of the Order of the British Empire will be particularly welcomed by all associated with the Imperial College of Science and Technology. It was to this College of the University of London that Dr. Penney went in 1927, entering as a Royal Scholar. After gaining a first-class honours degree in mathematics he remained at the Imperial College for two more years, devoting his time to research work in mathematical physics. One result of this work was a paper written in collaboration with Dr. R. de L. Kronig which has become well known and is still widely read by students of metal physics. In 1931 he was awarded a Commonwealth Fellowship and continued his research work at the University of Wisconsin. Two years later he returned to Great Britain to study at Cambridge, where he became interested in the theory of molecular structures, a field of research in which he has made notable advances. In 1936 he was appointed reader in mathematics in the Imperial College and served in this capacity until the outbreak of the Second World War. Early in 1940, he undertook part-time research work for the Ministry of Home Security, and since that time has been increasingly concerned with defence research. The very important part which he has played in this field is now well known, and has been recognized, first, by the conferment of the O.B.E. in 1946, and now by the well-deserved honour recently announced.

Economies in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research

In a written reply in the House of Commons on October 28 to a question from Sir William Wakefield regarding economies in scientific and industrial research (*Hansard*, col. 1735–7; October 28), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works, representing the Lord President of the Council, stated that no major plan or activity of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has been eliminated. A reduction of twenty-five posts in its non-industrial staff has brought the Department's establishment to 3,054. Planned recruitment has accordingly been halted, many outstanding vacancies cancelled and the reduced man-power resources re-allocated, reductions in headquarters staff and in the Building Research Establishment providing the further staff essential for the Mechanical Engineering Research and Hydraulics Research Establishments. The original estimates for the Department for 1952–53 have been reduced to £5,390,950 net, an increase of £24,950 over the estimates for the previous year, the total staff being now 4,049 as compared with 4,317 for 1951–52. Non-industrial staff currently authorized for the headquarters was 281 and for building research 420, as compared with 299 and 489, respectively, actually employed on October 1, 1951. In reply to the question whether the proposed cuts had been agreed by the Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, it was stated that the decision to restrict the available man-power and to reduce the estimates had been communicated to the Advisory Council and that the re-allocations were made with the Council's knowledge.

National Fuel Problems in Great Britain

The debate in the House of Commons on the Ridley report, recently initiated by the Ministry of Fuel and Power, afforded little evidence about a possible Government fuel policy. Reserve was to be expected in the adoption of some of the Ridley Committee's proposals, though the Minister in his rightly cautious remarks about co-ordination gave no suggestion that he has taken the hint given by the Committee and proposes to exercise the powers he already possesses in a way that would make the new body recommended in the report superfluous. Nor is the Minister prepared to recommend the provision of financial incentives to instal improved solid-fuel appliances for domestic heating, either to private consumers or to local authorities, even to the extent of removal of purchase tax. Equally he was unprepared to give industrialists any incentive to instal fuel-saving rather than other capital equipment. While accepting the Committee's view that competition should continue between the fuel and power industries and that, within a proper framework which maintains full freedom of choice for the consumer, the choice could be relied upon to bring about the best use of fuels, he ignored the essential condition laid down—that fuel prices should closely correspond to the relevant costs of supplying the different fuels. Apart from shirking this critical issue of price, neither the Minister nor his Parliamentary Secretary, who replied to the debate, succeeded in making it quite clear what was meant by their acceptance of the recommendation that an independent advisory service on fuel efficiency should be set up, controlled and financed by industry. The Ridley Committee recommended the continuance of the Ministry's own advisory service; but this the Minister proposes to cut down or at least limit to advice on fuel efficiency in government departments. The Parliamentary Secretary's efforts to elucidate this point are likely to have an unsettling effect on the technical advisers at present in the government service rather than to promote economy.

Scientific and Technical Information for Industry

In opening an industrial and commercial information exhibition at the Manchester Central Library on November 3, A. H. S. Hinchcliffe, after referring to his association with Sir John Stopford in forming the Manchester Joint Research Council in 1944, again stressed the importance of securing the effective utilization by British industry of existing knowledge, and the extent to which the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research is concerned with this problem as well as with the acquisition of new knowledge. Mr. C. Nowell, chief librarian of the Manchester Public Libraries, expressed the view that many of the smaller firms in the area are unaware of the existing facilities of the Commercial Library and Information Department, the Technical Library and the Reference Library in Manchester and the services they could render; Sir Raymond Street, in seconding the vote of thanks moved by Mr. Nowell, agreed that the small firm constitutes a major problem in raising the standard of efficiency and productivity in British industry. The exhibition, which has been arranged in association with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the British Cotton Industry Research Association, illustrates not only the services and resources of the Manchester Public Libraries, and more particularly of the Technical Library and the Commercial and Information Department, but also the work of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Although the main emphasis is laid on the work of the Department in disseminating scientific and technical information through its numerous publications and its own information department, some indication is given of the scientific and technical work carried out,