NEWS and VIEWS

British Association at Dundee

On Wednesday, the annual meeting of the British Association, held this year at Dundee, was brought to a close. The meeting opened on August 27, and was the first full meeting to be held since 1939; in that year, it will be recalled, the annual meeting opened also in Dundee, but was abandoned on the declaration of war. It was thus appropriate that the Association should mark the renewal of its full activities by meeting at Dundee, though nevertheless the generosity of the city in once more offering itself as host must not be overlooked. The formal opening of the meeting with the delivery of the presidential address on the evening of August 27 was preceded, at noon, by a civic ceremony in the Caird Hall, at which the Lord Provost conferred on Sir Henry Dale, president of the Association, the freedom of Dundee; this distinction, as Sir Henry remarked, not only honoured him but also the British Association. The Lord Provost and Corporation also gave a civic reception for the Association on the evening of August 28, and a dinner on the following evening to selected visitors, at which Sir Henry Dale, Sir Richard Gregory (immediate past-president of the Association) and Dr. Kirtley F. Mather, of Harvard, who had just delivered the British and American Association Lecture, paid just tribute to the hospitality of Dundee and its citizens. Local interest in the meeting was shown by the fact that of the total registration of 3,000 announced by Sir Henry Dale on August 27, no less than 1,770 were from Dundee and the neighbourhood; this latter figure exceeded that for 1939 by more than 250 and constitutes a record for meetings in Great Britain outside London. Sir Henry Tizard was elected president of the British Association for 1948, when the annual meeting will be held at Brighton. Sir Henry is chairman of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy and of the Defence Research Policy Committee (see *Nature*, February 8, p. 191); his acceptance of the office of president of the British Association ensures that the Association will be fully in touch with scientific developments and will not lack energetic leadership during the coming year.

During the meeting, a special graduation ceremony was held in Dundee and the honorary degree of LL.D. of the University of St. Andrews was conferred on the following: Sir Edward Appleton, secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research; Sir Lawrence Bragg, Cavendish professor of experimental physics, Cambridge; Sir Henry Dale, president of the British Association; Sir Alexander Fleming, professor of bacteriology, University of London; and Prof. Angus Robertson Fulton, formerly principal of University College, Dundee, and emeritus professor of engineering.

Development Fund for the British Association

At the close of his presidential address, Sir Henry Dale launched an appeal on behalf of the British Association for a development fund of £100,000 for the advancement of science. It was appropriate, he said, that the appeal should be announced in the Caird Hall, Dundee, where he was speaking, because it was Sir James Caird, who gave the hall to the city, who also gave the British Association in 1912 its first endowment fund. This was followed by other gifts, such as that in 1926 of £10,000 by Sir Alfred Yarrow, who, however, made it a condition that the capital and interest should be expended in twenty years. The Association now requires substantial funds to enable it to continue to discharge its functions. Hitherto, its working expenses have been small, chiefly because a large part of the cost of the annual meetings has been provided by the generous hospitality of the cities where they were held. It has no significant reserves to meet the present rising costs or to enable it to undertake new activities. An appeal is accordingly being made for a development fund of £100,000 to be used under the direction of the Council of the Association for the advancement of science. Among the specific purposes for which funds are urgently needed are the support of certain aspects of research not adequately covered by specialist and other bodies; promotion of contacts between British and other men of science; the extension of the scheme whereby senior science students at universities and colleges are enabled to attend annual meetings of the Association; provision of better accommodation than the wholly inadequate offices at present occupied by the Association; increased endowment to maintain Down House, the home of Charles Darwin, with its priceless collection of Darwiniana; and provision of a central organisation for the dissemination in Britain of scientific information. Particulars of the appeal can be obtained from the Secretary, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

John Couch Adams and the Discovery of Neptune

In a small book of forty-three pages, by Sir Harold Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal (Cambridge University Press), many misunderstandings regarding Airy and Adams have been rectified, so those who desire an unbiased view of the matter should read the book. Most people have been inclined to blame Airy for not giving more consideration to Adams when he announced the results which he had obtained, but it is shown that Airy was not really to blame and that the failure of Adams to reply to certain questions relating to the radius vector of Uranus was probably responsible for his loss of the sole glory of the discovery of Neptune. Airy seems to have behaved with remarkable courtesy to Adams, who was of a retiring disposition and who realized later what he had lost by not answering Airy's letter. Incidentally, it is shown that Challis did not appear in a very creditable light when all the facts were made known and that Le Verrier's subsequent behaviour could scarcely be described as becoming in a man of his ability. However, the painful controversy having ended, astronomers can only endorse the words of Sir John Herschel, addressing the Royal Astronomical Society in 1848, and speaking of Le Verrier and Adams: "May they both long adorn and augment our science, and add to their fame, already so high and pure, by fresh achievements".

National College of Horology and Instrument Technology

The National College of Horology and Instrument Technology is to commence functioning on October 6. It will be housed in the Northampton Polytechnic, London, which for fifty years has been concerned with the training of craftsmen in watch and clock repairing. The College is one of the national centres promoted by the Ministry of Education to cater for those specialized industries which are of great