The first impression derived from this study is that of the confusion which arises from lack of clear thinking and the failure to reconcile in practice the different interests which nationalization was intended to serve. Next it is clear that some aspects of the conduct of these vast industries go unstudied and unnoticed, and it is possible that much of what the public really thinks and wants is overlooked. A public relations service is clearly essential, and the question is what form it should take.

The study points out that success in this field depends above all on the attitude of the Boards: if their members are insensitive to the problem, the public relations officers can do little, nor has any agreement been reached within the industries on the functions of a public relations department. Few public relations officers appear to have a clear conception of the limits of their obligations, and the Trust suggests that the position of such departments in the nationalized industries requires review in terms both of the functions assigned to them and of the qualifications of their staffs. Moreover, the role of Parliament in this field is limited, and, although the present handicap on its effectiveness may diminish with time, the present system of parliamentary accountability has a strong decentralizing influence which so far the system of consumer councils has failed to counteract. While there is scope for detailed inquiries by universities, research institutions and other interested bodies, which could keep the public in close touch with the performance of the industries, such independent inquiries would have to be conducted on a systematic and intensive basis.

The Trust concludes from this study that the nationalized industries need to give far more attention to this problem, and, in particular, to take a much wider view of their responsibilities than the duties imposed by the nationalizing Acts. They need to find out far more than they already know about the consumer and his views, and the Trust cites the listener research of the British Broadcasting Corporation as an example of what might be done, possibly in co-operation with the consumer councils. No gentler hint that some industries—the study disclaims any inclusive validity for its conclusions—need to become more mindful of the idea of public service could well be given, but the main emphasis is on the flow of information in both directions—from, as well as to, the Boards. The final conclusion, however, is the most urgent: the centre of interest in the relations of the industries with the public needs shifting away from the top. The spur of public scrutiny must be applied at all points, for without ultimate control by Parliament domination by the sectional interests, already so much in evidence, may well follow; but for the individual consumer the basis of public relations is local. The industries should turn their attention to this in an attempt to overcome the feeling of remoteness which many of the public undoubtedly feel and which, as Mr. L. Hardern pointed out last year in his contribution on this theme to "Problems of Nationalised Industry", provides "all the elements of a growing opposition or hostility to the whole of the nationalised industries, irrespective of the success or efficiency they may achieve in their tasks". Apart from quoting that passage from Mr. Hardern's paper, the Acton Society Trust makes little reference to this factor of public confidence and goodwill or to the handicap which the growth of suspicion and misunderstanding could prove to the nationalized industries. Mr. Hardern's paper makes

the more useful complement to that of the Acton Society Trust because it includes constructive suggestions for improving the public relations service so as to promote mutual respect and co-operation in the continuous improvement of efficiency and standards of service and morale.

ECONOMIC POSITION OF CAMEROON WOMEN

A RESEARCH grant from the Colonial Social Science Research Council enabled Dr. Phyllis M. Kaberry to study the economic position of women in the Bamenda division of the British Cameroons during the years 1944 and 1948, and she is to be congratulated on having published some of the results of her researches so expeditiously and in such detail*. This 220-page paper-backed report (which is rather high in price) gives a very clear account of the role of women in this very pleasant and atypical region of West Africa—a high grassy plateau, well watered and fertile with as yet no problems of erosion or over-population; it is a region which, through no fault of its own, was split between the British and French mandated areas after the First World War.

The serious part of this report is, no doubt, contained in the chapters on standards of living and on Kumbaw budgets, eighteen of which are given in full in an appendix; but the average reader will probably prefer the more general chapters on the way these people live, and on the things in life which they value. In Bamenda they consider that it is the man's job to rule and to provide the very modest cash income of the household, and it is the woman's to grow the food and to feed the family.

The Nigerian Government, to judge from Prof. C. D. Forde's preface to the report, considers the status of women in Bamenda to be unduly low and to constitute one of the contributory causes of the under-population of the region as well as a social obstacle to its economic development. Dr. Kaberry's report leaves one with the impression that this status, even if it might be considered low by comparison with urban Yoruba and with certain Ibo and Ibibio groups in the eastern region of Nigeria, is certainly not a contributory cause of under-population. If a comparison could have been made with other parts of the Cameroons or even with some of the adjacent 'pagan' provinces of the northern region, quite different opinions might have been formed. It is, after all, only by a political accident that the British Cameroons has become a province of the eastern region, a region which differs completely from Bamenda ecologically, economically and culturally. As for being an obstacle to development, this surely depends primarily on how the women are approached. Any plans for economic development, as Dr. Kaberry says, must take into account the fact that women will continue to assume the major responsibility for agriculture; the immediate problem, therefore, is to improve their techniques and their organization of labour. The present policy of demonstration plots and "instruction in needlework and hygiene" is unlikely to make much impression upon them.

G. I. JONES

* *Women of the Grassfields: a Study of the Economic Position of Women in Bamenda, British Cameroons.* (Colonial Research Publication No. 14.) By Dr. Phyllis M. Kaberry. Pp. 220+11 plates. (London: H.M.S.O., 1952.) 32s. 6d.