

so close to the Chernobyl accident. Perhaps, rather than being poorly informed, we have a nation of sceptics!

A.D. Owen

University of New South Wales

Information Technology Study — Community Perceptions by the Western Australian Science, Industry and Technology Council
(Perth, June 1986) pp. 55 + 68 on microfiche, \$10.00, ISBN 0-7309-0206-4.

Any publication that begins with a glossary of terms and concludes with a two-page list of acronyms is unlikely to excite a very large audience, regardless of the subject matter. Unless, of course, that audience happens to be fascinated by the development and implementation of information technology policy in Western Australia.

This booklet, published by the Western Australian Science Industry and Technology Council with assistance from various other government departments, contains the findings of a study designed to assess particular problems, capabilities and prospects for Western Australia in terms of its development as an information society. The findings are to act as a basis for future policy development in the area of information technology. The study was based on a series of interviews with experts, on structured interviews with members of the community and on the results of a questionnaire.

The Executive Summary at the beginning of the booklet provides the cursory scanner with a summary of the major findings of the study under the following headings:-

- Information
- The Information Industry
- Telecommunications
- Government and the Information Industry
- Legal Considerations
- Education
- Social Effects
- Conclusions

This section, together with the page of conclusions towards the end of the publication, almost make the rest of the publication a waste of the state's precious forestry resources as most of the information contained therein is available from various other sources.

What the reader may find confusing is the statement in the conclusion of the Executive Summary that the study showed Western Australia to be an information society. Such a conclusion seems to conflict with the premise stated earlier in the publication that the study was commissioned in the belief that Western Australia was an information society. Could it be a case of a study being commissioned to find what bureaucracy wants it to find?

Semantics aside, the publication does contain much useful information for a Western Australian organisation whose livelihood depends on current and future government policy in the area of information technology (or one

contemplating a move to Western Australia). The real worth of the publication will be revealed when future information technology policy is formulated by the Western Australian government. Will the findings of the study be considered or will the report be ignored? The latter has been the fate of many such publications purporting to contain important implications for the development of government policy.

Gary Gibson
Brisbane

Technology, Innovation and Economic Policy edited by Peter Hall
(Philip Allan, Oxford, 1986) pp viii + 248,
ISBN 0-86003-062-8, 0-86003-171-3 Pbk.

This book is a collection of essays that first appeared in a special number of the *Greek Economic Review*. In his Introduction, the editor, Peter Hall, states that the objective of publication is to give the reader some idea of the diversity of current research into the process of technological innovation and the policies appropriate for its stimulation and direction.

The first essay, contributed by the editor, and entitled 'The theory and practice of innovation policy', is a very well written survey of a number of issues in welfare economics and market failure that have been at the centre of economists' arguments either for or against government intervention in the process of technological change. In a brief thirty pages, nearly all the major topics are either touched upon or explored in some depth. It is to me a welcome addition to the list of references for my undergraduates, although those readers with little background in economics may find its compactness rather daunting. I must point out, however, that the survey is marred by one rather obvious but crucial error. On page 5 at the end of paragraph 2, Hall states that "... firms, in the main assumed risk averse, shy away from innovatory projects when compared with those associated with greater uncertainty." This should of course read, "when compared with those associated with greater certainty," or, to quote Arrow, "any unwillingness ... to bear risks will give rise to ... discrimination against risky enterprises as compared with the optimum."¹ I might suggest the inclusion of an erratum slip in future copies.

The second essay, by Stan Metcalfe, explores the processes of diffusion and selection, and is a fine example of how a whole body of work on technological change, post Nelson and Winter, is now proceeding. The key suggestion arising from the paper is that the diffusion of a technology and the development of that technology are simultaneously determined within any competitive market economy.

Following on these two theoretical papers, Rothwell presents a more impressionistic view of public policy problems, giving a personal view of the appropriate design of innovation policies to stimulate reindustrialisation. The