

Progress in Wool Research

A PAMPHLET recently issued by the Wool Industries Research Association summarises, under the title "Scientific Research applied to the Wool Industries", a number of the practical results of the work. These include the invention of durable sheep-marking fluids completely removable in subsequent processing and leaving no traces in the finished fabric. The investigations on the recovery of wool grease from scouring liquors have contributed largely to the development of three processes in use at Bradford and elsewhere, while those on wool scouring, for example, have made possible the actual detection and commercial control of variable alkalinity by means of indicator cloth. The discovery of the chemical changes responsible for discoloration in carbonising has enabled adequate precautions for prevention to be taken. Improved 'ionised' oils have been developed for the lubrication of wool. Fundamental issues underlying the woollen spinning process have been elucidated, a new principle in roller drafting has been discovered for use in the spinning of dry combed rovings and a general relation developed between count, twist and strength for single worsted yarns. Causes of deterioration of spinning ability of dyed wool have been ascertained and of damage in fabrics through lead staining in weaving. Mothproofing and preservation against moulds and mildew have been important fields of work, and in these and in many other ways the application of quantitative measures has assisted in the control and efficiency of the numerous processes with which the wool industry is concerned.

Association of Scientific Workers

THE annual report of the Executive Committee of the Association of Scientific Workers presented to the Council on February 24 refers to the formation of a National Parliamentary Science Committee as an outcome of negotiations with the British Science Guild as the outstanding special work of the year. The support of twelve leading institutions has been obtained, and the committee includes Sir James Henderson, Prof. Miles Walker, Prof. Blackman, with Commander Bernacchi as chairman, and Mr. A. Howard and Mr. H. J. W. Stone as joint honorary secretaries. In consequence, the Parliamentary Committee of the British Science Guild and of the Association have been disbanded. The compilation of a "Handbook of Extra-University Research in Pure and Applied Science", giving data concerning commercial, endowed and private research laboratories, has been completed and negotiations for publication are in progress. It is believed that the handbook will serve as an advertisement of British research activities and of the interest taken by British industrialists in maintaining the highest efficiency in factories. The book may become a standard work of reference alongside the "Universities Yearbook" and the "Year-Book of Scientific and Learned Societies".

THE Association has been active in combating the evil of bogus degrees and has been in negotiation with the universities to secure their support of

successive Bills introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Jessel to deal with this evil. The Association collected a considerable amount of information regarding the granting of degrees by five different British 'degree-mongers' but has so far been unable to induce the universities to withdraw their opposition at the third reading of the Bills. The finance of the research associations has received attention and is being considered by a joint Committee of the Association and the British Science Guild. The production of "Science in Parliament" has continued and a memorandum has also been prepared on the relation of the unification of national transport, the construction of ship-canals across Britain, the reconstruction of derelict canals and land-drainage. The report concludes by directing attention to the resolution passed that members should seek to assist towards a better adjustment between scientific advances and social progress.

Absence of Winter Rains in England and Wales

THE Director of the Meteorological Office, Air Ministry, states that the rainfall over England and Wales has been less than the average for nine out of the last eleven months. August, November, December and February stand out conspicuously for their dryness. In October and January the fall was slightly above the average but there is not a single month of large excess. Taking the period as a whole, the rainfall was everywhere less than the average except along a strip of the east coast from Newcastle to Hull and again near Yarmouth. There were two areas in which the deficiency was particularly large, the fall amounting only to about two thirds of the average. The first of these is bounded roughly by the counties Breconshire, Bedfordshire, Somersetshire and Surrey; the second includes the Cheshire plain and the coastal strip of Lancashire. The absence of the winter rains on which we rely to such a large extent for keeping up our water supplies is remarkable. The rainfall for the four months November-February was less than half the average over a great part of the country south of a line from Aberystwyth to Yarmouth, and there are regions of similar deficiency to the west of the Pennines and in south Lancashire. In January, heavy falls amounting to about 20 inches fell in Snowdonia and the English Lake District, but less than two inches were measured over the eastern half of England, and less than an inch in the neighbourhood of Middlesbrough and the Wash. The deficiency for February was also marked. Totals of more than an inch were confined to Snowdonia, the neighbourhood of Borrowdale and parts of the north-east coast. Locally, for example at Patching Farm near Littlehampton, there was no measurable rainfall for the whole of the month, a very unusual occurrence. The partial failure of the winter rain has been the most severe since the memorable winter of 1879-80, which, however, followed a wet summer, whereas the summer of 1933 was dry.

Award to Dr. F. W. Pennell

THE first award of the George W. Carpenter fund for encouragement of scientific research was made on