NEWS AND VIEWS

Carnegie United Kingdom Trust

THE twenty-ninth annual report of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust covering the year 1942 shows that the operations of the Trust have been more concerned with the development or the completion of old schemes than with the initiation of new ones. In regard to youth services, the system of club equipment grants has been continued in England, Wales and Scotland, and has also been extended to Northern Ireland. The year's payments amount to £5,695 and substantial sums are still outstanding in respect of promises not yet taken up in full; the 1942 promises at December 31 stood at £12,168. Shortage of equipment due to the supplies situation and the scarcity of trained leaders are likely to present serious difficulties to any large expansion of the youth services at present. The limited revival of the former club library policy has met with very encouraging responses, and grants in aid of the headquarters administration of the national associations of boys' clubs, girls' clubs and young farmers' clubs were maintained in 1942 at the same rate as in the previous year. Notice of the discontinuance of these grants has now been given, but further assistance has been promised to the Eighteen Plus movement during the three years 1942–45. Grants for the training of leaders, of £1,200 to the National Association of Girls' Clubs for local supervisors of training and £1,000 for bursaries, were continued from 1941. Grants were also made during 1942 in aid of the administration of the Land Settlement Association, the Museums Association, the National Council of Social Service and the Rural Development Council of Northern Ireland, and towards the maintenance of the three central libraries. In regard to music and drama, the work of the Musical Education Committee has continued on the same plan as in 1941 but on a larger scale. The work of the Joint Committee for Drama also showed an increase in expenditure, and the report comments on the remarkable way in which musical and dramatic activities are not merely surviving the War but even extending and fortifying themselves.

Utilization Investigations of Forest Products

As during the War of 1914–18 so in the present War, the utilization of forest products has assumed a first-class importance in India. During the War of 1914–18 the exports from the Indian forests, mainly timber and forage, went chiefly to the Middle East. But India herself had to become self-supporting in several commodities such as, for example, soap, matches, bobbins for weaving and even to a greater extent railway sleepers, when these products could no longer reach her by import. This state of affairs has repeated itself during the present War, but has become more exacting through the greater demand on India to provide war supplies for her own needs and including those of a rapidly expanding modern army. This position fully explains the reason for the inevitable expansion of the work of the Utilization Branch of the Dehra Dun Forest Research Institute. Research on timber-seasoning kilns has already been dealt with (see NATURE, July 25, 1942, p. 127). Indian Forest Leaflet No. 34, Utilization (1943), "Types of Timber Seasoning Kilns suitable for drying Indian Woods", revises Leaflet No. 11, issued on the subject. Leaflet No. 33 (1943) deals with the detailed design of timber roof trusses made with disk dowel joints. Timber structures fitted in this fashion have not previously been used in India. The data incorporated in the leaflet are the result of actual tests carried out in the laboratories of the Institute.

Indian Forest Bulletins, Utilization, Nos. 114 and 117 (1943) discuss the "Treatment of Green Hollong (*Dipterocarpus macrocarpus*) Sleepers" and the "Testing of and Improvement in Design of Packing Cases". The green hollong sleepers were treated with a mixture of creosote and fuel oil; by conditioning the sleepers by steaming and vacuum or the Boulton process, or a combination of both, they could be satisfactorily treated, on an average 30 per cent moisture being lost. The packing case investigation was carried out at the instance of the Ordnance Stores Department. Cases for packing medical stores were the ones to which the investigation was confined. Three types of cases were examined, and the improvements proposed are discussed in the bulletin.

Our Knowledge of the Physical World

DR. A. C. EWING, in an article entitled "Knowledge of Physical Objects", has discussed the question, "How can we justify the claim to know the physical world ?" (*Mind*, April 1943). He first considers the contention that it is meaningless to entertain a *general* doubt about such knowledge because there are no possible experiences which could cast doubt on *all* physical propositions, only on some. He answers it by pointing out that dreams and illusions are the experiences on which the general doubt is based, and even though they are not conclusive evidence, the doubt has meaning by reference to them. This was a point well worth making. He next examines Prof. Moore's view that we can know with certainty something which it is both logically possible might not be true and also logically possible we might be wrong in thinking we knew. Our knowledge of physical objects is of this kind, according to Moore, and we know them without knowing how we know them. As Moore does not hold that we know physical objects directly, it seems possible to raise a doubt about our knowledge by pointing out that induction, by means of which this knowledge is established, cannot yield certainty. Briefly, Moore's answer to this is that the proposition that inductive argument cannot yield certainty is itself *less* certain than the proposition that he knows there is a chair.

The author develops his own position from this point by urging that strictly we can only speak of knowing that S is P where "S is P" is *objectively* as well as subjectively certain; but that we commonly say we 'know' that S is P where we are practically certain, though error is theoretically possible. In the strict sense we do not know that there are physical objects; in the other sense we do. Such knowledge is based on induction and therefore it must be admitted that any particular proposition which we know can by further evidence be rendered more certain than it is at any particular time. This is the Achilles' heel of the author's view. The present writer cannot believe that the existence of the table on which he wrote these notes, and on which a short time ago his supper was laid, can be rendered more certain. The distinction drawn by Dr. Ewing does not solve the problem. It simply takes us back to the discarded view that the existence of physical objects cannot be known, though it can be rendered highly probable.