

## NEWS and VIEWS

## The Agricultural Research Council :

Sir William K. Slater, K.B.E., F.R.S.

SIR WILLIAM SLATER will be retiring on June 30 from the secretaryship of the Agricultural Research Council, a post which he has filled with great distinction during the past eleven years. On graduating in chemistry at the University of Manchester, Sir William did research under Prof. Lapworth and for three years he was an assistant lecturer in the University. After two years in industry, he joined Prof. A. V. Hill at Manchester to assist in his work on muscle physiology. In 1923 he was awarded a Beit Memorial research fellowship and worked in the Department of Biochemistry of University College, London, under Sir Jack Drummond, where he developed a pioneer line of research on the biochemistry and physiology of insects, particularly anaerobiosis. In 1928 he went to Dartington Hall as scientific adviser to the trustees. Afterwards, he took charge of the agricultural and rural development on the estate and established a laboratory for applied research. In 1943, Sir William joined the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as secretary of the Agricultural Improvement Council for England and Wales, which had just been set up. He became responsible for the development of that Council's work, and had much to do with fostering the close relationship which exists between it and the Agricultural Research Council. Later, he became in addition senior advisory officer, responsible for setting up the specialist scientific section of the National Agricultural Advisory Service. This broad experience qualified Sir William well for the post of secretary of the Agricultural Research Council to which he was appointed in 1949. During his term of office he has brought to a successful conclusion a ten-year post-war programme for the development of agricultural research approved by the Cabinet in 1945. In 1947-48 the amount spent by the State on agricultural research was of the order of one million pounds; to-day it amounts to about six million pounds. New institutes have been created and existing ones have been expanded. Links with universities have been strengthened by the establishment of a number of units in university departments. The Council has indeed been fortunate in having the services of Sir William Slater over this period, and his wise guidance and never-failing patience will be missed.

Prof. E. G. Cox, F.R.S.

PROF. ERNEST GORDON COX, who will be succeeding Sir William Slater as secretary of the Agricultural Research Council on July 1, 1960, comes originally from Somerset. He was born at Bath in 1906 and educated at the City of Bath Boys' School and the University of Bristol, from which he graduated with first-class honours in physics in 1927. From Bristol he went as research assistant to Sir William Bragg at the Royal Institution during 1927-29 and there began the series of researches which transformed his formal field of interest from physics to chemistry. During 1929-45 he held appointments in the Department of Chemistry of the University of Birmingham, and in 1945 was appointed professor of inorganic and physical chemistry at the University of Leeds;

his title was changed in 1953 to professor of inorganic and structural chemistry in a perhaps hopeless attempt to define more precisely the many-sided implications of his researches. He was one of the first to apply X-ray methods to solve problems in the stereochemistry of metal co-ordination compounds. But he has also made many contributions in organic chemistry, from his early work on  $\alpha$ -chitosamine hydrochloride and hydrobromide, which established, by direct X-ray analysis, the existence and form of the pyranose ring in sugars, to his latest, very accurate, studies, with D. W. J. Cruickshank and others, of the electron distribution in benzene. In recent years his School of Chemistry has made Leeds an international centre to be visited by all interested in exact X-ray analysis. At the same time he has had much to do with problems of organization and administration, first in war research and later, in Leeds City and University; for the last three years, as chairman of the X-ray Analysis Group, he has been concerned with the practical applications of X-ray methods in many different fields. His variety of experience and knowledge, his own personal interest in agricultural problems (he is a serious amateur botanist and ornithologist) and his generous spirit should be of the greatest value in guiding agricultural research.

## Building Science at Sheffield : Prof. J. K. Page

MR. J. K. PAGE, at present lecturer in environmental physics in the Department of Building Science of the University of Liverpool, has been appointed to the newly created chair of building science in the University of Sheffield. Mr. Page was educated at Haileybury College and the University of Cambridge, where he gained first-class honours in Part I of the Natural Sciences Tripos. After graduation, Mr. Page held a temporary appointment with the Council of Industrial Design, where he assisted with plans for the Festival of Britain. After teaching at Westminster School for two years he took an appointment as senior scientific officer in the Colonial Liaison Section at the Building Research Station. During this appointment Mr. Page travelled extensively in West Africa, America and the West Indies. After a period as chief research officer of the Nuffield Foundation Division of Architectural Studies, Mr. Page was appointed to his present post in the University of Liverpool in 1957.

## Royal Astronomical Society Awards

AWARDS of medals have been made to the following by the President and Council of the Royal Astronomical Society: *Gold Medal* to Prof. V. A. Ambartsumian, president of the Academy of Sciences and director of the Byurakan Observatory, Armenia, for his numerous important contributions to both theoretical and observational astronomy; *Eddington Medal* to Dr. R. d'Escourt Atkinson, deputy chief scientific officer at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, for his pioneering papers on atomic synthesis and stellar energy; *Jackson Gwilt Medal and Gift* to Mr. F. Malne Bateson, of Cook Islands, and Mr. A. F. A. Lofley Jones, of Timaru, New Zealand, for their work on variable stars in the southern hemisphere.