love. And like other monsters of fiction, the monster of Academe is taking over.

Yet, the problem remains. Faced with the dilemma "publish or perish", Ray chose to perish and Brian chooses to publish. Reversion to a quarterly will not solve the problem, at least, it did not in 1970; publishing annually might, just.

British Steel Corporation

PETER MELLOR

PETER MELLOR is only partly right! We all know there is a problem, but not quite everyone thinks there is no solution. Arguments for doing nothing do, however, seem to preponderate: some think that hoary chestnuts are too difficult to crack, others that we have the best OR Journal there is, others (including Peter Mellor) that it is better now than it has ever been.

Professor Ackoff, at the recent conference, struck a resonating chord on the narrowing scope of OR and incidentally gave some views on the desirable content of an OR journal. He certainly doesn't seem to think that there is a shortage of the material he would like to read. Perhaps he is right, and that we have got to the stage when we are only interested in solving a very particular brand of problem—which does not include the problem of the Journal.

I am not so pessimistic. At the Conference a number of contributors said things which will actually affect what we do. Everyone should have the opportunity to read Ackoff's two papers. Get the script of Tocher's brilliantly simulated extempore harangue. Bring back the press gang. Deter the more abstruse contributions with an annual "No Prospect" award for the paper with the least chance of being read (possibly a sharp convex hull presented with vigour). The penultimate solution is to change the title of the Journal; ultimately we could, in desperation, like Ackoff, change our title.

British Leyland

EDWARD FIDDY