THE ROWETT RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL NUTRITION

GOLDEN JUBILEE

THIS year the Rowett Institute celebrates its origin in 1913, when a Joint Committee of the University of Aberdeen and the North of Scotland College of Agriculture was formed for the prosecution of research in animal nutrition. The late Prof. E. P. Cathcart, who in 1913 was a lecturer in the Institute of Physiology in the University of Glasgow, was first approached and accepted the offer to go to Aberdeen to start this research work. Later, he decided to take a chair of physiology in the University of London and, when intimating his change of mind, recommended that Dr. John B. Orr be offered the post. Thus, Dr. Orr became the first director of what not long after grew into the scale of an institute, and in this capacity he served until his retirement in 1945, when he was succeeded by Dr. D. P. Cuthbertson, also from the Institute of Physiology, Glasgow, but who had been seconded at the time to the Medical Research Council. During its fifty years, therefore, the Institute has had only two directors.

The Governing Body of the Institute is now tripartite, with five persons appointed by each of the following: University of Aberdeen, North of Scotland College of Agriculture and the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University is its chairman.

Following his retirement in 1945, Sir John Orr became the first director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The need for the creation of such an organization owed much to Orr's vision and his previous researches culminating in his book *Food, Health and Income*. Orr had also been responsible for a large-scale demonstration of the nutritive value of milk for children, and the evidence from this and comparable trials was largely responsible for the introduction of the milk and finally the meals-in-schools scheme. He had felt that so much useful knowledge had been acquired about animals that it was time it was applied to man himself.

The Commonwealth Bureau of Animal Nutrition does not share the Jubilee that the Rowett Institute is celebrating: it is only thirty-two years old, but, as in some ways an offshoot of the Institute, it shares its history and celebration, for Orr was its first director, followed in more recent years by Dr. I. Leitch and Dr. D. Harvey. The present director of the Institute is consultant director to the Bureau and editor-in-chief of its publication, *Nutrition Abstracts and Reviews*.

The early and subsequent history of the Institute, its Reid Library, its farm—the Duthie Experimental Stock Farm—and its residential hall—Strathcona Club—are described in a unique volume entitled *Progress in Nutrition and Allied Sciences*, which is edited by the present director and published by Oliver and Boyd at the modest price of 50s. for its 452 pages (*Nature*, 200, 201; 1963). This provides an account of the present research work of the Institute in relation to the existing state of knowledge, and some account is also woven into it of the past research of the Institute. A few distinguished ex-members of staff have contributed topics not at present being investigated at the Institute. There are thirty-nine chapters. Among the significant topics dealt with are those which have been in recent years the continuing concern of the Institute. These are the physiology, biochemistry and microbiology of digestion, particularly in the ruminant; the nutritional significance of the 'non-protein nitrogen' fraction of plants; physiological individuality; minerals in relation to the skeleton, the teeth and functioning of the nervous system; mammalian glycosidases and their inhibition; growth and reproduction; family diets; infection and resistance. The Institute's present contribution to our better understanding of the nutrition of dairy cattle, sheep and their shelter, poultry and pigs and the recent system for intensive beef production introduced in Britain by the Institute are also described. The Institute continues to assist in defining where the application of man's scientific knowledge of agriculture to world needs can best be directed.

The present staff of the Institute numbers two hundred and fifty persons, of whom some fifty-five belong to the scientific officer class. Dr. R. L. M. Synge, Nobel prizeman, is probably its most distinguished member of staff. He has written a challenging article on the state of our ignorance concerning the nutritional role of the constituents of the non-protein fraction of plants at this point in time.

The Institute publishes each year an annual report which is free to universities, colleges and non-commercial research organizations.

At its Founders' Day Dinner in this year of its Golden Jubilee, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Right Hon. Michael Noble, gave the principal speech and proposed a toast to "The Founders".

D. P. CUTHBERTSON

VEGETATION OF THE HUMID TROPICS

A SYMPOSIUM on the vegetation of the Humid Tropics was held at Kuching, Sarawak, during July 2-10; it was sponsored jointly by the South-east Asia Science Co-operation Office of Unesco and the Government of Sarawak, and was attended by some 36 participants coming from most of the countries of South-east Asia, as well as from Europe, the United States and Australia. The United States was represented by Dr. F. R. Fosberg of the Pacific Vegetation Project, Washington, chairman of the Humid Tropics Committee of Unesco, and by Dr. George Gillett of the University of Hawaii; participants from the United Kingdom were Sir George Taylor, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Mr. P. Greig-Smith, reader in botany at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, and Prof. P. W. Richards. Mr. L. Mattsson, director of the South-east

Asia Office at Djakarta, was the official representative of Unesco. This symposium was the third of a series on tropical vegetation organized by the South-east Asia Office of Unesco and followed those held at Tjiawi, Java, in 1958, and at Goroka, New Guinea, in 1960 (see *Nature*, 189, 24; 1961).

The present policy of the South-east Asia Science Co-operation Office is that each symposium should have one or more principal themes, as well as giving experts on tropical vegetation the opportunity of discussing their work and problems with colleagues whom of necessity they cannot meet very often. At the Goroka symposium, the Proceedings of which have recently been published*,

* Unesco Science Co-operation Office for South-east Asia and Administration of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (Government Printer, Canberra, 1963).