

NEWS and VIEWS

Plant Industry in Australia: Dr. O. H. Frankel

DR. O. H. FRANKEL has been appointed chief of the Division of Plant Industry, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Canberra. Dr. Frankel has had wide experience in the botanical field and has made outstanding contributions as a geneticist. He has been on the staff of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Zealand, since 1929. He was appointed first as a geneticist at the Wheat Research Institute, and later became chief executive officer of the Institute; more recently, he has been director of the Crop Research Division of the Department. A British subject by naturalization, Dr. Frankel was born in Vienna in 1900. He holds the degrees of doctor of agriculture of the University of Berlin, and master of agricultural science and doctor of science of the University of New Zealand. Dr. Frankel and his co-workers at the Wheat Research Institute have succeeded in breeding wheats which are suited to the unfavourable New Zealand environment and yet which combine the desirable properties of high yield and high quality. Thus New Zealand farmers can now grow wheats suitable for high-quality bread-making, whereas previously their wheats produced only low-grade biscuit flour.

Technical Personnel Committee

IN a written answer to a question in the House of Commons on July 26, Mr. Alfred Robens, Minister of Labour and National Service, said that it has been decided to reconstitute the Technical Personnel Committee, which, under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey, dealt with questions of scientific and technical man-power during the Second World War and during the immediate post-war period.

The terms of reference of the Committee are: (1) To consider, make recommendations and deal with questions relating to the home and overseas demand for the available supply of scientific and technical personnel of professional or approximately professional standards, including the making of recommendations on its economic use and the need for increasing the available supply. (2) In connexion with the overseas demand for such personnel: (a) to make recommendations upon appropriate steps to promote the recruitment from the United Kingdom of persons required to assist the economic development of under-developed countries; (b) to consider any special steps which are required to provide opportunities for training in the United Kingdom of persons from under-developed countries. The Committee will be empowered to invite representatives from other Government departments or outside interests to be present when matters of concern to them are being discussed.

The membership of the reconstituted Committee is as follows: Chairman, Lord Hankey; members nominated by the Federation of British Industries, Sir Arthur Fleming, Sir Wallace Akers, and Captain A. M. Holbein; representative of the Universities, Sir Edward Appleton; chairman of the University Grants Committee, Sir Arthur Trueman; deputy chairman of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy (nominated by the Lord President), Prof. S. Zuckerman; one representative each of the Treasury, Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Board of Trade, Commonwealth Relations Office, Ministry of Labour,

Ministry of Supply, and Lord President's Office. The secretary will be Mr. A. J. S. James, Ministry of Labour and National Service.

Productivity of British Land

A SUB-COMMITTEE of the Research Committee of the Rural Reconstruction Association has published a report on "The land which would be required to produce the food requirements of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the basis of present yields of crops and livestock". The Committee has taken the consumption of food in 1946 as a year when the diet was adequate and of which accurate estimates exist. By taking each of the main items in the diet it worked back to the land which would be required for total production, which was found to be 49,553,000 acres of crops and grass, whereas the total actually available is only 35,530,000, plus some nine million acres of rough grazing. It is thus concluded that Britain could feed herself if the average annual yield of crops could be increased by about 40 per cent. Alternatively, the calculations show that the target of the Ministry of Agriculture of 55 per cent home production of essential foods is modest. The report has very interesting appendixes on land requirements for poultry, cattle and pigs. The Committee in its calculations suggests that a much greater proportion of the meat requirements should be obtained from pigs and that if five million acres of cropland were devoted to production of pig foods the number could be increased to about 16 million, providing nearly 60 per cent of the estimated meat consumption. The report is one which deserves careful study.

Scottish Hill Farm Research Committee: First Report

THE first report of the Scottish Hill Farm Research Committee of the Scottish Advisory Council has now been published (pp. 134+16 plates; Edinburgh and London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1951; 3s. 6d. net). Set up in 1945, this Committee was appointed to advise on the development and co-ordination of research in relation to technical problems of hill farming in Scotland. Three research farms have been established, each affording facilities for different types of investigation. At Sourhope, Roxburghshire, the management of grass hills is the dominating question; at Glensaugh, Kincardineshire, wintering problems are under consideration; and at Lephinmore, Argyll, the co-ordination of hill farming with forestry is being studied. The work carried out during 1945-49 is reviewed in detail. Among the interesting questions investigated is the possibility of applying fertilizers to hill land by means of aeroplane. Preliminary trials indicate that satisfactory distribution of lime can be effected in this way, but that reduction in costs is essential before the method can become an economic proposition. Problems concerned with sheep naturally form a major part of the agricultural research work in Scotland, and co-ordination of field trials regarding sheep-dips has been attained and a survey made of the breeding systems used in hill flocks. Various diseases cause unnecessary loss, and the Committee emphasizes the need for extension of the veterinary service. Special attention has been paid to heather. A review of the literature on the subject is included in the report, and recommendations made as to profitable lines of work to be undertaken with regard to this valuable plant. A new Committee to continue in office for a three-year