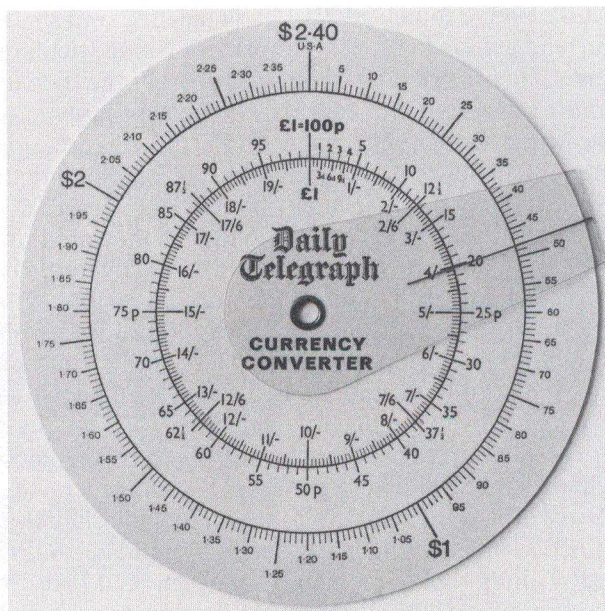


Title 217

The **Converter** of the old English £-s-d currency **to the new decimal notation** was the Author's only invention, but instead of patenting it, he transferred all rights to the *Daily Telegraph*. Many thousands were sold and the Author received royalties. The model illustrated has a US \$ ring added on the outer circumference, giving the Converter an additional usage for American visitors to Britain. The cursor indicates the equivalence 4/- shillings, 20 new pence and 48 US cents, when in 1971 the rate of exchange was US \$ 2.40 = £ 1. © Author.



At the end of January 1971 I had made my own small contribution to Britain's new currency, while in the USA President Nixon tried in vain to conquer all cancer diseases. He offered \$ 100 million to prevent the then annual death of 300000 Americans from all types of cancers, and he was quoted as saying "If we can put men on the Moon, we can cure cancer on Earth". It is now quite obvious to all scientists that money can buy technological miracles, whereas great advances in biological knowledge can only be achieved by basic science research over decades.

Without such advances in biology, as they are now gradually accumulating, [see Title 368], no cancer cure will ever be discovered. Of course if there is no basic science, technological miracles are also impossible. It has always been a disgrace that our great statesmen, with the exception of Benjamin Franklin, Chaim Weizmann and Jawaharlal Nehru, never had a scientific education to grasp the simple distinction between basic and applied science, and what can be achieved with their aid, when employed intelligently and efficiently.

The idea of a converter from the old to the new British currency came to me when I looked at a very beautiful reprint of a book, *Astronomicon Cæsareum* by Petrus Apianus (1495-1552), originally published in 1543 [see also Title 78]. It contained a series of splendidly hand-coloured volvelles, the circular paper discs, graduated along their circumference, which could be rotated against other concentric discs inscribed with further facts. Two or three such discs were mounted concentrically with a small pin on a page of the book and a coloured thread of cotton acted as a cursor. Apianus, a German astronomer and cartographer, was famous for the maps and illustrations in his many books and obviously used volvelles to facilitate astronomical calculations.

What could be easier than to have a circular disc with the New Currency on the outer circumference, £ 1 = 100 NP (New Pence), and the old Imperial currency on an inner, also central ring, both printed on the same piece of plasticised cardboard, no rotation needed. Only a single transparent plastic cursor was required to find the equivalents of old and new values.

Once I had made a simple rough prototype, I discussed it with my great friend Lord Hanworth, whose engineering knowledge I greatly valued. He advised me against seeking a patent for the converter, time was after all pressing and suggested I obtained a sponsor for the gadget. I could think of none better than *The Daily Telegraph* who accepted the idea, advertised, marketed and sold it most successfully in two sizes, 8 cm and 11 cm diameter respectively, as a copyright article with its own imprint and my name on each item. I received a good royalty from the considerable sale of these converters.