

Britain. He points out that the basic unit in British local administration is the parish, the zone of influence of a single place of worship in the Middle Ages. Rural districts, urban districts and boroughs have been built up by the aggregation of parishes, and national parliamentary representation is still organized on that fundamental unit. As a consequence, in spite of many reforms, there are still more than two thousand separate authorities responsible for local community organization. Early legislation favoured supply by a local council. This favoured the setting up of a large number of small generating stations. The work of Ferranti showed the possibilities of alternating current transmission; but the small areas resulting from the early legislation, the wide distribution of coal and its abundant supply did not give the incentive to A.C. supply that there was in other countries. In 1925, a Government committee was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Weir. The committee came to the conclusion that there was a wide difference between generation and distribution and that retail distribution was a local matter which might suitably be decentralized. The findings of this committee were the basis of the Electricity Act of 1926. A Central Electricity Board was formed to construct and operate a large number of high-tension transmission lines called a Grid. The board divided the network into nine schemes covering the whole of Great Britain except northern Scotland. Not only did the construction of the Grid have a beneficial effect upon national employment at a time of acute depression, but also the experience in high-voltage construction which it entailed has placed British manufacturers once more in the forefront of technical progress.

University's Care of Body and Mind

RENSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, founded in 1824 at Troy, New York, claims to be the oldest institution of higher learning in any English-speaking country that has devoted itself continuously to instruction and research in science and engineering. In a recent bulletin, it directs attention to the very thorough provision it has made not merely for the technical efficiency of its graduates but also for ensuring the physical fitness and bodily vigour of its undergraduates and for developing in them a broad and balanced mental outlook. Applicants for admission are examined physically; and if corrective exercises seem advisable they are prescribed by the Department of Physical Education. Every undergraduate is required to take during the first year a comprehensive course in physical education, including personal hygiene, recreational games, gymnastics, swimming and athletics. Medical advice and hospital care in case of need have been made available for all students. A member of the staff of a neighbouring hospital is in attendance daily for an hour and a half in the gymnasium for consultation. In the first year every undergraduate has to qualify in English, drawing, history, graphics, mathematics, physics and chemistry, and has to prepare a thesis during the summer vacation. The English course covers the material and methods of composition as

illustrated by the successive steps in the preparation of a comprehensive article on a subject of immediate interest, the preparation and delivery of incidental speeches and a survey of contemporary ideas and current usages. Except in the case of students of architecture, all undergraduates also take a brief course introductory to professional study, designed to acquaint them with the materials and methods of study in different fields, to introduce them to the members of the faculty whom they will eventually meet in their work, and to indicate the nature of the openings which will be available to them upon graduation.

Natural History and Science in South Australia

THE presidential address before the Royal Society of South Australia, delivered by Dr. C. T. Madigan last year, is devoted to the history of the hundred years of science in South Australia as appropriate to this centenary year (*Trans. Proc. Roy. Soc. S. Australia*, 60, Dec. 1936). He points out that the Royal Society is really older than the State itself, for though it has an unbroken existence only since 1853, its origin can be traced back to the South Australian Literary and Scientific Association initiated among the founders of the Colony in London in 1834. The active functioning of the Royal Society dates from the inspiring presidency of Prof. Ralph Tate; in the twenty-five years of his association with the Society between 1876 and 1901, it became the established medium for publication of original scientific contributions. The nature of this published work is summarized by Prof. Harvey Johnston for general zoology, by Sir Douglas Mawson on geology, by Prof. J. G. Wood and Mr. J. M. Black on botany, by Dr. James Davidson on entomology, and Dr. T. D. Campbell on anthropology. Naturally these descriptive and natural history subjects, so important in a young colony, bulk most largely in this first century, and Prof. R. W. Chapman's report, whilst reminding us that many of Sir William Bragg's first publications in physics appeared in the *Transactions* of the Society, makes it most abundantly clear why this state of affairs prevailed. Before the Society or its predecessor, the Adelaide Philosophical Society, could spend its energies upon the publication of natural history, it had to pass through a phase in which it was the public forum for the advocacy of any and every cause associated with general education. In those days, even so late as 1868, a speaker urging the establishment of free schools, could quote a South Australian parent in this strain, "I have ten children who can't read or write. I can't read or write myself, why should they?"

Zoology of Iceland

THE study of the zoology of Iceland has lagged behind the investigation of its geology and geography, but a new work in five volumes on the "Zoology of Iceland" should form a worthy contribution to the knowledge of a fauna of unusual interest from several points of view (Copenhagen and Reykjavik: Levin and Nunksgaard). The work will be carried out by specialists, and each part will appear as it is