

NEWS and VIEWS

Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara

THE Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara, the functions and composition of which were approved at an inter-governmental meeting held in London last May, will meet on November 21 at Nairobi for discussions on the utilization of science for the benefit of the subcontinent. The governments represented are Belgium, France, Portugal, Southern Rhodesia, the Union of South Africa and the United Kingdom and Colonies. The Council is constituted as follows: Dr. P. J. du Toit, president of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (*chairman*); Prof. J. Millot, director of the Scientific Institute, Madagascar (*vice-chairman*); Dr. E. B. Worthington, scientific secretary to the East Africa High Commission (*secretary-general*); Prof. Aubert, director of pedological research, Office of Overseas Scientific Research, Paris; Dr. F. J. Cambournac, Institute of Tropical Medicine, Lisbon; Dr. B. A. Keen, director of the East African Agriculture and Forestry Research Organisation, Nairobi; Dr. J. P. Lebrun, secretary-general of the National Institute of Agricultural Research in the Belgian Congo; Dr. A. Mendes Correa, of the University of Oporto, director of the Higher Colonial College, Lisbon, and member of the Portuguese National Assembly; Prof. T. Monod, director of the Institute of French Africa, Dakar; Col. W. H. Mulligan, director of the West African Institute of Trypanosomiasis Research, Kaduna, Nigeria; Dr. B. F. J. Schonland, research professor of geophysics and director of the Bernard Price Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; Mr. N. P. Sellick, director of research, Meteorological Services, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia; Dr. L. van den Berghe, director of the Institute for Scientific Research in the Belgian Congo. The Council's functions will be to suggest new subjects for research and how to set about them; to link in friendly liaison (but not to supervise) scientific bureaux now working in this field, as well as individual research workers; to facilitate transfer of these workers from one territory to another, and the circulation of their reports, and to suggest, to the governments concerned, such specialist conferences as may advance the interests of Africa.

Presenting Science to the Layman

It is very generally accepted that in the United States the art of successful popularization is well understood, not only of knowing how to catch the attention of the ordinary man, but also in the even more important sense of knowing how to apply scientific theories and methods to the problems that interest him and in ways which he can understand. The July and August issues of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* (from the Academy Office, Philadelphia; 2 dollars each), dealing with the 'Point Four programme' and gambling, respectively, demonstrate this point very clearly. Each of the issues is in the nature of a symposium, for which special editors are appointed, and each contains a wide variety of articles which deal with a subject of public importance from the more popular as well as a strictly scientific point of view. The result cannot but be of great interest to the British reader, accustomed as he is to assume perhaps rather too readily that his own professional publications which deal with scientific topics

cannot have more than an indirect effect on public opinion. This method of analysing a problem, and of presenting the results, is best demonstrated by citing examples from these two issues of the *Annals*. The discussion of the problem of gambling, for example, contains both a carefully prepared discussion of the psychodynamics of gambling, which is not likely to be understood by the ordinary reader, and also much more palatable articles, as, for example, that on gambling odds, prepared by a well-known statistician. The issue which is concerned with the Point Four programme similarly deals with the political, psychological and economic aspects of American aid to underdeveloped countries from a strictly technical point of view, and also provides a summary of the implications of the scheme as seen by competent British and United States experts and others with more general interests.

Work of the Caribbean Commission

SOME of the activities of the Caribbean Commission, a consultative and advisory body to further and co-ordinate economic and social progress in those territories within its scope (including the British West Indies), were indicated by the Minister of State for the Colonies in a reply circulated in *Hansard* for May 24. The Technical Information Services answer technical inquiries over a wide field, as well as producing and circulating information leaflets, the "Yearbook of Caribbean Research", "Crops and Livestock Information", reports on plant and animal diseases and educational films. Technical conferences have been held on land tenure, forestry, meteorology, livestock and soil science. Surveys and studies have been made in plant and animal quarantine legislation, industrial development, the criteria for potential Caribbean industries, fishery population movements, and the utilization of sugar by-products. Assistance in social and economic development has included aid to pioneer industries, tourist development and the administration of the war-time Caribbean schooner pool. The Commission is also the parent body of the Caribbean Research Council and the West Indian Conference which meets once every two years. Recommendations of the Conference which have been adopted by the Governments affected include the establishment of a Caribbean tourist committee, a meeting of meteorological experts in 1949 which led to improvements in the system of warning against hurricanes, and the grant to the Caribbean area by the University of Puerto Rico of thirty scholarships to its School of Industrial Arts.

German Leather Industries during 1939-45

In a comprehensive survey of "The Leather Manufacturing and Related Industries in Germany during the Period 1939-1945" (B.I.O.S. Surveys Report No. 27; London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1950; 3s. 6d. net), Dr. C. H. Spiers has gathered together much valuable information from the reports of the various missions which investigated the German leather industries. These reports do not disclose anything revolutionary as regards actual hide and skin processes, but they show some interesting chemical developments, notably the introduction of two fundamentally new tanning reactions ('immergan' and di-isocyanate tannages), an improved iron tannage ('ferrigan' tannage), the large-scale exploitation of the synthetic tannins, and the production of effective substitutes for natural oils and