

not graduate without an active and realistic interest in the broader problems of the world to-day. The challenge is not a new one, but its urgency grows with the growing prestige of 'corporative' States. It was an outstanding motive of the remarkable series of eight university supplements published in *Time and Tide* in 1935. To that series Sir Ernest himself contributed an article on "Where our Universities Fail".

SIR ERNEST SIMON'S estimate of the responsibility of the universities in this matter is based partly on the assumption (the validity of which tends to diminish) that public opinion in Great Britain is largely determined by men and women educated at the universities, and partly on the influence the universities exert on the teaching in secondary schools through university scholarships and entrance examinations, and control over examinations in those schools. His argument finds some support in the last report of the University Grants Commissioners. But arguments must be cogent indeed to overcome the inertia of university governing bodies, especially since no provision was made for research in the social sciences when the Government of the day set up the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. In a postscript to his paper, Sir Ernest announces that the Association for Education in Citizenship is proposing to appoint a committee on the whole problem of the universities and citizenship and invites communications from persons interested in this matter. His address is, Broom Croft, Didsbury.

#### Public Affairs Forums in the United States

ADULT civic education through "public affairs forums" is now being energetically pushed by the United States Federal Office of Education, the present head of which, Dr. Studebaker, played a principal part in the launching, several years ago, of the pioneer forums in Des Moines. The latest official publication on the subject, a pamphlet entitled "A Step Forward" (Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 10 cents), includes an account of ten forum demonstration centres in as many different States, managed by local educational authorities. A foreword by the Commissioner strongly emphasizes the principle of local responsibility and control, but the enterprise has been financed largely out of the Federal Emergency Relief Appropriation, and several hundred relief workers have taken part as assistant librarians, research assistants, artists, writers, accountants, typists, etc. The Secretary of the Interior, in commending the Commissioner's scheme, observes that it has brought about an essential and practical contact between "those few of our citizens who are concentrating their time and effort on the pursuit of truth in the field of social problems" and the average citizen who cannot devote much time to a specialized study of these complex questions. The success of the scheme hinges on finding competent leaders for the forums, for they have the difficult task of first presenting a topic in simple language in a way calculated to sustain interest, giving a fairly comprehensive and impartial outline of the problem

and the alternative solutions, and then stimulating, leading and organizing a free discussion for forty or fifty minutes. Most of them have been obtained on leaves of absence from colleges and universities. The improvement of social intelligence for the democratic control of our material resources is, says the Commissioner, the challenge of our day.

#### Social Services in Great Britain

"PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES" (Cmd. 5310. London: H.M. Stationery Office. 4d.) portrays statistically what may, without much exaggeration, be called the social revolution of the twentieth century in Great Britain. It shows that in the first thirty years of the century the cost of the social services referred to increased just thirteen-fold, namely, from thirty-six millions to four hundred and sixty-eight millions sterling. The first decade was marked by a rise in expenditure under Education Acts from 20 to 34 millions and the coming of old age pensions which cost 7 millions in 1910. The next decade saw a leap in education expenditure from 34 to 90 millions and in old age pensions from 7 to 21, the introduction of unemployment insurance (11 millions), national health insurance (30 millions), the mental deficiency acts, and, of course, war pensions. Between 1920 and 1930 the expenditure under unemployment insurance increased to 102 millions and under old age pensions to 37½ millions, and the widows', orphans' and old age contributory pensions acts came into force, involving, in 1930, an expenditure of 34½ millions. During this period, expenditure under the housing acts increased from 4½ to 40 millions.

#### Natural History Exhibition at Wye

THE Wye College Branch of the University of London Animal Welfare Society (ULAWS) held a Natural History Exhibition at the South-Eastern Agricultural College, Wye, on March 11-13. The greater part of the Exhibition was given up to natural history specimens exemplifying the classification of the animal kingdom. Several dissections caused much interest. A fine collection of beaks and feet of birds made by a member of the Branch was on view. Specimens of bacteria, minerals and other microscopic objects were shown. In addition, there were films of animal life, including the ULAWS film on the care of dogs, which proved to be very popular. At the entrance to the Exhibition were exhibits dealing with the oil menace and the rabbit problem. The former showed how the discharged waste oil from ships and tankers floats on the surface of the sea and covers the feathers of sea-birds. Very little is enough to kill birds, causing them to die of pneumonia due to the water being able to get at the skin. A live guillemot from which the oil had been removed was shown. In all cases so far, however, the solvent used to remove this has also removed the natural grease from the feathers, with the result that the bird gets sodden when placed in water. Further experiments are being carried out by Mr. R. S. Pitcher. A gin trap for catching rabbits was demonstrated and its unsatisfactory character explained. Instead of decreasing the animals, it often leads to an increase,

as has been shown in Carmarthenshire and by experiment in Devon and Pembrokeshire. Various humane traps and snares were shown together with apparatus for cyanide fumigation, but the latter was put forward as by far the best method for the painless and effective control of the rabbit. A bookstall was provided by the Cathedral Bookstall, Canterbury, and departments of the College provided many of the specimens and the apparatus. Messrs. Flatters and Garnett, Ltd., W. Watson and Co., E. Gerrard and Co., Ltd., Thomas Murby and Co. provided material, and the Folkestone Museum lent some cases and specimens.

#### Physics in 1936

THE rapid advances now being made in our knowledge of the physical properties of matter have made it desirable that progress reports should be published at frequent intervals; three such reports have been issued by the Physical Society, and a number have appeared from time to time in the issues of the *Physikalische Zeitschrift*, the latest being on nuclear physics by Profs. S. Flügge and A. Krebs, which occupies twenty-four pages of the issue of January 1. The Physics Forum in the issue of the *Review of Scientific Instruments* of January occupies twelve pages devoted entirely to a review of some of the most noteworthy advances, by Prof. T. H. Osgood of the University of Toledo, Ohio. It deals with the collisions of slow and fast neutrons with atomic nuclei and the knowledge of the effective cross-sections of nuclei which has been derived from them; with the scattering of one type of nuclear particle by another and the applicability of gravitational and electrical inverse square laws of action of one particle on another; the changes of mass when atoms are built up of their constituent parts; the recent removal of doubts as to the validity of the momentum explanation of the Compton effect; the frequent transformations from matter to radiation and back again which take place in the path of a cosmic ray, which make complete investigation difficult; the discovery that the oscillations of the atoms in a crystal lattice are not isotropic and the question whether supraconductivity in metals, which is suppressed instantly by a magnetic field and more slowly by a rise of temperature, is due to a surface or a volume effect. Prof. Osgood also touches on the increased accuracy of newspaper articles on scientific subjects and on "the growing recognition of the importance of physics and the training which physics gives in industrial fields". His report will be much appreciated by readers who have not the time to devote to more detailed accounts.

#### Electricity Costs and Factors

IN a paper read to the Institution of Electrical Engineers on March 11, Mr. J. A. Sumner pointed out some of the modern factors which affect electricity costs and charges. He makes a brief comparison between rural and urban distribution and concludes that rural areas quickly become remunerative. He suggests that the expansion of demand must be preceded by a reduction of charges for domestic supply,

and a halt should be called in the downward trend of charges for power. The alteration in charges must be accompanied by a greater unification of charges and tariffs, and this can only be achieved quickly by means of a single executive authority which would have the exclusive right to direct and initiate the unification of tariffs and charges. Prices for domestic supply are generally too high to permit an extensive use of electricity, and statistics show that reductions in price tend to follow an increased demand instead of preceding it. So far as the domestic consumer is concerned, for large modern undertakings the original Hopkinson definition, namely, that the fixed charge per quarter should be proportional to the greatest rate at which a consumer may ever use electricity, is no longer applicable. If we are to retain the two part system of charging for electricity, we must reconsider the basis to be adopted for charging. The correct kilowatt charge for each consumer depends upon the time of demand, the 'diversity' of the consumers' load and of the group of consumers with whom he is associated, the voltage of supply and many other factors. It looks as if it were a problem which would not admit in practice of even an approximate solution applicable to all cases.

#### Cotton Growing Research

AT a meeting of the Administrative Council of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation held in Manchester on January 26, the director mentioned the extremely bad cotton season that had been experienced in Nyasaland. He said that information received by the Corporation indicated that the loss of crop has been caused to a large extent by insect pest damage, and if this is to be reduced effectively a close season for cotton of at least two months is a necessity. The Government is anxious to extend cotton growing on the Lilongwe Plateau. The Corporation's staff has pointed out, however, that the Plateau is at about the limit of altitude at which successful cotton-growing in Nyasaland is possible; it seems, therefore, that it would be wise to try cotton there on a small scale only, before any attempt is made at extensive production. A pest survey would also be needed as a preliminary in the adjacent area. The Director referred to the importance to the natives of Nyasaland of an economic crop as a means of restricting the present uncontrolled emigration of adult males into other countries in search of work, which is the cause of the breaking up of village life and much consequent poverty and distress.

THE report of the executive stated that over a large part of Africa insect pest damage is probably the limiting factor in cotton production. One insect, the jassid, has now been to a large extent controlled by the breeding of a resistant type of cotton by the Corporation's staff at the Experiment Station at Barberton in South Africa. This variety is now grown in many parts of Africa, including Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and in parts of Tanganyika and Uganda. The Corporation's staff have therefore been turning much of their attention to work on bollworms