

Scientific Society. In this way all branches of the natural sciences in Moravia are represented in publications which reflect the high standard of work performed by contemporary Moravian men of science, including discoveries in archæology, geology, ecology and biology in addition to meritorious physico-chemical researches.

### Mercury Poisoning

A REVIEW of present knowledge as to the liability of users of mercury to contract mercury poisoning by continued exposure to mercury vapour or to solutions of mercury compounds of small concentration has recently been issued (*Rev. Sci. Inst.*, Aug.). Although there are great differences in the sensitivity to poisoning amongst individuals, it seems certain that prolonged exposure to an atmosphere containing one quarter of a milligram of mercury vapour per cubic metre of air is dangerous. As the saturation vapour pressure of mercury at 18° C. is such that there is more than 10 mgm. of mercury in a cubic metre, it is evident that exposure of considerable surfaces of mercury to air at ordinary temperatures should be avoided. Good ventilation is the best precaution where exposed surfaces are unavoidable, and this failing, gas masks containing carbon-iodine absorber should be used. Rubber gloves should be worn to prevent contact with mercury or mercury solutions.

### Optical Utilities

MESSRS. W. WATSON AND SONS, LTD., 313 High Holborn, London, W.C.1, have issued a booklet entitled "Optical Utilities", containing a catalogue of small optical instruments for aiding vision. These include magnifiers mounted as spectacles, the "Speera" for dissecting or viewing minute objects, and the "Spectopera" for viewing distant scenes, a magnifying glass with electric bulb in the handle for examining maps, prints, etc., a "Strip" magnifier for reading small print, a pocket lens compass, the needle of which is mounted between two lenses so that it can be used as a pocket magnifier, and other useful devices.

### Noise Insulation

THE valuable summary of the best methods of reducing noise which Dr. G. W. C. Kaye, of the National Physical Laboratory, communicated to the *Journal of Scientific Instruments* in June has now been issued by the Institute of Physics as a separate publication, and should be in the hands of all designers of structures in which noise is to be diminished as much as possible. The loudest of the offending noises should first be reduced at least to the average level of the others, either by reducing it at its source or by providing fewer facilities for its propagation. Against direct transmission through the air the remedy is to enclose the source or hearer in a sound-proof building, which may require its doors, windows, walls and floors to be heavy or double with intervening air gaps, and to have its walls and ceilings lined with sound absorbing materials. Metal piping should have short lengths replaced by rubber or other less efficient transmitting material, and be supported by insulated clips.

### National Research Council of Japan

THE report of the National Research Council of Japan for the year April 1936–March 1937, which has recently been published, contains a list of serial publications issued during the year, with details of the general meeting, divisional meetings and committee meetings, as well as of the international scientific meetings at which the Council was represented. In addition to the Divisions of Astronomy, Geophysics, Chemistry, Physics, Geology and Geography, Biology and Agriculture, Medical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics, a Committee of Pacific Investigation has held five meetings and a National Committee on Radio Research ten meetings dealing with the transmission of short waves, measurements of radio waves during the total solar eclipse on June 19, 1936, studies of the ionosphere, etc. The report also gives the personnel of the various divisions and committees and a full list of serial publications received from abroad.

### Political and Economic Planning

A BROADSHEET recently issued by P E P (Political and Economic Planning) summarizes the progress of P E P in 1936–38. In the last two years the volume of published P E P work has approximately doubled, five full reports covering electricity supply, international trade, social services, health services and the Press having appeared within sixteen months, besides more than thirty regular numbers of *Planning*. This result has been attained by a small voluntary body with a budget of less than £10,000 a year and a paid staff of less than a dozen persons. This in itself is a striking indication of the opportunities which exist for organized thought about the future, and the most significant feature about the work of P E P is probably the extent of the opportunities it has opened up. The results already achieved suggest that by bringing to bear on public problems even a small proportion of the available intelligence and energy, it should be possible to prevent serious national and international difficulties from arising. The broadsheet gives a complete list of reports already issued as well as of the planning broadsheets, and indicates the position of the studies of regional development and industrial location, on the gas industry, on partners in industry and of the inquiry into population policies which have been initiated by P E P and on which reports are later to appear.

### Science for the People

ADVANCE reports promise that science will be well shown at the great 1939 exhibitions in America—the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco and the New York World's Fair (Science Service, Washington, D.C.). Synthetic foods will be manufactured on the spot, and laboratory rats will be fed upon the foods, and have to stand a comparative test against normally fed individuals. A complete 'chemical' garden growing indoors, without sunlight and without soil, will illustrate the production of maize, peas, melons, squash, spinach and lettuce by chemical means and ordinary incandescent lighting. Electrical apparatus, television, sound amplifying