

scientific men themselves. They must play their part in the relations of their own country with other countries whether by meetings or travels on scientific business, by means of work in their own foreign services, or in international organisations under the United Nations in which may be brought together scientific workers from every people and every land. Dr. Needham includes in his lecture warm tributes to the work of Dr. Julian Huxley and of Dr. J. T. Bodet, who has succeeded the former as director-general of Unesco.

### Technical Co-operation in Africa

REPRESENTATIVES of the Belgian, French, Portuguese, South African, Southern Rhodesian and United Kingdom Governments held a Conference in Paris during January 11-14 to continue the work on technical co-operation in Africa south of the Sahara which has been going on during the past five years. The first in this series of meetings was held in 1945 between the French and British Governments and concerned itself with West Africa, when questions of public health were examined. Since that time technical co-operation has been extended to other subjects and now includes Belgium, Portugal, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia and their dependent territories. Resulting from the Conference just held in Paris, it has been agreed to recommend the establishment of a Commission for Co-operation in Technical Matters in Africa south of the Sahara. This Commission, which will meet twice a year, will have an administrative role and have among its objects that of giving practical effect to technical co-operation in Africa. The Conference also recommended that the existing practice should be maintained whereby observers from the specialized agencies of the United Nations or E.C.A. are invited to be present at its technical conferences. The Conference also agreed to the establishment of a secretariat with its seat in London, which would have the task of: (a) reviewing and co-ordinating the programmes of technical co-operation in Africa south of the Sahara, including follow-up action for dealing with rinderpest, sleeping sickness, soil conservation, anti-locust campaigns, etc.; (b) drawing up and submitting to the Member Governments plans for further programmes of technical co-operation; (c) seeking the approval of governments for recommendations made at recent conferences, such as the transport conference at Lisbon, scientific conference at Johannesburg, nutrition conference at Dehang, French Cameroons, and indigenous rural economy conference at Jos, Nigeria.

### A Systemic Insecticide in Commercial Production

ONE of the most striking of recent developments in insecticides has been the discovery in Germany of the toxic properties of a long series of organic phosphorus compounds. Some of these compounds have the property of being absorbed by the roots or leaves of plants and being translocated to other parts, so killing all the aphids and other sucking insects which feed upon them. One of these compounds, *bis* (*bis*-dimethylamino)-phosphonous anhydride (see *Nature*, May 21, 1949, p. 787, and September 24, 1949, p. 522), has been selected by Pest Control, Ltd., of Cambridge, and with remarkable speed has now been developed and made available commercially under the name of 'Pestox 3'. The great virtue claimed for this material is that while it is highly toxic to greenfly and to red spider mites, it is without effect on ladybirds, parasitic

Hymenoptera, and other enemies of these pests. There is some disagreement in the published reports upon the extent to which this material is absorbed and translocated after application to the leaves of plants; but there can be no question about its great effectiveness in practical use. The chief problem raised by the widespread use of this systemic insecticide is one of toxicity to man. This will not arise when it is used on roses or chrysanthemums—except that the greatest care is needed on the part of those who have to handle and apply the insecticide. But where it is used on crops for human consumption, it is highly dangerous to apply it later than one month to six weeks before marketing. This places a heavy responsibility on the grower.

### New Insect-proof Material for Packaging

A NEW insect-proof packaging material which is cheap and very easy to handle has been developed by the Pest Infestation Laboratory of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. There is considerable wastage in packaged foods, resulting from the penetration of insects from outside. It was found that a layer of sand-paper formed an effective barrier, but did not prove practicable in use. Paper and corrugated cardboard impregnated with D.D.T. were unsuccessful because the insects bored straight through and so did not remain long enough in contact with the insecticide to pick up a lethal dose. The final solution was to use cellulose wadding, several layers thick, impregnated with D.D.T. When faced with this material the insect, after getting through the first layer, wanders in all directions and so takes up enough D.D.T. to be killed. Not one insect has ever got through this material in the course of numerous laboratory tests. The material is bulky and therefore suited to covering groups of packages rather than small containers. Provided there is a fairly large overlap, the wadding need not be sealed round the package; it will be sandwiched between layers of ordinary paper to prevent contamination of the goods by D.D.T. This packing material is due for testing on a commercial scale shortly.

### Northern Advisory Council for Further Education

IN the second year of its existence the Northern Advisory Council for Further Education had before it the dual task of building up its organisation and of carrying out the advisory duties laid upon it during its year of inauguration. An interlocking regional plan for technical, commercial and art education has been produced and issued to local education authorities in the area for information and guidance in preparing their own development schemes. Surveys have also been made of the educational requirements of a number of industries, and a regional scheme formulated for courses of training for part-time and intending part-time teachers. Contact with the industry of the region has been broadened by the establishment of permanent advisory committees for the important building and engineering industries. Copies of this interesting report showing how technical education is being integrated on a regional level may be obtained from the Secretary, 43 Eldon Place, Barrasbridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1.

### Earthquakes Registered in New Zealand

DURING the second quarter of 1949, thirty-eight strong and thirty-eight minor shocks were regis-