

10/ NEWS and VIEWS

University of Bristol: Plans for Extension

ON October 29, at a meeting of representative men and women of the region, an appeal was launched for funds for the extension of the University of Bristol. The University has for some years been engaged in making plans for its future expansion and development. Although it possesses several fine buildings, certain departments are already cramped. In the Medical Faculty, teaching has been dispersed and accommodation was severely restricted even before the Department of Anatomy was destroyed in an air raid. With the expansion which must take place to meet the demands for both undergraduate teaching and graduate training and research, new buildings are a necessity. The scope of the Faculty of Engineering has recently been enlarged by the foundation of the Sir George White chair of aeronautical engineering. The Faculty is housed at some distance from the University in a building on which it has no permanent hold, and new quarters are necessary here, too. Both in the Faculties of Arts and Science certain departments require more room, especially in view of the growing numbers of staff and scholars engaged on research.

Apart from such natural expansion, several new departments are in preparation. It has long been felt that the University of a great agricultural region should make a direct contribution to the interests of the countryside, but it has also been felt that work already done elsewhere in the south of England should not be duplicated. The proposal that a School of Veterinary Science should be established at Bristol has now provided an opportunity which will be taken. A Field Station is already available, and the pre-clinical teaching will be provided for in the new Medical School. It is further proposed to institute a graduate diploma in horticulture for students already possessing an honours degree in one of the sciences bearing on that subject. The purpose is to provide men with a training in fundamental science capable of carrying out research on applied lines. This will be done in association with the Research Station at Long Ashton. The University also proposes to set up an Institute of Education on the lines of Scheme A of the McNair Report, and will thus assume responsibility for the training of teachers in a group of associated colleges.

The demand for a general increase in the numbers of men and women taking university courses lays a special obligation on a University formerly small in numbers and therefore capable of economic expansion, and it is proposed to plan for an ultimate student population of some 3,000. It has been urged on the University that its situation, and the amenities it enjoys, make it specially suitable for development on residential lines. The suggestion is welcome, and fits in with past policy. There are already three fine Halls which formerly allowed all students not living in the city to spend one or two years in residence: further, the University had been successful in evolving a system of student life intermediate between the collegiate and the institutional. It has just acquired four mansions which give a material increase in living room. As a most important item in its plans, it puts the provision of several new Halls. The site for these, in fine and open surroundings, within reasonable distance of the University, is already available, and an immediate objective is the building of two

new Halls to be called after Mr. Winston Churchill, chancellor of the University, with whose name the appeal has been associated.

Universities Quarterly

THE need for a journal wholly devoted to university education and the vital problems affecting university development has grown more urgent in recent years. *Universities Quarterly*, the first number of which has just been published, is an attempt to meet this need. Its primary purpose is to discuss—"with complete freedom and from all angles"—what can best be done by the universities themselves, industry and the Government, to enable the universities to adapt their teaching, research, and, if need be, guiding philosophy, to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society. The journal is not, in consequence, intended solely—or even primarily—for members of university staffs. Rather is it the intention of the editorial board, of which Sir Ernest Simon is chairman, that many of the articles will be of interest also to those engaged in public life, the Civil Service, local government, and teaching work in secondary schools and technical colleges. Catholicity of appeal is, perhaps, the most notable feature of the first number. Bertrand Russell urges that most students should learn something of the fundamentals of philosophic thinking. Bonamy Dobrée discusses knowledge for its own sake. Sir William Larke writes on industry and the universities. Sir Ernest Simon deals with the problems of expansion and development facing the universities as a result of the growing national demand for higher education. Other features include an article by Dr. O. C. Carmichael on "Higher Education in the United States", a series of short contributions on "Why Compulsory Philology?", and book reviews. The last, which ought undoubtedly to have a major place in a journal of this type, is unfortunately the weakest feature in the first number. *Universities Quarterly* is published by Turnstile Press, Ltd., 10 Great Turnstile, London, W.C.1, and the price is 5s. per issue.

Scientific Instrument Manufacturers' Association of Great Britain

THE annual report, for 1945-46, of the president and council of the Scientific Instrument Manufacturers' Association of Great Britain Ltd. (from the Association, River Plate House, 12-13 South Place, London, E.C.2) remarks on the growing appreciation of the part that scientific instruments and laboratory apparatus play in science, industry and education, and how this has, to a large extent, contributed to the continued expansion and progress of the Association. The report records that, during the year under review, twelve new firms joined the Association; bringing its total membership up to eighty-six, and that the formation of a new section, dealing with electronics, is under consideration. At the last annual general meeting, the council was empowered to appoint a permanent director of the Association, and although seventy replies were received to advertisements in the Press, it was decided, after full consideration, that an approach be made to the British Scientific Instruments Research Association, with which the Scientific Instrument Manufacturers Association actively collaborates, for the appointment of Mr. A. J. Philpot as director of both bodies.

Many new problems have faced the Association during the year, and the council has expressed,

through individuals or appropriate committees, the Association's views on such matters as the de-requisition of business premises, the call-up of young technicians, the control and future of German industry, the disposal of surplus scientific instruments, and the post-war protection of the British scientific instrument industry. During the year, valuable contacts were made with the Scientific Apparatus Manufacturers Association of America and with the French Syndicat Général de l'Optique et des Instrument de Précision. Previous personal contacts made in Sweden led to the successful exhibition of British scientific instruments held in Stockholm during May-June last, in which forty members of the Association took part (see *Nature*, 158, 66; 1946). The Association is taking part in the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition, and participation in an exhibition to be held in Brussels, as well as in the 1947 British Industries Fair is stated to be under active consideration.

Royal Observatory, Greenwich: Annual Report

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 THE report of the Astronomer Royal to the Board of Visitors of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, covers the period May 1, 1945, to April 30, 1946, and deals with the usual matters presented at the annual visitation. The Astronomer Royal was able to resume occupation on October 1, 1945, when a portion of the damaged Flamsteed House was repaired, and a small amount of work has been carried out at the Observatory, but no structural repairs have been attempted up to the present. The covering of the dome of the 28-in. equatorial, which suffered on several occasions from the effects of blast, is beyond repair, and it will not be renewed in view of the pending removal of the Observatory to Herstmonceux. The telescope will be dismantled as soon as storage accommodation is available, and will be re-erected on the new site. It is impossible to provide even an outline of the lengthy report, which should be read by all who are interested in the work and in particular in the future of the Royal Observatory.

One matter in connexion with this latter point is of supreme importance and is dealt with very clearly at the end of the report. It is most essential, if the Royal Observatory is to continue its work in contributing to the development of astronomical science, that the basic grades should be recruited at a higher level. Post-graduate research for students from the universities should be provided for by the Royal Observatory, and it is hoped that some such scheme will materialize in the near future. While proposals have been submitted for regrading its staff (including that of the Nautical Almanac Office) on the basis of the reorganised Scientific Civil Service, no decision has yet been made. At present both the salaries and prospects of promotion of the Observatory staff are very inferior to those in other scientific establishments, and unless improvements are made the recruitment of staff to fill vacancies must present serious difficulties. This is a matter of the utmost importance, and it is time that the British public was aware of the dangers to the development of astronomical science in Great Britain if overdue reforms are not forthcoming.

Research Council of Alberta

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 THE twenty-sixth annual report of the Research Council of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta: King's Printer), covering the year 1945, includes lists of members of the Council and the Technical Advisory

Committee, the technical staff and of the publications of the Council. Most of the investigations in progress in the previous year were continued, new investigations including a soils survey in co-operation with the Dominion Government and studies of the possibilities for the commercial utilization of cereal straws and of Alberta poplar. Difficulties in obtaining technical staff, services and supplies continued to handicap the work. Much of the work on bituminous sands was concerned with the critical problem of freeing the crude oil, recovered by the separation unit, from water, sand and silt, and preparation of it in suitable form for the refinery. Study of the hot-water separation method continued, and the most significant advance in the year was the discovery that the silt and clay present in bituminous sand powerfully assist displacement of the oil from the sand by hot water. Three papers on this work were published during the year. A detailed report on the use of Alberta coals in automatic domestic stokers was issued as Report No. 46. Other fuel investigations related to briquetting, while the major geological project was a field investigation of part of the Highwood coal area. A report on the "Geology of the Red Deer and Rosebud Sheets" was published during the year, and a study of the Fischer-Tropsch synthesis of petrol and other liquid fuels from natural gas has been concerned with the reduction and conditioning of catalysts. A co-operative soils survey programme was planned with the soil survey department of the Dominion Government, but was not completed owing to shortage of qualified staff, and it will be some time before the detailed reports are available. A study is also in progress of the periodic rise and fall in the number of rabbits, fur-bearing and other animals and birds at intervals of about ten years.

A paper by E. Stansfield, chief research engineer of the Research Council of Alberta, on recent work of the Council, presented to the Annual Western Institute of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in October 1945, has now been issued as Contribution 10 of the Research Council, and the picture it gives of the work of Council is supplemented by a list of the more important items in the programme for 1946-47 and a summary of the appropriations granted by the legislature. Mr. Stansfield, in his paper, refers briefly to the studies initiated on the biological cycle, to earlier work on the wetting of coal, current work on coal for automatic domestic stokers, and on low-temperature carbonization, portable gas producers, briquetting, etc.

Forestry in China

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 IN *Acta Brevia Sinensis* (No. 11; 1945) some interesting information is given on Chinese forests and forest resources, a subject upon which all too little is known in Europe. Abstracts are given from papers or forthcoming books on half a dozen aspects of forestry procedure, analyses of the forest, extraction, etc., with a note on the Forest Products Laboratory. The report on a survey of the forest resources of China for railway sleepers proposed in south-west China records investigations in the five provinces of west Sikong, south Szechuan, south-east Kweichow, north Kwangsi and south Hunan. Several forests hitherto unknown were explored for the first time. Among the more important of these are the evergreen forests of Loochen in the region between the provinces of Kweichow and Kwangsi, and the mixed forest at the upper part of Nien Shao Ho, south-east Kweichow. The lumber markets at Yaan,