between shopkeepers and customers has largely disappeared, and the former are no longer the trusted purchasing agents and advisers of the latter; goods are left to sell themselves; the salesman merely wraps them up, sees that they are paid for, and passes them over the counter. The recent foundation of the Retail Trading Standards Association is a move in the right direction, but will not prove effective unless more consumers take an active interest in standards and exert a firm but constructive pressure to secure a fair deal for the consumer.

A SECOND way is for consumers to elect or appoint representatives to protect their interests. Parliament cannot be expected to concern itself with detailed questions, but special consumer councils might succeed if they could arouse public interest. Thirdly, the consumer might be protected by direct Government action. Certain State departments, for example, the Ministry of Health and the Board of Trade, already help in this respect; but they do not go far enough and can only deal with cases that come within the ambit of the law: their services are certain to increase, but no great good can be done unless public opinion is aroused and made effective through a special consumers' organisation. Another method of helping the consumer is suggested by the success of Consumers' Research, Inc., in the United States, a voluntary organisation that investigates goods offered for sale and marketing practices, and makes known the results to its members. Closely allied to the concept of a consumers' research organisation is that of a 'trade union', which would comprise consumers of certain specified products, would stand up for their rights and bring pressure to bear when occasion demanded. An example of such a body is represented by the Automobile Association, which recommends hotels and garages, elaborates route plans and provides free legal defence.

Economics of the U.S.S.R.

IN a recent issue of the *Manchester School*, Vol. **6**, No. 2, there is an interesting article on "U.S.S.R. Economics—Fundamental Data, System and Spirit" by Prof. M. Polanyi, who points out that the present moment appears to be a favourable one for taking stock of the achievements of the Russian Revolution. Socialism has been definitely instituted, and communism has been relegated to an uncertain future. Also the recent introduction of a marketing system makes it easier to review the economic situation, as we can now compute values in terms of money. Planned economy is a corollary of communism, but in fact, Prof. Polanyi states, a system of planned economy has never been attempted in the U.S.S.R. since the repeal of communism in 1921. For one thing, as Stalin bluntly admits, there has never been a proper distributive system at all. The First and Second Five Year Plans were not systems of planned economy, but merely systems of planned production, and even this is an overstatement for no great stress was laid on the systematic nature of the plan. The Soviets claim that they have carried out the First Five Year Plan, but in doing so they pass over in silence the biggest item of their plan, namely, the planned increase of agricultural production by fifty-five per cent; instead of this being achieved, a very serious fall took place during the first five year period. During the last four years, the outline of an economic system based on the principles of marketing has been developed. Prof. Polanyi concludes that while he is convinced that no return to private ownership is possible in the U.S.S.R., it seems that public and collective management is developing on lines almost identical with those in the marketing system of capitalism.

Watt Bicentenary Exhibition at the Science Museum

A SPECIAL exhibition was opened at the Science Museum, South Kensington, on December 20 to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth at Greenock on January 19, 1736, of James Watt, the famous engineer and inventor. The exhibition will remain open until April 19. Many objects of particular interest are being shown, including three original beam engines, two of which were erected in Soho Manufactory in 1777 and 1788 respectively and the third in London in 1797, and various original experimental models, including the separate condensers of 1765 which led to his most important contribution to the development of the steam engine. The Garret Workshop, where Watt frequently worked from 1790 until his death in 1819, and which was moved with its contents from Heathfield Hall near Birmingham to the Science Museum in 1924 for permanent preservation, is on view. A large number of drawings, some by Watt himself, have been lent by the Birmingham Public Libraries Committee and form a detailed survey of the progress in steam engine design from 1775 until 1800, the period of Watt's partnership with Boulton. Numerous portraits of Watt, Boulton and their scientific friends have been generously lent for the occasion by the National Portrait Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Society, the City of Birmingham Art Gallery and others. About one hundred letters between Watt and Boulton have been selected from the voluminous correspondence preserved at the Assay Office, Birmingham, which gives an intimate picture of Watt's difficulties and achievements. Some of the memorials and books written on the life and work of Watt are exhibited also. Catalogues of the Memorial Exhibition, the Garret Workshop and the Stationary Engines Collection are on sale in the Science Museum. Special Bicentenary Lectures are being given by the guide lecturer in the lecture theatre and the gallery on various days during the period of the exhibition. Particulars can be obtained on application.

Function of the American Chemical Society

IN his address at San Francisco on August 19 in receiving the Priestley Medal of the American Chemical Society, Prof. W. A. Noyes said that the two outstanding problems to be solved by our generation are the abolition of war, and a better