

FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

IN spite of the general economic recession many postal administrations seem to have entered into 1982 with the same mentality prevalent in earlier and better years. To some administration the stamp collector appears to be a creature sent into the world to be fleeced. These are strong words but the unremitting spate of special and omnibus issues, whether maxi or mini, leaves one with no other choice.

Last year we had one royal event commemorated by a large number of countries, including North Korea which has no use for royalty and no discernible connection with the British Royal Family. This year we shall be celebrating the Princess of Wales's 21st birthday, Lord Baden Powell, the Year of the Elderly, the World Cup and, possibly, the birth of a royal baby. With every special issue the poor collector is told that if he misses out he will be losing opportunity of a lifetime. When it comes to the total cost of every such issue the selling blurbs become very coy.

There are few postal administrations not too obviously obsessed with milking the collector dry. Those few who still think of the collector as someone worth cultivating and who follow reasonably sober issuing policies are the ones whose stamps are likely to have a more lasting value. In Europe, for example, the postal administrations which have not resorted to gimmickry includes Andorra, Cyprus (both failings, particularly with regard to Greek & Turkish) the Faroes, Greenland, Iceland, Malta and Switzerland. These countries do have their number of issues per year, but their sins are still venial ones.

Some other countries have clambered on the band-wagon of gutter-

pairs, special booklets, innumerable maximum cards, special size sheetlets for each issue and so on ad infinitum. These countries are aided and abetted by dealers eager to make a quick killing and always ready to move on to other and better things.

In the non-European area the countries with a sober issuing policy, although not above an occasional gimmick, include the Antarctic Territories (Australian, British, French and New Zealand), Ascension Island, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling), Islands, Pitcairn Islands, Tokelau Islands and Tristan da Cunha. The South African homeland, if one forgets the political odour, have so far managed to keep their noses clean philatelically.

Every collector is free to collect whatever pleases him and if he finds it interesting to collect colourful labels no one can gainsay him. However, it is always advisable to devote some of one's energies to collecting stamps and postal material of a country whose stamps are really used for the actual pre-payment of mail and which does have to resort to gimmicks to entice collectors. One hopes that when the exuberance of certain administrations is exhausted they will again start to tread the path of philatelic sobriety.