THE ALPHABETIZATION OF ISLAMIC NAMES

In Volume 5 of The Indexer, pages 37-8, Brigadier Searight gave advice on indexing Islamic names, but did not deal with the problem of alphabetization. I recently indexed the second volume of a book containing many Islamic names, and instructions on this point were passed on to me by the indexer of the first volume. Names beginning with al- were to be indexed under the initial letter of the following word. Names beginning *Abd Allah were to precede those beginning Abd al-. Although al- was to be ignored at the beginning of a name, in the middle of a name it was to be reckoned with, and so was the abbreviation b. (for ben or ibn=son of). The sequences thus obtained may be illustrated by the following:

- Muhammad 'Abduh
- Muhammad Ahmad
- Muhammad al-Amm
- Muhammad al-Mahdr
- Muhammad Air
- Muhammad b. 'Abbad
- Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah
- Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karlm
- Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhāb
- Muhammad b. Abī Āmir
- Muhammad b. Mūsā
- Muhammad b. Sām
- Muhammad Faqīl
- Muhammad Iskandar
- Muhammad Tayrāb

On consulting the indexes of a number of other books on Islamic subjects published within the last few years, I found that this plan of alphabetization is not by any means a standard one. Most indexers, but not all, ignore al- at the beginning of Islamic names. A few index al-Ghazalf, al-RazT, and similar names under A. In alphabetizing long names, indexers who ignore al- and b. in the middle of names are about as numerous as those who observe them. The matter is not unimportant, for so many Muslims have names beginning *Abd Allah, Aḥmad, Muhammad, etc., that the other parts of the name are essential for identification, and doubt about alphabetical order may cause a reader to miss the name he is seeking.

Some authoritative ruling would be welcome to indexers. Would readers who have special knowledge of Islamic names, or of indexing them, please write to the Editor.

M.D.A.

A POUND OF FLESH

‘The index. Here is another favourite way of reducing production costs—just reduce the index to nonentity. A full index would be the straw that breaks the camel’s back, so let the reader be the goat. Fair gives one the hump.’

This latest championship of the full index comes from the pen of that lively literary critic, Nigel Dennis, and the book he is reviewing (in the Sunday Telegraph of 14 June) is The life of Ezra Pound, by Noel Stock (Routledge). Appropriately he entitles the review, which he starts by castigating the parsimony of some publishers, with the heading above.

G.N.K.

INDEXING IN AUSTRALIA

An Australian member, Mr. H. Godfrey Green, has sent us information that the Australian Library Journal for March 1970 has articles on indexing the Commonwealth and West Australian Hansards, and the South Australian and Queensland Parliamentary Debates.

This issue also notes that the Commonwealth Gazette of 13th March, 1969, carried an advertisement for a parliamentary indexer to prepare indexes recording the business of the House and formal documents, and commented that ‘an appointment of this kind will be welcomed as recognizing the importance of indexing as a discipline and as an integral aspect of parliamentary publishing’.

The Indexer 7 (3) Spring 1971

123