

THE work of Prof. Weidenreich, more especially with the supplement of the cultural study of the contents of the palaeolithic cave at Choukoutien, by W. C. Pei, offers too many points of interest for detailed comment here. One matter of special moment is the inference he draws that the important body of knowledge which has been derived from the specimens of *Sinanthropus* calls for "a radical transformation of our conceptions of the problem of mankind", and he then proceeds to the significant conclusion that while human development has been orthogenetic, it has also been polycentric, certain consequences following logically upon this as affecting the mode of that development, in which Lamarckian and Darwinian conceptions are set aside as unimportant in favour of an evolutionary progressive development of the type. At the same time, his remarkable diagnosis of three racial types—Melanesian, Eskimoid and Mongoloid—in a single and small palaeolithic population at so early a date is scarcely less significant for the further development of racial theory at large. Mr. Pei's cultural study of this same palaeolithic population affords a view of its technological capacity which is little less than surprising. This is also, be it noted, the first site in China on which cultural material of palaeolithic age and human skeletal remains have been found in association.

#### Universities and Government Grants

It is generally known the Government grants to the universities of Great Britain have been stabilized for a limited period from the beginning of the War. As that time approaches its end, the Government and the University Grants Committee will be faced with a difficult task. The incessant call for economy at this time of stress must be heeded. No sum that can be saved, however small it may be, is negligible in the present circumstances; indeed it may be in the multitude of minor economies that the best hope lies. Nevertheless, in the matter of the universities, great caution and careful scrutiny will be necessary. Any move which curtails the efficiency of the universities in the discharge of their duties would be sharply criticized. It will readily be granted that the undergraduate population of the universities has decreased substantially, and national service has also claimed a varying proportion of the teaching and supervisory staffs. Teaching and research must, however, still go on. Apart from present needs, there is the future to consider. When the time comes for reconstruction, the universities must be ready to expand rapidly and to play their part in building up the new order. This they can do only if they retain their efficiency throughout the days of war-time activity. The task of those in authority will be to satisfy present needs and also to enable the universities to meet their obligations to the future.

#### British Social Hygiene Council

It has been found impossible to continue meetings of the full Educational Advisory Board of the British Social Hygiene Council during the War. A repre-

sentative Emergency Committee has been formed, however, and held its first meeting on December 19 at Tavistock House, London, W.C.1. It was decided that the long-term policy of stimulating the development of biological education should be maintained so far as is possible. The possibilities of educational activities are to be explored on a regional basis; particular attention is to be directed towards providing short courses of lectures and talks for youth leaders, adolescents and men and women in the military forces. The development of biological education in the Colonies is being continued and negotiations for the production of text-books of biology for use in schools in East Africa should soon be completed. Tentative inquiries are also being made to determine the possibilities of holding a Summer School for teachers, if circumstances permit.

#### Dendrochronology in the Eastern United States

THE dream of the archaeologist, for whom from the nature of his material an absolute chronology is rarely available, has been the attainment of a system of dating which should be universally valid; but diversity of conditions, as a rule, precludes anything approaching certainty when attempts are made to apply any given method of time measurement outside a more or less restricted area. For this reason much interest is attached to attempts which are being made to extend the tree-ring method of dating outside the south-western United States, where it has been applied with conspicuous success to the dating of Pueblo remains and structures. The first successful observations in the eastern United States are recorded by Prof. Charles J. Lyon, of Dartmouth College (*Science*, 90, 419; Nov. 3, 1939), who has compared the rings of virgin white pine felled by a hurricane in September 1938 at Wolfeboro, N.H., with buried logs of the same species uncovered in an excavation at the site of an ancient bridge abutment nearby. The skeleton plot method of Douglass gave the date of 1806 for the last ring formed in the trees used to build the bridge, a result said to be "very reasonable in the light of Wolfeboro history". Further, from North Sutton, N.H., thirty-nine miles south of this bridge, a record of white pine was obtained for a 260-year period, establishing a link with the buried logs in a 128-year overlap between the outer rings of the latter and the inner rings of the Sutton trees. Although not sufficient for a standard scale, yet this marks a beginning in the formulation of an efficient instrument for the eastern archaeologist; but it is noted that the identification in detail is less perfect than in the south-west. Apart from the cross-check, however, the rings agreed with a number of entries of drought in a diary.

#### History of Intensive Cultivation

AN interesting historical review of progress in the production of early vegetables by methods of intensive cultivation has recently been issued by R. J. G. Hopp (*J. Roy. Hort. Soc.*, 64, Pt. 2; Nov. 1939). The first record of forcing plants appears to be in the time of the emperor Tiberius, when cucumbers