

NEWS AND VIEWS

Finland and the U.S.S.R.

HOSTILITIES between these countries have ceased, and a peace has been signed which gives the U.S.S.R. substantial territorial gains. Finland loses much of her industrial and agricultural areas by this treaty, and nearly half a million of her population are being transferred from the ceded territory to other parts of Finland. The country has suffered a grievous blow, not through any lack of valour, but through the overwhelming military power of the U.S.S.R. Now the Finns have turned with characteristic courage and energy to the task of reconstruction. Towns and houses destroyed by aerial bombardment have to be rebuilt, new towns created for the transferred people, and the whole of the economic life of the country has to be restarted under the new conditions, while the defence of the new frontiers must also be organized. The Finns have saved their freedom, and on this the nation will rise again. The help in men, money and materials still so sorely needed will surely not be grudged by right-thinking peoples who have watched the struggle of this gallant democracy.

Water Pollution Research

THE Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has opened a new Water Pollution Research Laboratory at Watford equipped for work on the problems of water supply, sanitation, and the recovery and utilization of valuable materials from trade effluents of many kinds. Plans for building a research station for work of this nature have been postponed by the War, but temporary accommodation has now been obtained. Although no central research station has hitherto been available for the work of the Water Pollution Research Board, many investigations have been carried out in the last few years, on behalf of the Board, in other laboratories. Among other important work, it has been shown that certain clays and glauconitic sands found in Great Britain yield material capable of softening hard water, and that certain synthetic resins can be used to remove dissolved salts and other substances from water.

The Board has also co-operated with industry in the investigation of river pollution by beet sugar and milk factory effluents. Another important investigation was that on the effect of the discharge of sewage into the estuary of the River Mersey on the deposition of silt and other solid matter in the estuary, and an investigation is now in progress at a branch laboratory in Birmingham, in co-operation with the Birmingham Tame and Rea District Drainage Board, which has indicated that the capacity of percolating filters for treating sewage can be increased by at least 50 per cent. Communications intended for the Director of Water Pollution Research should be addressed to the Water Pollution Research Laboratory, Langley Road, Watford, Hertfordshire.

Radioactive Standards

RELIABLE standards of weak radioactivity are required in a number of fields of work; for example, by geologists, geophysicists and cosmologists concerned with the radioactive content of the materials of the earth's crust; by biological and medical investigators employing the technique of radioactive indicators or internal artificial radioactivity therapy; and in studies of radium and thorium poisoning. A committee of the United States National Research Council is endeavouring to facilitate the needs of such workers by preparing a series of feebly radioactive standards which will be analysed at a number of laboratories equipped to make such measurements. These standards will ultimately be deposited at, and certified by, the National Bureau of Standards at Washington, D.C., to be issued as working standards to investigators who may desire them.

The standards in preparation are: (1) *Radium standards*, comprising 100 c.c. solutions in sealed flasks, for use as emanation standards; and 5 c.c. solutions in sealed ampoules for use as gamma-ray standards. (2) *Thorium standards* in the form of sealed ampoules containing sublimed thorium chloride for use in preparing standard thorium solutions. (3) *Standard rock samples* consisting of a variety of finely ground minerals of certified radium and thorium content, which may be used in fusion techniques for checking methods of extracting radon and thoron from rock samples.

Drug Addiction

IN a paper read at an evening meeting of the Pharmaceutical Society on March 12, Dr. Walter B. Kennedy, a member of the Poisons Board and formerly professor of physiology in the University of Baghdad, made some interesting references to the influence of habit-forming drugs brought to his notice in the Near East and elsewhere. A topical and important aspect of drug addiction is the problem of maruanha, the name by which the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*, is known in the United States. Maruanha, said Dr. Kennedy, is destructive of the moral sense: "Under its influence there develops a ruthlessness rarely encountered under other conditions, and a spurious courage, or rather a complete disregard for danger and consequences which results in horrible crimes of violence—often devoid of motive. An additional danger is that the addict is often led into indulgence in the white drugs, morphine, heroin and cocaine". Another exotic drug which has lately found its way to Europe is mescal or peyote, obtained from a Mexican cactus. It is an inebriant producing even more brilliant and prolonged hallucinations than does hashish.

Dr. Kennedy referred to the excessive use of endocrine products of which evidence was seen occasionally; he mentioned in this connexion the