

IT HAPPENED LAST MONTH . . .

The editors of THE ELECTRONIC ENGINEER have sifted through the various technical and significant happenings of the past month and selected the items that would be of the most interest or use to you.

WESCON shows its strength . . . Attendance at WESCON dropped about 20% compared to the last Los Angeles showing in 1968. However, the consensus of the exhibitors was very definitely positive. Many expressed the opinion that those attending were the people they really wanted to reach. The quality of this year's WESCON and the favorable reaction of most exhibitors reflects the consistently good performance of the WESCON staff.

Things look better . . . Many WESCON exhibitors claim that their component and equipment sales are increasing, leading to the conclusion that we have "bottomed out." Several companies interviewed said that foreign sales were good, thus acting as a buffer during the slowdown.

Keyboard lights up . . . There are snap switch, reed switch, mercury switch, magnetic and Hall effect keyboards. And now, there is also an optoelectronic keyboard. Developed by TEC, Inc., Eden Prairie, Minn., the new bounce-free keyboard works with light for code generation. Physically, the keyboard looks and feels like any other one, but works with a light beam and shutter.

Metric system in the United States . . . Increased use of the metric system in the United States is inevitable, claims the Electronic Industries Association. Based on a membership survey, EIA said a majority would favor a conversion plan that called for government legislation with targeted changeover dates and voluntary participation. However, the survey also indicated that there is no great enthusiasm among electronic companies for or against establishment of the metric system in this country. A majority of those responding indicated they have stepped up their use of the system over the past 10 years, but 90% said they have no plans to make more changes toward its use. There was unanimous agreement that without a coordinated program or encouragement from the Federal government no significant change toward metrication would ever occur.

Computer surge predicted . . . A recent Department of Commerce survey predicted domestic electronic computer shipments would rise by 15% in 1971 to \$4.6 billion. In addition, it noted that greater emphasis than ever would be put on foreign markets as a last frontier for sizable computer and peripherals sales. This emphasis would result in more exports and the setting up of overseas subsidiaries. Sales for 1970 were pegged a \$4 billion, down 5% from 1969. Sec-

retary of Commerce Maurice Stans forecasts "a renewed upswing in business activity" for the entire economy.

A mighty foundation? . . . Dr. C. Lester Hogan, president of Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp., called for the formation of an industry-supported "foundation for human survival." Speaking at a WESCON symposium on "Applying Technology to Public Problems," Dr. Hogan enumerated the following functions for the proposed foundation: a clearinghouse for problems of the day, a data base for individual business responses, and an interface with government agencies. "It is time that business ceased pushing the burden of responsibility off on government or individual enterprises alone and shoulder the responsibilities as one," said Fairchild's spokesman. In addition to enlarging industry's activity in social problems, he called for increased Federal Government action, particularly against pollution of air and water, and the "terrible environment of the ghettos." The Fairchild president stated that "these commitments are more important than the space program and they will have more far-reaching significance."

Improved graphics . . . Following a 1-year feasibility study for NASA, CBS Labs. recommended the use of electron beam recording (EBR) wherever computer-processed information is called for, such as the Earth Resources Technical Satellite program in NASA's case. Capable of generating 20,000 TV lines on 70-mm film from magnetic tape or computer output, the EB recorder, according to CBS representative Robert Rutherford, makes it unnecessary "to make compromises for optical and film grain size variations."

"House of Wax," revisited . . . Unlike a few bad movies made in the 1950s, a new movie project is in the offing to make a truly three-dimensional movie that will be viewed without the funny glasses. Joseph Strick, producer of the movie versions of James Joyce's "Ulysses" and Henry Miller's "Tropic of Cancer," has entered into a 5-year licensing agreement with Holotron Corp. to make commercial movie holograms, using lens-less, three-dimensional photography by laser beams. There are, however, several obstacles to this first non-laboratory making of moving holograms. The showing of a holographic movie uses a behind-the-screen projection system that limits an audience to less than 100 viewers. Also, because of the demands of laser light, filming has to be within the confines of a studio.