is possible, and pests due to drought are controlled. Soluble fertilizers can be added to the water and minor elements also supplied in this way. Production is speeded up and a greater variety of vegetables can be grown.

The discussion was opened by Lord Bledisloe, who was followed by Sir John Russell and others. In replying to questions Dr. Bewley said that, whereas glasshouse growers as a whole are not attracted by cloches, new entrants into horticulture are learning how to use them and many seem satisfied with the results. He thought that no objection could be raised to steel houses on the basis of more severe temperature fluctuations. He had examined most glass-substitute materials, and while some are satisfactory for a year or two, those that are cheap enough for commercial purposes do not stand up to weather conditions very long. He had long been interested in waste heat from power stations and factories. Usually the waste hot water is not hot enough for circulating in the glasshouse pipes, and there is the disadvantage of injurious fumes and grit owing to the close proximity of the industrial plant.

Mr. Bush, in reply to questions, emphasized that shelter belts should always contain gaps through which the cold air can drain away. The lime makes a good shelter belt, but must not be too dense.

Mr. Secrett said that the addition of nitrate of potash in the irrigation water had always given better results than nitrate of soda, but he could not say why. It was perhaps surprising that the very small amounts of fertilizers used in the water had such big effects, but it was probably due to the repeated applications. There is no limit to the area that can be irrigated provided the spray lines are available. His units are four acres, and at Milford he irrigated twenty acres from one centre.

INTER-UNIVERSITY RELATIONS AND EXCHANGES

THE question of inter-university relations, which was discussed on July 21 at the Congress of Universities of the Commonwealth, is partly an administrative and partly an academic question. On one hand, it is necessary to make such business arrangements between the universities as will enable a young student or teacher to move from one university to another without academic loss of standing or financial embarrassment. On the other, it is necessary to make such an exchange sufficiently attractive from an academic point of view for the man or woman contemplating a temporary migration to make sure that it will be academically advantageous. No young man with academic ambitions —which will probably be centred in his own country— will welcome the idea of an exchange which will leave him for a year in a university which is not equipped whether in its libraries or laboratories to enable him to develop his own research. Conversely, no university will welcome a teacher who regards himself as nobly and self-sacrificingly spreading the joys of learning to universities less lucky than his own.

This latter problem can only be met by the universities knowing each other better. Though many of the speakers at the Congress admitted that their universities were ill-equipped for certain types of work, almost all were able to claim that in one subject or another they were doing work, or had work waiting to be done, which would be most attractive to a young teacher anxious to become master of some topic. The vast quantity of work awaiting the historian of Australia is an example. The first essential is that the universities should know each other far more intimately than they do at present. The Congress agreed to recommend that the universities of each country should be encouraged to form an agency which should act as an instrument of communication with universities elsewhere. Further, since the whole Congress meets only every five years, it was suggested that, in the years between such meetings, vice-chancellors and senior members of staff should visit each other as frequently and as regularly as possible.

The Congress passed several resolutions designed to make the traffic between universities easier and less hazardous. The first resolution dealt with the announcement and advertising of vacancies. It is in this stage that the central office of the Universities Bureau can be of great assistance. It can keep in touch with the appointments committees of the several universities and provide information about the type of post to be filled. It can arrange for candidates to be interviewed by a panel composed both of experts in any subject and of men acquainted with the university which is advertising a vacancy. It can arrange for the successful candidate to be given expert advice about what he may expect to find at the university to which he is going. But it cannot fulfil these functions unless it is very fully informed of the needs of the advertising universities. Many posts are filled by a local man although the formality of advertising may be maintained. It is obviously undesirable in these cases to put candidates to the expense and inconvenience of applying for a vacancy which is more nominal than actual. But if the Bureau receives the help it needs, it can be of immense use to any universities arranging exchanges.

The second resolution dealt with the question of superannuation benefits. Though the importance of ensuring that a man does not suffer financial loss if he goes temporarily to another university needs no stressing, the method of achieving this end is extremely complicated. A committee was set up to inquire into the possibilities.

The question of travelling expenses is closely related. The cost of moving from one part of the Commonwealth to another is in itself sufficient to make the idea impossible for most aspirants. It was agreed to approach bodies or foundations which may have resources available for this purpose; and the Congress was given to understand that proposals would be sympathetically received by some at least of these foundations. It is quite certain that no exchanges can be successfully arranged unless the finances are arranged in such a way as to make the project if not attractive at least reasonable, from the point of view of the scholar or student who is contemplating migration.

The Congress had before it a report written by Mr. Douglas Veale, registrar of the University of Oxford. Mr. Veale has recently been in Australia and wrote an account of his visit and put forward several recommendations as a result of what he had learned. As his memorandum took the form of a report to his own University, it was not discussed by the Congress; but it included the greater part of what the delegates to the Congress were seeking,

and, moreover, it put it in a form which implied that it would not be impossible to implement the proposals almost at once.

Mr. Veale's first recommendation was based on the fact that universities in Britain are overcrowded and under-staffed. A great part of the extra burden which is now being borne in British universities could be shared with young postgraduates from abroad—preferably young men immediately after their appointment to lectureships at their own universities. There would be no difficulty in asking them to take a few hours teaching, by which means they could supplement their incomes without making it impossible to do research work on their own. Mr. Veale found that the idea of combining teaching and research in this way would be welcomed by the Australian universities; and there is every reason to think that it would be to the advantage both of the teacher and of the taught.

Mr. Veale's other recommendations were closely in line with the resolutions which the Congress had passed. The discussion and the resolutions showed two things very clearly: first, a realization on the part of universities in all parts of the Commonwealth that it would be greatly to the advantage of all concerned if they could know each other better, and make more frequent exchanges of men and ideas; secondly, a determination to overcome the difficulties which are at present obstructing the way. A great deal depends on the reports which will be issued by the committees set up by the Congress at Oxford.

HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

THE report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended March 31, 1947 (Cmd. 7441, pp. 1–204. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1948. 3*s*. 6*d*. net), records, in general, another favourable bill of health. In spite of the continuance of rationing and other controls, and of the various additional ingredients of that too-familiar conception 'austerity', the vital statistics and other features of this report suggest that austerity is not really doing the population of Britain very much harm. In the period covered by the report the birth-rate rose to 19·1 per thousand of the population, a figure which is the highest recorded since 1923; and the infant mortality-rate fell to 43, which is a new low record. Maternal mortality also fell to a record low level of 1·43 per thousand total births, and death-rates at ages of less than fifteen years from measles, scarlet fever, rheumatic fever and heart disease were all the lowest ever reported. The death-rate was 12·0, which is the lowest since the previous best (11·6) in 1938.

One of the outstanding features of the year was the success of the diphtheria immunization policy. Deaths from this disease numbered 472, instead of the 2,361 reported in 1938, and there was a fall of 36 per cent in the notifications of diphtheria as compared with the year 1945. The greatest proportional decline was in the age-group 5–10 years (42 per cent), and the next greatest in the age-group 10–15 years (39 per cent). These figures speak for themselves; but the warning is issued by Sir Wilson Jameson that continual control of the antigens used for the immunization and maintenance of a high proportion of immune children are essential if this excellent result is to be maintained.

Encouraging also is the fact that in 1946 new low records were reported for deaths in Britain from respiratory and other forms of tuberculosis. In 1946 the number of deaths from this cause was 22,847, whereas ninety years ago it was 66,000 in England and Wales among a population half its present size. The report wisely avoids complacency about this advance in the control of a disease which still causes nearly one third of all deaths at ages between fifteen and thirty-nine. More beds for tuberculous cases are urgently required to accommodate the long waiting lists, and just as urgent is the need for more staff. If, says the report, the staff had been available, half the patients awaiting treatment could have been given beds during the last two years.

Notifications of whooping cough were higher than in 1945, a fact which will not surprise the parents of young children; but deaths from this distressing disease were lower. A reliable prophylactic vaccine has yet to be found, but experimental work on this problem is being energetically continued.

A serious feature of the report is the great increase of syphilis. New male cases at treatment centres rose to 10,705, a figure which is nearly double that of the previous year. Female cases, on the other hand, were 6,970 compared with 5,527 in 1945. An increase of 1,654 in the deaths from cancer is also recorded; but the report emphasizes that modern methods of treatment of this disease can do much to relieve the pain and suffering that it causes.

Among the many interesting facts recorded in the report is the slight decline since the middle of 1945 of about three-quarters of a pound in the average weights of adults aged twenty-five to fifty-four; but the improvements in the heights and weights of school children recorded during the later years of the War have been, on the whole, maintained. Nutritional surveys have shown that only 33 out of 7,216 persons in various parts of Britain could be classified as badly nourished.

During the first six months of 1946, smallpox was a continual menace because of the heavy return traffic from India by sea and air; but the energetic action of the health authorities confined the outbreaks that occurred within narrow limits. Readers of this part of the report will realize how much steady and unrecorded work is continually being done to safeguard the health of the people; and travellers by sea and air who read it in conjunction with the section dealing with the control of airborne and seaborne disease will understand that any regulations to which they have to submit when they enter Britain are not lightly imposed. In these days of rapid travel over great distances, it is clearly the duty of every traveller to see that he does not wittingly carry into the country which he visits diseases which may be deadly to the people living there.

It is not possible in a short review to record all the other interesting features of this comprehensive report. Apart from the facts it gives about the incidence of diseases other than those mentioned above, it includes discussions of the work of the emergency public health laboratory service, now a permanent feature of the medical organisation of the country, and of the excellent work being done on all aspects of maternal care, nutrition, the improvement of hospitals and their conflict with the building restrictions, water supplies, health publicity and other aspects