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## Introductory Remarks

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## Introductory remarks

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The following papers were all presented at a two-day meeting of the Royal Society on 28 and 29 October 1976. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of the subject since its introduction into industry and civil government after World War II. After an introductory review, the papers were grouped into two parts.

The first group of papers were concerned with theory and methodology. Two papers therefore discussed the development of the mathematical techniques of the subject, and a further two papers discussed the methodological problems of applying such techniques in the general areas of planning and industrial control. Two of the speakers were at one time project leaders at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and thus spoke from direct international experience.

The second group of papers was concerned with the practice of the subject. Since the only people that can speak with authority about the impact of the subject on decision making are the decision makers themselves, three senior managers from industry and government reviewed the use that was made of operational research and systems analysis in their organizations. A further two papers from overseas respectively reviewed case studies which made some progress in tackling those aspects of planning and organization which are primarily concerned with 'value'.

The subject is already too large for such a small collection of papers to attempt to be comprehensive. It is also developing too rapidly for any one author to claim to be authoritative and unchallenged. In particular, arguments persist about the underlying nature of the subject and the validity of various methods of incorporating value judgements into decision making processes. These points were made in the discussion. On the whole, however, the programme was too full to allow a balanced discussion of the papers, and it has been thought better therefore to publish these papers as they stand. As such they give a fair idea of the progress that has been made in applying scientific principles to problems that were once thought to be beyond analysis. The scientific debate will, of course, continue.