

Society of Radiographers are to be asked to send one representative each to serve on the committee. This committee was given power to elect its own chairman and to formulate a constitution for the Group. In addition to providing a medium for the exchange of views and experiences on the practice of radiography and X-ray crystallography in industry, it is to be hoped that the Group may ultimately issue a report summarizing many of the essential practical points of importance to users of X-ray plant, as one noticed at the above-mentioned Conference that many quite elementary matters of technique were not generally known in the various industries employing X-rays. Membership of the Industrial Radiology Group is open to all who are interested, whether or not they are at present members of the Institute of Physics.

#### Association of Scientific Workers

THE annual council meeting of the Association of Scientific Workers was held in Birmingham on May 24 and 25; eighty delegates were present representing scientific workers and engineers in industrial and Government posts as well as university staff and students. As this was the first council meeting to be held since the registration of the Association as a trade union, the reports presented, and the ensuing discussion, were chiefly concerned with the planning of an industrial policy for the Association. Discussion centred mainly around a report by the Industrial Sub-Committee which analysed the present conditions of scientific and engineering staff. This report showed that even under peace-time conditions, there is a considerable difference between salaries paid to people having the same qualifications but employed by different firms. In the engineering industry, for example, the general salary level is notably less than in certain chemical firms. Increments were often obtained by negotiation between the employer and the individual, but war-time restrictions on change of employment have removed the individual's chief bargaining instrument. A survey among members of the Association shows that there is a marked tendency in industry for no increments to be given, while in Government establishments war-time posts carry a fixed salary.

It was pointed out in the discussion that cancellation of increments is particularly unfair to the younger scientific workers whose salaries are frozen at the low starting figure. Attention was also directed to the injustices caused by failure to grant payment for overtime to many scientific workers and engineers. It was said to be a common experience, particularly in large firms, for hours of work and holidays to be altered suddenly without consultation with the unorganized sections of the staff. The conclusion drawn by the Industrial Sub-committee of the Association and endorsed by the council meeting is that collective action through the Association is the only effective method by which engineers and scientific workers can safeguard their conditions, and bring them into relationship with those of organized

sections of industry. The council unanimously adopted a resolution in favour of close co-operation between the Association and other trade unions.

#### Mummification in America

REFERENCE has already been made (NATURE, April 5, p. 413) to the first part of a description by Dr. Aleš Hrdlička, curator of physical anthropology in the U.S. National Museum, of investigations undertaken in mummy caves and rock shelters in the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska (*Scientific Monthly*, Jan.-Feb. 1941). It would appear that the aboriginal inhabitants were at some unknown period replaced by the Aleuts, among whom, comparatively lately, Russian penetration took place. The Aleuts practised mummifying, though whether they began to do so after their arrival in the islands or whether they brought the custom with them from their unknown place of origin remains a mystery. The mummies of both sexes were stored in the caves lying upon driftwood, and differences of physical anthropology among them suggest that a few members of the pre-Aleut people had been allowed to survive, perhaps in a condition of slavery. The finding of one or two objects of Russian origin with some of the mummies seems to indicate that the practice continued until a fairly recent date. A certain amount of cremation also appears to have been customary, and interesting and well-developed industries showing some degree of artistry were collected. The difficulties under which the expedition worked were very considerable, but nevertheless much valuable information has been added to our knowledge of these interesting peoples.

The practice of mummifying the dead, like that of trephination, is always intriguing. Why should these elaborate processes have been undertaken at all? Connected as they often were with magic or religious notions, their discovery sometimes throws a sidelight on the ideas of bygone peoples; whereas a study of the ordinary industries of such folk only determines their material culture—only tells us how they lived, not how they thought. Actually, mummifying has never been a common method of dealing with the dead either in modern or in ancient times. Egypt, of course, furnishes the classic example, but in the New World there were peoples both in South and North America who practised the rite. The orthodox diffusionist naturally claims that the custom in, say, Peru derived from Egypt; but frankly it is difficult to believe that the two or three prehistoric American peoples really had any connexion either with the Old World or with each other. It would seem far more likely to have been the result of a spontaneous development consequent upon a somewhat similar outlook on death.

#### Floating Electric Power Plants

MR. A. C. HARDY, in an article entitled "The Electric Ship" in the *Electrician* of May 2, outlines some recent trends and developments. A project for a 50,000 kw. self-contained, floating power plant.