

Commonwealth Foundation

THE Commonwealth Foundation has produced its first progress report after 18 months of official activity as a charitable organization providing funds for professional bodies on a supra-national basis. The Foundation aims to encourage and support contacts and exchanges between members of the professions in the Commonwealth countries, through conferences, exchanges of personnel and information, and the setting up of Commonwealth-wide associations not centred on Britain. So far grants for nearly £200,000 have been allocated for sixty different projects throughout the Commonwealth. Accountancy, architecture, education, engineering, law and various aspects of medicine and science have been supported, with amounts varying from £35 for publishing an accountancy bulletin in Zambia, to £24,000 for professional centres with basic reference libraries in Kampala and Port of Spain.

A meeting of representatives of the professions, arranged by the British Commonwealth Office in 1964, produced the idea for the Foundation. The proposal was announced at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in June 1964; terms of reference were agreed in 1965 and, after appointment of a permanent staff of three, the Foundation became operational in March 1966. Twenty-four of the twenty-five Commonwealth countries contribute a quarter of a million pounds a year to the Foundation, at rates agreed to by the Prime Ministers concerned, to correspond with the size and affluence of each country.

Each contributing country is represented on the Board of Trustees, which has so far met five times, under the chairmanship of Sir Macfarlane Burnet. Applications for grants are accepted from individuals or professional bodies throughout the Commonwealth, for first consideration by the full-time director, Mr John Chadwick. Provided the applicant can produce good reasons for his application, and it falls within the terms of reference of the Foundation, it is passed to the Board of Trustees with the director's report. Mr Chadwick thinks the board will have to meet three times a year at least, and a sub-committee has been set up to consider applications which are urgent or for small sums of money. The main task of the staff in getting the Foundation has been to make its existence known, for individuals and professional bodies can only apply for grants if they know the facilities exist.

The Foundation, which describes its private but international set-up as "without precedent", is not stating its policy too firmly at this stage, and is prepared to experiment. A pilot project is under way in the field of journal distribution. The London Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases is collaborating with the Foundation to provide copies of the *Tropical Diseases Bulletin* for those in underdeveloped countries who cannot afford the subscription. The London bureau is pleased how quickly the Foundation accepted the scheme.

Dragon Reprieved

THE Dragon high temperature reactor project will be kept in being for one more year at least. During 1968, the costs of the project will be borne by the United Kingdom, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The Euratom countries, the other supporters of the project, still have no firm policy for

1968 and thereafter. As a result, they have so far refused to extend the project until 1970. But they have at least been able to sanction an arrangement by which Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland pay their normal contributions to the 1968 budget of £2.1 million, with Britain making up the rest. It has also been agreed that Euratom will finally make up its mind by the end of July 1968 and, if approval to continue the project is reached, then the contributions made for 1968 will be taken into account. But if no agreement is reached, Euratom will waive its rights to the written down value of the fixed assets of the project. Meanwhile, Euratom will continue to receive the same benefits, in the form of information and secondment of personnel to the project, as if it were paying its full share.

This generous settlement indicates a good measure of enthusiasm for the project among the non-Euratom countries. Some observers see the high temperature reactors as a good possibility for industrial use, able to produce electricity and high grade steam in reactor sizes smaller than would be economical with other reactor types. The news of progress with Dragon comes at the same time as the first experimental results from another high temperature reactor, the AVR, built in Julich by Brown Boveri/Krupp Reactorbau GmbH for a group of German utilities. The reactor has so far run for about three months, most of the time well below its full design capability of about 50 MW (thermal). The work has established that the system is safe, and approval has been given for full power operation. Powers of 18 MW (th) and helium outlet temperatures of 590° C have been reached.

Living at High Altitude

SOME 30 million people throughout the world live above 10,000 feet—more than the total population of 85 per cent of individual nations. They live under perpetual physiological stress, that of hypoxia—oxygen shortage—often compounded by cold stress. Yet there is little systematic knowledge of the effect these conditions have on the high-altitude dwellers and the biological adaptations that are developed to cope—a situation thrown into relief by next year's Olympic Games in Mexico City, which lies at 7,349 feet.

To counter this lack and promote useful research programmes the regional office of the World Health Organization and the US International Biological Programme Committee jointly sponsored an international conference on "Man at High Altitude" in Washington last month. The study of high altitude peoples is of great interest to the Human Adaptability Section of IBP. The conference hardly threw a glance at the problems of Olympic athletes, but a couple of papers were relevant to this practical problem as they discussed the relation of oxygen uptake and work capacity.

Dr R. F. Grover of the University of Colorado has compared lung function and working capacity of athletes from two groups; one, a community settled for several generations at Leadville 2 miles up in the Rockies, the other a group from lowland Kentucky. It was found that maximum capacity for consuming oxygen at Leadville was reduced as much in the Leadville native athlete as in the Kentucky athlete. Dr Grover wondered whether the long-adapted Andean