

pointing out that it is a research institution which has no collective opinions.

Hospital Physicists' Association

AN inaugural meeting of the new Hospital Physicists' Association, held by courtesy at the British Institute of Radiology on September 24, was attended by thirty-seven physicists drawn from hospitals all over Great Britain. The aims of the new Association are to discuss matters arising out of the mutual interests of those engaged in a branch of scientific work which has grown up largely in the last thirty years. Membership is open to physicists attached to hospitals, medical schools, medical or biological research departments. The meeting was followed by visits to the Middlesex, Royal Cancer and Westminster Hospitals on the next day. The afternoon session was devoted to papers. Dr. H. T. Flint spoke on technique with the various radium gram-units; Prof. F. L. Hopwood gave an account of the betatron; Prof. G. Stead discussed teaching for the diplomas and Prof. S. Russ read a paper on the professional equipment of a hospital physicist. Messages of goodwill from the National Radium Commission and the Council of the British Institute of Radiology were read at the meeting. It was agreed that there should be at least three meetings during the year, one of which should be in the provinces. Prof. Russ was elected chairman for the first year, with Dr. Wilson of Westminster Hospital acting as honorary secretary. Prof. Russ reminded his audience that the first full-time appointment as physicist to the Hospital was made thirty years ago. It is likely that to-day between fifty and sixty physicists were engaged in some capacity in hospital or medical research work. A good start was made with the new Association with plenty of evidence of vitality among its members.

Post-War Building Policy

A PAPER, "Housing, Town Planning and Full Employment" by F. J. Osborn, which has been reprinted from *Town and Country Planning*, points out that while the method of compartmental study of housing policy, town and country planning policy and building industry policy is essential owing to the complexity of the subject as a whole, there must also be co-ordination at a high level before major policy decisions are taken. There are, however, ominous signs of different accentuations and of a clash not far ahead. In particular, Mr. Osborn points out that the Minister of Health's housing circular of March 4 is reactionary in its planning implications, and if the local authorities act upon it before a planning policy is announced it will prejudice that policy and preclude its taking the new direction which the Government has been contemplating.

Analysing the building programme to which the Government has been committed by its White Paper of February last, Mr. Osborn considers that the programme is practical in terms of man-power, of labour, of materials, of finance, and suggests that the main difficulty will be the partly, but not wholly, obsolete dwelling. The White Paper programme cannot be carried out without the replacement of nearly all the pre-1914 dwellings in our old towns and villages. Where vacant sites are available nearby, the procedure could be fairly simple. Either the local authority could build or the Government could encourage private enterprise

to do so by offering finance on suitable terms. In areas of high concentration this will not be effective, as many old houses will still have a rental value which will persist longer than twenty or twenty-five years. Consequently the total cost after rebuilding will be the present value and the cost of the new buildings which will replace them, and since these costs added together will make the rent of the rebuilt dwellings too high, the obsolete dwellings will still stand.

Mr. Osborn sees only three methods by which this obstacle could be overcome. One of these he rejects—the State to find the money for buying out the existing values of obsolescent dwellings and cancelling them, so that the sites can be cleared for economic re-building at low density. In his view a combination of the other two will be necessary: the employment of a substantial part of the building industry both by the State and by private enterprise under State stimulus in creating entirely new centres of life and work, and planned extensions of existing small towns; and third, to set statutory limit on the life of an old dwelling, a principle which is included in the Uthwatt proposals. He urges the desperate urgency of a planning policy and the necessity of facing squarely the problems of obsolescence of urban buildings and compensation for land values, and creating the machinery for controlling the location of industry and business, and for building new towns and town-extensions to relieve the pressure on space where the bulk of rebuilding has to be done.

Increase in American Longevity

ACCORDING to the April issue of the *Statistical Bulletin*, the organ of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York, the average length of life of the American people has increased by almost one third since the beginning of the century. In 1941 the average expectation of life at birth was 64·36 years, which was a gain of more than fifteen years since 1901. The record was especially favourable for white females, who in 1941 had attained an average length of life of 68·08, as compared with 63·39 years for white males. Coloured persons showed a greater longevity than the white, though the current longevity among the coloured was still ten years less than for the white. The most substantial gain in longevity occurred in childhood, adolescence and young adult life, the death-rates in 1941 below forty being well under one half those at the beginning of the century. Improvements in mortality have also taken place even after forty. The favourable health situation is also illustrated by the fact that about 60 per cent of the babies now being born will live to 65 as compared with only 40 per cent in 1901. On the whole, health conditions have been very favourable in spite of the growing shortage of civilian medical men, the initiation of restrictions on food consumption, the crowding in centres of war industries and inadequate housing.

Conservation of Wild Life in Great Britain

THE Universities' Federation for Animal Welfare (temporary address, 284 Regent's Park Road, London, N.3) has issued a circular directing attention to the need for co-ordinating the diverse and often conflicting interests concerned with the regulation of wild life, both fauna and flora, in Great Britain. It is suggested that a central "Wild Life Authority" should be set up by statute and charged with the