

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

AN article describing the opportunities which the British Council provides for a career overseas accompanies the customary review of the year in the annual report for 1963-64*. It is of particular interest to the scientist. The staff of the Council considered in this article now numbers about 500; most of them are overseas for about four-fifths of their service, and some 80 per cent of them work in developing countries and are directly or indirectly concerned in education. The total staff of the Council numbers 3,700, of whom 1,600 serve in London and some twenty other universities. Of the remaining 2,100 serving overseas, 400 were appointed in London. Although men and women with scientific training are particularly welcome as candidates for general service entry (at present about 20 a year), there are not many scientists in Council service at present, but the Council hopes to increase the number of full-time science liaison and information posts. It also requires more men and women with scientific training as representatives and assistant representatives overseas. It also attaches importance to having men with a scientific training participating in the higher direction and planning of its work. The article, however, points out frankly that it is difficult for anyone serving the Council overseas to remain an active specialist in a scientific subject, unlike the librarian, for example, who will continue to use his expertise.

The 27 librarians serving the Council overseas play an important part in the Council's work, but until recently a Council career in librarianship meant a series of moves from country to country without advancement. Prospects have now improved and, apart from the upgrading of posts, some librarians have moved to posts of general responsibility. The article describes briefly the nature of the work overseas, and a brief section on the sciences indicates how here it is concerned with promoting science contacts: in the more advanced countries this entails liaison work at the research and postgraduate level, but in the less-developed countries the emphasis is on help and advice in teaching science. A realistic analysis of rewards and drawbacks in Council service overseas notes the recent improvements in pay, allowances and conditions of service and refers to the easements for officers and their wives serving in distant posts, especially in regard to family and educational problems which have been permitted as an indirect consequence of the Plowden Report on Overseas Services. Nevertheless, in terms of prestige and emoluments the normal ultimate ceiling is lower than in the Diplomatic Service and the main attractions are intangible.

Receipts from earnings and donations of £626,000 brought the Council's income for the year to £9,260,000, and for 1964-65 the Government grant of £8,634,000 in 1963-64 has been increased to £10,010,000, that from the Department of Technical Co-operation rising from

* The British Council, Annual Report 1963-1964. Pp. vii+107+12 plates. (London: The British Council, 1964.) 2s. 6d.

£233,000 to £371,000, largely for the cost of administering the increasing number of graduate volunteers. The Council also administers some £2 million provided by technical assistance schemes by the same Department, and the report refers particularly to the exceptionally close working relations between the Department and the Council, which now has representatives in more than 80 countries. It is still impossible to keep pace with the demand for various kinds of assistance in teaching English, and, of the 60 additional experts to serve in key English language teaching posts in the Commonwealth which it is planned to fill by 1970, 8 were appointed in the autumn of 1963, 12 in the autumn of 1964, and 10 are to be appointed in 1965. The Council continued to develop its work in English language teaching by television and has posted television officers for this purpose to India, Iran, Kuwait, Nigeria and the Sudan.

Of more than 64,000 overseas students now in Britain, a fifth are at universities, and although projects for 1,665 places in hostels in London and 1,471 elsewhere had been agreed in September 1964, besides the 1,226 additional places already available, the need for such accommodation remains urgent. Apart from such hostel accommodation, the £3 million voted by Parliament for the Overseas Students Welfare Expansion Programme administered by the Council goes to expanding the services provided at the Council's centres for overseas students and trainees in Britain. The Council is subsidizing an experiment at the Department of Education in the University of Sheffield on the development of programmed instruction in English for overseas students of scientific subjects. At the Department of Education in the University of Birmingham it is assisting research on tests of proficiency in English for overseas students. The National Foundation for Educational Research is being assisted in a large-scale survey of the problems which these students face in adjusting themselves to conditions of study in Britain, particularly the effect of the language factor.

Of some 476 specialist tours and advisory visits overseas arranged by the Council in 1963-64, 71 were concerned with science and technology, 85 with medicine, and 134 with education. It is estimated that almost 35 per cent of visitors and scholars coming to Britain in 1963-64, and of advisory visits and specialist tours overseas, were concerned with science and medicine: they included 118 scholars, bursars and others from the United Arab Republic, while 20 scientific and medical specialists from Britain visited that Republic. Of 8,851 overseas visitors to Britain assisted by the Council, 1,986 were concerned with science and technology, 1,110 with medicine, and 2,263 with education. Of 82 university interchange visits under the Commonwealth Scheme, 50 were for university teachers on study leave, 22 for postgraduate research workers and 10 for distinguished scholars invited for short visits. Under the Foreign Scheme there were 142 short visits, 4 longer teaching visits and 104 visits by young research workers.

THE DESIGN OF SPECIFICATIONS FOR DRUGS

THIS account is based on a document produced by the Science Committee (Pharmaceutical Analysis) of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Recent advances in analytical techniques have revealed the presence in some drugs of hitherto unsuspected impurities with potent undesirable pharmacological effects. The Science Com-

mittee (Pharmaceutical Analysis) of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences has discussed the design of specifications as set out in the current British Pharmacopoeia and the British Pharmaceutical Codex, and it has formulated ideas for the future. The Committee's work has shown the need to apply a more critical approach to specifications for all drugs (see *Nature*, 203, 701; 1964).