

## NEWS AND VIEWS

## Agricultural Research Council:

Sir Edwin Butler, C.M.G., C.I.E., F.R.S.

CHARGED as it was with the scientific supervision of the widespread organization for agricultural research which has been developed in Great Britain since 1911 and holding (as many may think unfortunately) but few of the purse strings directly, the policy of the Agricultural Research Council has been to guide and stimulate work in progress at research institutions, rather than to attempt control. As the late Sir William Hardy expressed it, "free" not "directed" research was what it desired to promote. In giving effect to this policy, Sir Edwin Butler proved himself an ideal secretary. An acknowledged leader in his own subject, mycology, he had, as director of institutions in India and Great Britain, gained a wide knowledge of the problems and the methods of the agricultural investigator. He quickly made himself familiar with the work of the research institutes and he visited them frequently. Nor was he ever an unwelcome visitor, since directors and members of staff alike soon found that in him they had a real friend, always ready to interest himself in their problems, always ready with helpful suggestions. To the Council the contacts thus established were invaluable, as were also his detailed descriptive reports. His conclusions could be accepted with confidence; they were marked by proofs of full understanding, careful weighing of evidence and absolute fairness. His personal qualities made him the best of colleagues and it was with great regret that, because of the verdict of his medical advisers, his resignation from the secretaryship was accepted. But this did not come until he had left behind him a permanent memorial of his tenure of office.

When, in 1935, Sir Edwin became its secretary, the Council was searching for a suitable estate on which to establish a field station for experimental work on farm animals; a number of estates was visited and when Compton was seen, Sir Edwin was the first to recognize its possibilities. After it had been acquired its development owed much to him, in particular the fine range of laboratories, and the homes for laboratory animals are largely the result of the care which he, in consultation with Mr. Dunkin, the director, bestowed on the planning of details. Members of Council and others who visit Compton in future must always associate these buildings with the name of Sir Edwin Butler, who watched over their construction from foundation to completion with unceasing care.

## Prof. W. W. C. Topley, F.R.S.

PROF. W. W. C. TOPLEY, who now becomes secretary of the Agricultural Research Council, like his predecessor, holds a medical qualification, and like him decided to work for the advancement of science, rather than follow a professional career; but whereas Sir Edwin chose plant pathology as his special subject, it was on science as affecting animal health

that Prof. Topley specialized. His name until now has been so closely associated with bacteriology in relation to human medicine that surprise may be felt by some to find him among the agriculturists. But he does not come among them as a stranger. Since the earliest days of the Agricultural Research Council, Prof. Topley has been a valued member of some of its committees on animal health. In 1939 he became a member of Council and he is chairman of the committee in charge of the particular investigation for which the Compton Field Station was, in the first instance, acquired.

It was with great pleasure that his colleagues learned recently that Prof. W. W. C. Topley was willing to accept the post vacated by Sir Edwin and that his qualities of initiative, drive, clear thinking and direct, convincing manner of speech when advocating a cause in which he believes have now been secured for agriculture. In the uncertain days which lie ahead, it is a comforting thought for all who have the progress of agricultural research at heart to know that as its Secretary the Council has secured the services of a man who has not only made outstanding contributions to science, but has also proved himself to be an inspiring leader of others. It may be that those primarily interested in medicine may regret Prof. Topley's decision, but let them not forget that in recent years it has become increasingly clear that the foundations of human health are deeply laid, that man's physical well-being depends in no small degree on the health of domestic animals, on the properties of cultivated plants, and ultimately indeed on the special characteristics of the soil itself. Medical science will not lose, but gain, by Prof. Topley's transference to the wider field of agricultural science.

## Centenary of the Pharmaceutical Society

IN the afternoon of April 15 several hundreds of pharmacists attended a meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, which was held to celebrate the centenary of the Pharmaceutical Society. Mr. Walter Deacon, who presided, introduced Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council who, he said, now had many dealings with representatives of the Society at the Home Office and elsewhere. In his address, Sir John said it was fitting that someone with a knowledge of the circumstances of pharmacy extending over thirty years should attend the meeting as a representative of His Majesty's Government to pay tribute to the Society's past achievements and to wish it well for the future. The founders of the Society, he continued, laid down that its main purpose should be to advance chemistry and pharmacy, and the constancy with which their successors had pursued that aim deserved the fullest recognition. Modern developments of medicine have changed completely the work of the pharmacist, and it is right that the public should now know how successful have been the efforts of the Pharmaceutical Society to