NEWS and VIEWS

Forest Products Research Laboratory

Mr. W. A. Robertson

MR. W. A. ROBERTSON retired on March 31 from the position of director of forest products research (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research). He took over charge of the Laboratory at Princes Risborough in 1933, the earlier part of his career having been spent in the Indian Forest Service, mainly in Burma. Mr. Robertson has thus been responsible for the direction of timber research in Great Britain during a period of important development which would undoubtedly have been greater but for the restrictions caused by the War. In 1941, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies decided to appoint a forest adviser, Mr. Robertson was selected for this responsible post on a part-time basis. He will now be enabled to devote his entire attention to the problems confronting the Colonial Office in its reorganization of the Colonial Forest Service. In view of his wide experience, it may be considered fortunate that Mr. Robertson's services will continue to be available in this capacity.

Dr. F. Y. Henderson

DR. F. Y. HENDERSON, who has taken up the post of director of forest products research on Mr. Robertson's retirement, joined the staff of the Imperial College of Science and Technology in 1921 as plant physiologist. He devoted much of his time to research, and took an active part in teaching, and organizing the practical teaching in plant physiology. He was also for many years director of biological studies at the John Cass Institute, and superintendent of examinations for the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. In 1931 Dr. Henderson took over the work of Prof. Percy Groom as timber technologist, and did much teaching in this field as well as research on the biological changes in felled timber.

Research in Animal Health at Aberystwyth

THE research professorship in animal health endowed by the generosity of Lord Milford at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, has been filled by the appointment of Mr. Alastair N. Worden. Mr. Worden, who is twenty-eight, was educated at Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet, the Royal Veterinary College, London, and St. John's College, Cambridge. After experience of veterinary practice for more than two years with Mr. J. Pickup, of Barnet, Mr. Worden was awarded in 1938 a Ministry of Agriculture studentship in animal health, spending the first year of his tenure of this studentship in the Division of Nutrition of the Lister Institute, the second in the Bacteriological and Biochemical Departments of the Ministry of Agriculture's Veterinary Laboratory at Weybridge and the third in the Department of Agriculture at the University of Cambridge. He also spent some time at the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen. In 1941 he was appointed to the Biochemical Department of the Institute of Animal Pathology, University of Cambridge. His research has dealt mainly with human and animal nutrition and with the relation of nutrition to infectious diseases. He is a member of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee on which he represents the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare and he is secretary of the Institute of Animal Behaviour.

Prof. Worden starts with the great assets of youth, energy and the breadth of outlook which his training has given him. He goes to a centre already made famous by the work done by Sir George Stapledon and Dr. T. J. Jenkin at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station at University College, Aberystwyth. Everyone will wish him success in a field which has become, as one result of the War, of great moment, not only to Britain, but also to the world in general.

Educating the Citizen

THE central problem of the planned society is, as Prof. H. J. Laski has pointed out, to make the issues at stake intelligible and to bring out in individuals the interest that compels action; in "Planning Our Country", J. F. Adburgham and Elizabeth Halton well maintain the standard set by earlier pamphlets in this "Unless We Plan Now" Series (English Univ. Press, Ltd. 4*d*. net). The main aspects of the problems involved in town and country planning are simply but adequately explained and in a way which should conduce to discussion. There is a short but adequate bibliography, and the pamphlet should fulfil its avowed purpose of bringing home to the ordinary citizen the exact meaning of planning and of how much depends on his contribution and interest if effect is to be given to such proposals as are to be found in the Barlow, Uthwatt and Scott reports.

Much the same can be said of the pamphlet "The Struggle for Democracy", by W. E. Brown, in the "Changing Britain" Series (Univ. of London Press. 1*s*. net). This is even more elementary, and the appeal is largely pictorial. The graphic presentation shows vividly how the development of the British system of government reflects the efforts and strivings of the individuals in the community. The pamphlet indicates not merely how immense has been the broadening of the basis of government and of the sphere of government action in the last century, but also, and more important still, that government is not to be thought of as something apart from the ordinary citizen: it is a matter of 'we', not of 'they', and the interest or inertia of the ordinary citizen, what he does, as well as how he votes, that ultimately shapes our institutions.

Rose-bay Willow-herb and Honey Bees

IN the *Bee World* of January, A. Norman Handley discusses the status of the rose-bay willow-herb (*Epilobium angustifolium*). He mentions that the Press has joined forces with the farmers in condemning this plant as a noxious weed. The author believes that it is very questionable whether the plant could establish itself in properly cultivated ground. The roots appear to thrive best on waste lands where the soil is firm and undisturbed. The beekeeper, however, appreciates this herb because it yields valuable nectar and pollen especially during periods of scarcity from about early July until mid-August. In 1944, which was a notoriously bad year for bees, many hives managed to build up and even store surplus nectar from the rose-bay willow-herb. This plant also provides humble bees with food at a time when the next year's queens are being reared. The value of these insects as a general aid in pollination and a particular help in the case of red clover is, of course, well known. Now that the author has brought up this subject it would appear desirable that the true status of this kind of willow-herb should be determined. Much more information is needed before it

will be possible to account for the sudden appearance of the plant in land that has been ploughed or cleared and whether it is due to buried seeds or to other causes.

Mme. Lepaute : an Eighteenth Century Computer

ELIZABETH CONNOR, Mount Wilson Observatory, Carnegie Institution of Washington, has written (Leaf. 189, Astro. Soc. Pac., Nov. 1944) a short account of the astronomical work of Mme. Lepaute, whom Lalande considered "the only woman in France who had genuine knowledge of astronomy". As a child she was a voracious reader, and it was generally recognized by those who met her that she had a brilliant mind. When Lalande and Lepaute, to whom Mme. Lepaute (*née* Nicole-Reine Étable de la Brière) was married in 1748, collaborated in a treatise on clock-making, Mme. Lepaute calculated a table for the book containing a number of oscillations for pendulums of different lengths and the lengths of pendulums corresponding to a given number of vibrations. Her great work was the assistance that she rendered in the computations of the perturbations of Halley's Comet, and Lalande pays her a tribute when he affirms that without her help Clairaut and he would scarcely have undertaken this enormous task. In 1759, Lalande was placed in charge of the *Connaissance des Temps*, and Mme. Lepaute became one of his assistants. When this work was given to someone else in 1774, they concentrated their attention on volume 7 of the "Ephémérides", and Mme. Lepaute made all the calculations for the sun, moon and planets for both volumes 7 and 8, covering the period 1774–93. In addition to this, she devoted much time to eclipses, computing a table of parallactic angles which was useful in eclipse work. She also made computations for the observation of the transit of Venus in 1761, and wrote a memoir on the subject for the Academy at Béziers. For twenty-five years she was engaged continuously in astronomical work; but her eyesight was finally affected and during the last years of her life she was unable to apply herself closely to the subject.

A 1,000-*g* Centrifuge

IN connexion with recent development work, the Bell Laboratories have designed a centrifuge for the purpose of subjecting objects to high accelerations under conditions permitting the effects of the acceleration to be studied. The machine is described and illustrated by R. M. Pease in an article in the *Bell Laboratories Record* (**22**, No. 16 ; Dec. 1944). Machines of this general type have been built before ; but there was none available that would develop high enough accelerations. For the required tests, an acceleration 1,000 times the earth's gravitational acceleration was needed. To secure this acceleration, two parallel steel rods are clamped at their midpoint and rotated by an adjustable speed D.C. motor. Fastened between the rods at their outer ends is a heavy steel plate to which is secured a mounting for the object under test. With the test object in place, the machine may be driven at the speed necessary to give the desired acceleration. After stopping the machine, the effect on the apparatus under test may be determined. Provisions are also made for observing the effect of the accelerations on the object as the speed of the machine is increased. A neon lamp is mounted to shine directly on the object when the arm is horizontal. At each rotation, this lamp lights for a few millionths of a second from an impulse generated in a winding on a permanent magnet when a small iron bar attached to the rotating arm passes the pole pieces. For the rest of the time, the arm is in comparative darkness. This stroboscopic arrangement makes the arm appear to stand still in the horizontal position and any distortion of the test object can be observed while the acceleration is being increased.

Electric Lighting Installations for Building Interiors

IN a paper on this subject read recently before the Institution of Electrical Engineers, R. O. Ackerley examines the methods which should be adopted in order to answer the various questions which arise when designing an electric lighting installation. The paper stresses the importance of careful task analysis in the first instance to determine exactly what is the visual problem for which suitable lighting must be provided, and goes on to discuss methods of lighting, factors affecting illumination requirements, the selection of appropriate lighting fittings and lamps, and the calculations necessary to determine their location and wattage. The paper also deals with probable trends in lighting in the post-war period and the light sources and materials for light-control that are likely to influence them.

Modern Electric Lift Practice

A PAPER read by L. S. Atkinson before the Institution of Electrical Engineers reviews present-day electric lift practice by making brief reference to those aspects of the subjects which are the concern of the architect, and to the application of lift equipment to suit various classes of building. It explains the changes that have been made in general design from time to time to meet the problems created by the increasing height of buildings and their growing populations, and further describes the equipment as generally installed to-day.

Summer School in Social Biology

A SUMMER SCHOOL in Social Biology and Human Affairs will be held by the British Social Hygiene Council at University College, Nottingham, during July 28–August 11, under the directorship of Prof. Winifred Cullis. This School is designed for teachers and social workers, health visitors, superintendents of children's homes, industrial nurses, etc. Special consideration will be given to educational problems in social biology presented by the coming increase in the school-leaving age. Further information can be obtained from the British Social Hygiene Council, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

Announcements

DR. W. Q. KENNEDY has been appointed professor of geology in the University of Leeds.

AT a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society held on April 13, the following officers were elected: *President*, Prof. H. H. Plaskett ; *Vice-Presidents*, Dr. E. C. Bullard, Sir Harold Spencer Jones, Prof. E. A. Milne and Mr. F. J. Sellers ; *Treasurer*, Mr. J. H. Reynolds ; *Secretaries*, Dr. H. R. Hulme and Mr. D. H. Sadler ; *Foreign Secretary*, Prof. F. J. M. Stratton ; *Members of Council*, Miss M. G. Adam, Dr. H. A. Brück, Rev. M. Davidson, Dr. M. A. Ellison, Mr. F. J. Hargreaves, Dr. A. Hunter, Dr. E. M. Lindsay, Captain W. N. McClean, Prof. W. H. McCrea, Dr. G. C. McVittie, Mr. P. J. Melotte and Dr. R. Stoneley.