Corporation will be renamed the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The necessary legislation will be introduced as soon as possible. A similar statement was made simultaneously in the House of Commons.

## M.R.C. Committee to study the Methodology of Toxicity Testing

In reply to a question in the House of Lords on August 2, the Minister for Science, Lord Hailsham, said that the Minister of Health sought advice on testing new drugs generally through his Standing Medical Advisory Committee, which was the appropriate body. Since the recent events relating to thalidomide, Lord Hailsham said he had himself inquired of the Medical Research Council concerning the part it could expect to play in advancing methods of testing. The Council had that week announced its intention to appoint a committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Harington, to study the methodology of toxicity testing. Lord Hailsham attached great importance to the work of this Committee, although it was not the Medical Research Council's responsibility to carry out routine testing programmes on drugs or other chemicals from the point of view of either efficiency or toxicity. It did, however, sponsor many clinical trials of new preparations of particular promise for specific purposes and had for many years undertaken fundamental toxicological research, especially with regard to the difficult methodological problems which arise in devising tests to demonstrate possible long-term effects which might be produced, for example, by food additives. The Council had a special responsibility for advising the Minister of Health on the scheduling of drugs under the Therapeutic Substances Act. So far as thalidomide was concerned, he was advised that there was general agreement that in the existing state of knowledge it was extremely unlikely the most rigorous programme of screening tests would have suggested an effect was to be expected on the developing human embryo.

## U.S. National Committee for the International Council for Building Research, Studies and Documentation

The National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council has announced the organization of a U.S. National Committee for the International Council for Building Research, Studies and Documentation. The Academy–Research Council was requested to become the official adhering body for the United States instead of the Housing and Home Finance Agency in order to broaden and strengthen participation by the United States in the activities of the International Council. As a non-governmental organization, the International Council for Building Research, Studies and Documentation promotes international co-operation in its areas of interest and is concerned with not only the technical but also the social and economic aspects of building. Membership in the U.S. National Committee includes representatives of nine national organizations and five federal agencies; provisions have also been made for additional representatives and three members-at-large. No chairman has yet been named. The Committee will be administered within the Division of Engineering and Industrial Research of the Academy–Research Council. Staff support is being provided through a Secretariat consisting of an executive secretary, Mr. Robert M. Dillon, and a technical secretary, Mr. Robert W. Spangler. Further information can be obtained from the executive secretary, U.S. National Committee for CIB, National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington 25, D.C.

## Leicester Museums and Art Gallery

It is seldom that a provincial museum can finance the publication of a list of figured and described material in its geological collections. This has recently been accomplished by the Leicester Museums and Art Gallery, which has published *A Catalogue of the Figures and Cited Specimens in the Department of Geology, 1962* (Pp. 46. Leicester: The Museums and Art Gallery, 1962). The list has been compiled by the curator of geology, C. A. Sizer, who, in an introduction, rightly stresses that the formative period of the collections covers a long time. In spite of different curatorial standards through the decades, it has been possible to list a large number of specimens. A few are holotypes, a few more are figured, but the great majority are cited, though mentioned is the term more generally used. These lists will be of service to palæontologists, especially those working in the Leicester area, and, although the information is of a negative character, it is of value to know that unfortunately certain specimens have been lost. The publication also includes a few petrological specimens and the relevant references.

## Refraction of the Eye and its Components in Twins

Two earlier monographs by Prof. Arnold Sorsby *et al.* have established that relatively few cases of long sight and short sight are the result of anomalies in the dimensions of the optical components; for the most part, these are within the normal range but are inadequately correlated. Three questions thus arise. First, what determines the anatomical anomaly seen in the 3–5 per cent of the population who have 'component' ametropia? Secondly, what causes 'correlation' ametropias which are seen in some 55 per cent of the population and which represent varying degrees of failure, during the growth of the components, of a physiological co-ordinating mechanism? Finally, how do the 40 per cent or so who are emmetropic come to have perfect correlation? A new investigation carried out by Prof. Sorsby, M. Sheridan and G. A. Leary on twins is an attempt to assess the significance of heredity in the determination of these three types of refraction (*Medical Research Council Special Report Series*, No. 303: *Refraction and its Components in Twins*. Pp. viii+43. London: H.M.S.O., 1962. 7*s.* net). It is based on an analysis of data not only concerned with refraction as a whole but also on the individual optical components. For both refraction and its components, uniovular twins in all the refraction groups were found to show a significantly higher incidence of concordant values than biovular twins and unrelated pairs. Such discordance as was found in uniovular twins was of the same order as that known to occur with many morphological features, and which is generally regarded as due to variation in the expression of the genes rather than to environmental influences. It may therefore be taken as established that the dimensions of the optical components, the efficiency of the mechanism co-ordinating the growth of the components, and thus the refraction of the eye, are all genetically determined. The modes of inheritance and the