

Surveys of Town Planning

A BROADSHEET recently issued by Political and Economic Planning (P E P) reviews the report of the National Survey and National Planning Committee of the Town Planning Institute, the first really thorough and informed analysis of the reasons for the wasteful and undesirable development of the land which is still occurring all over England. Together with the Bressey report on the Highway Development of Greater London, it makes a major contribution to the national planning of the use of land, and as such has claims on the attention of all scientific workers who are concerned with the social problems of our technical civilization. Essentially the primary task is one of co-ordination—of fitting together the requirements of many different and often rival users of land, and where necessary choosing between them. Pointing out that there are national aspects of planning urgently requiring comprehensive study, decision and action, and that the existing planning system is quite inadequate to deal not merely with these national aspects but even effectively with the broader regional requirements, the report recommends the creation of a National Planning Commission.

THE functions of this Commission would include the compilation and collation of all relevant information bearing on the use, development and planning of land from a national point of view: advising and co-ordinating Government departments, statutory undertakers and highway authorities in their use and development of land; providing planning authorities with constructive advice and guidance, such as the Minister of Health is prevented by his quasi-judicial position from providing, watching their planning operations, and making appropriate representations to the Minister of Health when necessary. The Commission would also keep the general progress of planning under review, investigate its problems, defects and delays, frame proposals for overcoming them and generally advise the Minister and the Government on the legislative and administrative development of the planning system. As a basis for its activities and as a background for local and regional planning, it would formulate a national plan or policy on broad and flexible lines for the allocation of major land uses and developments. The wisdom of this proposal is emphasized by the revelation in the Brassey report of the widespread damage being done in the absence of such measures, and the indictment it contains of recent official policy in regard to roads.

An Adolescents' Charter from Manchester

THE Federal Council of Lancashire and Cheshire Teachers' Associations has recently issued a "Report on Entry into Employment" which includes a formulation in fourteen points of what the Council regards as "a working basis under the conditions at present prevailing in the industrial world and under the Acts dealing with school leaving and the regulation of factories and workshops now in force". Among the more significant of the fourteen points are: vocational guidance for all and, as a means for

ensuring this, insistence on the submission at regular intervals by every juvenile advisory and choice-of-employment committee of reports to the appropriate authority (in one area 23 out of 24 such committees were found to have ceased to function); entry into employment of a school leaver to be preceded by medical examination and report, co-ordinated in each case with the child's 'health-sheet'; all school planning to include "equipment suitable for the use of older persons, and such amenities and arrangements as will appeal to the developing mind and character of the ex-pupil" (especially in rural and detached areas); continuative education for all, and *definite* arrangements to induce all school leavers to continue their education, whether in technical, commercial or art schools or in less exacting or more general courses; recreative facilities to be provided in connexion with all further education. The report dwells on the distressing waste of much of the good work done in the primary schools owing to lack of effective means for ensuring further education up to the point at which the adolescent attains to the will and capacity for self-instruction. "In the interval between leaving the primary school and the desire to proceed further, the foundation laid in the primary school has been lost since no means or care have been taken to retain it".

The National Central Library

WE read in the daily newspaper that "the lecture system has been obsolete ever since the invention of printing". Notwithstanding, the system has led at least to the demand for public libraries. The need arose from the establishment of mechanics' institutes and the foundation of lectures for adult education. Actually the public libraries movement dates from the Select Committee of 1845, which authorized a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate for their maintenance. The corner stone of this movement is the National Central Library, unifying and binding together, as it does, the independent units of the system. The National Central Library constitutes a central bond, through which the books in any one library are made available for use in any other. The annual report for 1937 shows that, in addition to the ten million books contained in the urban and county libraries, the National Central Library has built up gradually a supplementary reservoir of another ten million books, which may be borrowed from university libraries, and those of learned societies and similar institutions.

COMMENCING as an experimental library for workers' educational classes at Toynbee Hall in 1914, the Library was given a Royal Charter, as recommended by the Public Libraries Committee in 1927. This report also recommended that the Science Library at South Kensington should be the principal source on which the National Central Library should rely for the loan of books needed by students of science and that the Science Library should be made as complete as possible. Thus the National Central Library has become the centre of a national library movement, with which nearly all the public, university and other libraries in Great Britain are

associated. The past year has seen the completion of a series of more self-contained regional library systems. Such a vast scheme of mutually supporting libraries must depend for its greatest efficiency on the maintenance of central catalogues. Union catalogues by authors of the books in the affiliated libraries are being compiled at various centres. The total number of entries in that at the National Central Library has reached $\frac{3}{4}$ million. A subject-catalogue of books and original articles is maintained at the Science Library and has reached $2\frac{1}{4}$ million entries. A "Union Catalogue of the Periodical Publications in the University Libraries of the British Isles" was published in 1937. The total number of books lent during that year was nearly 140,000, of which it is significant that some 400 were supplied to foreign libraries.

Prices of Biological Books in 1937

FOR twelve years the *Quarterly Review of Biology* has analysed and compared the cost to Americans of biological books, based upon the prices of all such received for review by the *Quarterly*. The analyses have produced some interesting figures regarding the relative cost of books produced by different nations, and to some of them attention has been directed in NATURE. In point of price, German books are still the most expensive, despite the announced policy of German publishers, a German average of 1.95 cents a page comparing with 1.27 for British books, and 0.85 for French. Than the last the only cheaper books published are those issued by the British Government (0.34 cents a page) and the U.S. Government (0.16), but since the last three categories are often published in paper covers, some of the saving may be on binding. Comparing 1937 with 1936, it is remarkable to find that the average price per page from every origin, except Germany and Great Britain, has been lowered—by from about 10 per cent in U.S. books to so much as 79 per cent in British Government official publications. But while the British Government has been so greatly reducing its charges, the ordinary British publishers of biological books have been compelled to increase by 16.5 per cent. However, it is possible that the particular books received by the *Quarterly* for review do not represent fair samples in every case; indeed, the total of British Government publications received in all the twelve years only amounts to 8,836 pages, so that, as the authors, Raymond Pearl and Maud DeWitt Pearl, point out, general conclusions must be drawn with caution from this material.

The First Slovakian Polytechnic

It is true that, for a country of fifteen million inhabitants, Czechoslovakia is well provided with facilities for higher education. There are four universities, one of which is German, and numerous academies and schools of technology that grant recognized diplomas; but until now there has been no Slovak polytechnic. When the new academic year commences in October, however, this will be remedied by the opening of a polytechnic at Košice, in east Slovakia, to be named after Dr. Milan Stefaník, the

Slovak astronomer who became the first Czechoslovak Minister for War. This technical institute will rank after the Comenius University of Bratislava as the second most important educational establishment in the eastern half of the Republic. The president, Dr. E. Beneš, has nominated the principal members of the staff, which will include a number of Slovaks who have graduated in science or technology. Their colleagues will be certain lecturers from the Universities and Polytechnics of Prague and Brno, and the new institute will doubtless soon be able to supply local industrial undertakings with students who have obtained their diplomas at Košice.

The Public Health of India

THE vital statistics and public health of India are dealt with in the recently published annual report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for 1935 (Vol. 1. With Appendixes. Delhi: Manager of Publications. 1937. Rs. 2, or 3s. 6d.). The mid-year estimated population was 278,199,545, the birth-rate and the death-rate per 1,000 were respectively 35 and 24, and the infantile death-rate per 1,000 live births was 164 (the corresponding rates for England and Wales are 15, 12 and 57). The total mortality from the three principal epidemic diseases—cholera, plague and smallpox—decreased by 24,000 compared with 1934, but this was more than covered by the large reduction in deaths from plague, which fell from 80,000 in 1934 to 32,000 in 1935. Cholera mortality rose to 217,000, the highest figure for the past three years. Smallpox caused 91,000 deaths, as against 84,000 in 1934. Tuberculosis is another disease the incidence of which has increased rapidly during recent years, and which is causing a heavy mortality, particularly in urbanized and industrialized areas. Of fevers, malaria caused the heavy toll of 1,632,000 deaths. No less than 150,000 women died in childbirth or from causes associated with childbirth. An account is also given of the public health services and administration, and of the work of the laboratories and institutes for medical research.

Institution of Electrical Engineers Awards

THE following scholarships have been awarded by the Institution of Electrical Engineers for 1938: *Ferranti Scholarship* (annual value £250; tenable for 2 years): L. S. Piggott (University of Oxford); *Duddell Scholarship* (annual value £150; tenable for 3 years): J. B. Higham (Penarth County School); *Silvanus Thompson Scholarship* (annual value £100, plus tuition fees; tenable for 2 years): H. Darnell (Mersey Railway Company); *Swan Memorial Scholarship* (annual value £120; tenable for 1 year): J. G. Hutton (Sunderland Technical College); *David Hughes Scholarship* (value £100; tenable for 1 year): H. E. Newton (University of Sheffield); *Salomons Scholarship* (value £100; tenable for 1 year): C. Halliday (King's College, Newcastle-on-Tyne). Grants have been made from the War Thanksgiving Education and Research Fund (No. 1) to J. W. Carroll (King's College, London), to E. Franklin (University of Birmingham), and to G. Y. Shute (University