

Schools Design Prize 1980

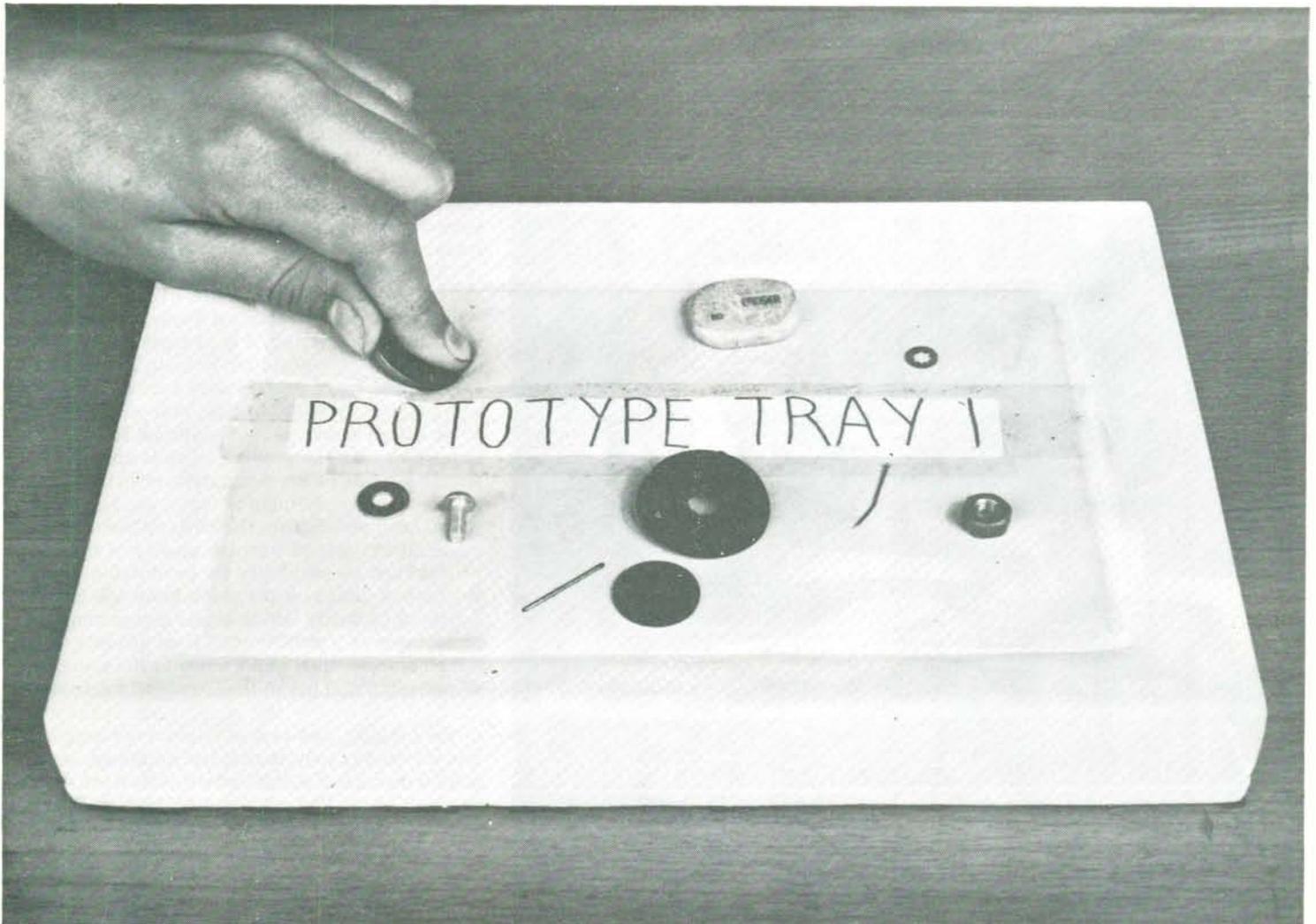
The fourth Schools Design Prize competition, organised by the Design Council and sponsored this year by Rolls Royce Limited, had its prizegiving ceremony at the Royal Institution on Wednesday, 12th November, 1980.

The annual Design Prize, established in 1977 under the sponsorship of G.E.C., has provided ample evidence that young people, when challenged to solve a problem or satisfy a need, can produce designs that show remarkable imagination, ingenuity and creative ability. The development of these talents is not only of great educational importance, but also vital to the future well being of British manufacturing industry, and this year one of the major features of the competition has been the close collaboration between the entrants and the sponsors. Mr. Donald Pepper, Vice Chairman of Rolls Royce, in his introductory remarks at the prizegiving described this collaboration in which design engineers from Rolls Royce visited over 100 schools to discuss design projects with entrants and to offer their expertise and guidance on specific

problems. The liaison he insisted was as important for industry as it was for the schools, for the long term health of the nation is dependent on fostering the potential that exists in many school design departments.

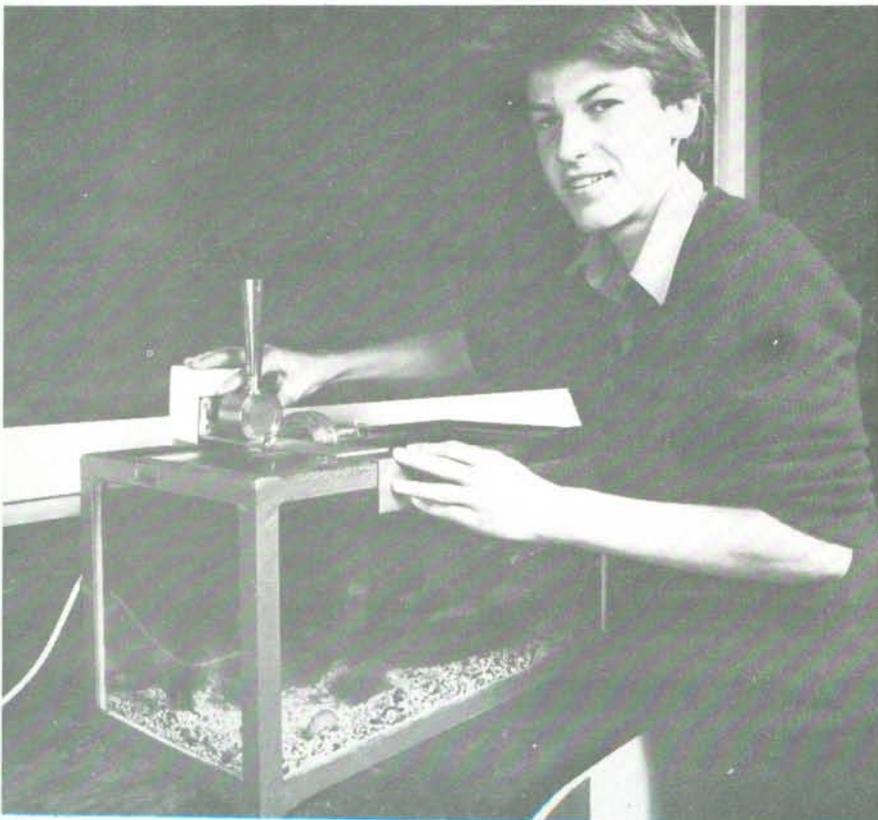
Echoing this need for a partnership between education and industry, Mr. Neil Macfarlane, M.P., Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at the D.E.S., welcomed the growth of the competition particularly for the technical and economic realism that the design projects demand. He welcomed the publication by the Design Council of the booklet 'Design Education at Secondary Level' (available from the Design Council, price £1.50), and emphasised the central role of design in the curriculum not simply as a route to a career in design but also as a major contributor to the general education of all children.

Making it easier to pick up the pieces
This tray, designed by Adrian Falkingham, Brian Shepherd, Ian Smith and Robert Wilson of The Holy Family High School, Goole, has a special surface which enables people with manipulative problems to pick up small objects from it more easily.



Mr. Steven Bragg, Vice-Chancellor of Brunel University, and chairman of the judging panel, then introduced the prizewinning projects, and highlighted three significant features of the year's awards. Firstly, the growth of projects with a real concern for the needs of the handicapped, secondly the evident enthusiasm and courage of many of the design teachers who then had to supervise projects in an area in which they were personally inexperienced, and thirdly the lack of girl prizewinners. This latter feature was attributable not to a lack of creative individual projects by girls, but to the judges' brief that required the projects to be suitable to production.

Feeding the fish when you've "gone fishing"
Sixteen-year-old Richard Thompson of The Sandon School, Chelmsford designed an automatic fish-feeder that would dispense the right amount of fish food at the right times to his fish while he was on vacation.



The Prizewinners

Group One (under fourteen years)

Pick-up tray for disabled – Adrian Falkingham, Brian Shepherd, Ian Smith, Robert Wilson, The Holy Family High School, Goole.

Group Two (over fourteen and under sixteen years)
Bell ringing automatic timer – Nicholas Ash, Michael Holloway, Adrian Trace, Blessed Edward Oldcorne RC Secondary School, Worcester.

Automatic fish-food dispenser – Richard Thompson The Sandon School, Chelmsford.

A/V aids for visually handicapped children – Sameer Ahmad, Trevor Coleshill, Martin Ward, Spurley Hey High School, Manchester.

Model boat test tank – David Taylor, Swaffham Hamonds High School, Swaffham.

Group Three (over sixteen years)

Amphibious stretcher – Philip Moreland, Finham Park Comprehensive School, Coventry.

Alternative sewing machine control – David Parkin, Horsforth School, Leeds.

Portable gymnasium – Howard Calvert, Orange Hill High School, Edgware.

Rucktent – Andrew Worrall, Rossall School, Fleetwood.

Braille teaching aid – Roderick Fairweather, Sevenoaks School, Sevenoaks.

Electro/mechanical grab – Martin Simkins, Wollaston School, Wellingborough.

After the presentation of the prizes by H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, the display of prizewinning projects was opened to the public. One unfortunate feature of this display was the conspicuous absence of the design development drawings that would have shown the developing thoughts of the candidates. Whilst the slick, professional display of products is hardly to be decried, it is particularly important in a design competition *for schools*, to emphasise the importance of process over product. The child's thinking and decision making, that will be reflected in his design sheets, is in educational terms more important than the product he ends up with. Herein lies one of the perennial conflicts of interest in national competitions of this type. The panel of judges, and presumably the Design Council are primarily concerned with the quality of the end product and its suitability for production. Many teachers of design on the other hand will have a different priority which whilst recognising the importance of a well finished final product will attach at least equal importance to the processes of designing that led to that product. Fortunately the only evidence of this conflict was in the display of the projects, and as if to counter my argument it was interesting to note that five of the six senior prize winners had submitted projects done under the aegis of the Oxford board 'A' level in Design, an examination noted for its commitment to developing design thinking.