

## NEWS and VIEWS

## Chemistry at Durham :

Prof. F. A. Paneth, F.R.S.

PROF. F. A. PANETH, on reaching the retiring age this autumn, terminates his highly successful activities as professor of chemistry and first director of the Londonderry Laboratory for Radiochemistry in the University of Durham, and is going to Mainz as director at the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry. In the early years of this century, Sir William Ramsay addressed an audience in Vienna. The large and enthusiastic gathering listening to his fascinating report of the discovery of the noble gases included the great landowner Kuppelwieser, who was so much impressed by Ramsay's lecture that he decided to finance the costs of an institute for radioactive research to be erected by the Vienna Academy of Sciences. Paneth, who had just taken his degree in chemistry in the University of Vienna, joined this institute as an assistant and contributed very materially to the important work carried out in the course of the first decade of its activities. This included numerous pioneer investigations on the application of radioactive indicators in inorganic and physical chemistry. In 1913 Paneth spent some time in Soddy's laboratory in the University of Glasgow, where one of his activities was the study of methods of microanalysis of gases which he later developed to a most remarkable extent. The first fruit of his great skill in analysis of gases was the discovery of polonium hydride, followed by the discovery of lead, bismuth and tin hydrides and of free organic radicals. In recent years he has made very important contributions to our knowledge of the composition of the higher atmosphere and of the helium content of meteorites as an indication of their age. Simultaneously, he has promoted several branches of radiochemistry.

Intense and most successful occupation with numerous experimental problems did not prevent Paneth from being a most effective first president of the International Commission of Radioactivity. Nor did it prevent him from showing much interest in the definition of fundamental concepts of chemistry and in the study of the history of science. This is witnessed by his publications on the life and works of Boyle and his remarkable lecture on Thomas Wright of Durham and Immanuel Kant. Prof. Paneth has shown himself to be an ingenious experimenter, a scholar and an eminent teacher.

Prof. G. E. Coates

PROF. PANETH is being succeeded at Durham by Geoffrey Edward Coates, son of J. E. Coates, the retired professor of chemistry in the University College of Swansea (University of Wales). Prof. Coates, who was born in 1917, was educated at Clifton College and Queen's College, Oxford, where he obtained the degrees of B.A. (first-class honours in chemistry) and B.Sc. During the Second World War he did research work on corrosion at the Metallurgical Research Laboratories of the Magnesium Metal Corporation, Swansea. Since 1945 he has been lecturer in inorganic chemistry in the University of Bristol; he has acted also as chief examiner in chemistry to the Bristol University School Examination Board. In December 1952 he was appointed senior reporter for inorganic chemistry for the "Annual Reports of the Chemical Society",

and for the past five years he has been consultant to the Imperial Smelting Corporation, Ltd., Avonmouth. He is also a member of the Bond Energy Committee and the Fuel Incendiary Panel (Ministry of Supply, Scientific Advisory Council). Prof. Coates's publications before the War dealt with electrochemical problems: the electrolytic corrosion of metals, electrode potentials, and polarization; but some were also concerned with questions of molecular structure. Since the War, he has devoted his efforts mainly to the study of organometallic compounds (for example, trimethylgallium and dimethylberyllium), of borine derivatives, and of fluorine compounds.

## E. R. Cooper Memorial Award for Work in New Zealand

IN memory of the late Dr. E. R. Cooper, a fund is being raised to institute an annual award to scientific workers. Dr. Cooper, who died a year ago at the age of forty-two, was one of New Zealand's younger scientists. His death was a serious loss to scientific research, organization and administration. For a decade he guided the development of the Dominion Physical Laboratory, which, beginning with a very small physics section, became under his directorship the largest branch of the N.Z. Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Besides his capacity as an organizer, he possessed outstanding scientific qualities. He always attached great importance to the publication of scientific work and the development of the natural resources of New Zealand. These two ideas have been incorporated in a memorial award sponsored by the Dominion Physical Laboratory Technical Advisory Committee of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Zealand. The award will be made annually to the author or authors of published physics or engineering papers who give the best account of their research work in New Zealand, preference being given to work that contributes to the development of the natural resources of that country. The Royal Society of New Zealand will administer the award, and will appoint a selection committee consisting of two representatives of the University and two of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and one of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Donations towards the capital sum required to establish the award should be sent to the Secretary, D.S.I.R., P.O. Box 8018, Government Buildings, Wellington. While the monetary value of the award will be small, its scientific standing will be high and in accord with the high standard set by the scientist whose memory it perpetuates.

## Commonwealth Fund Fellowships for Advanced Study and Travel in the United States

A NUMBER of Commonwealth Fund Fellowships are again being offered by the Commonwealth Fund of New York to British subjects for study and travel in the United States. All expenses of travel, study and living will be met, with some adjustment of stipends for married men. The Fellowships, which are open to British men and women who are not normally resident in or near the Americas and who have not previously worked or studied for more than a few months in the United States, are offered annually in six categories as follows. *General*: twenty Fellowships to graduates of a university in Great Britain and Northern Ireland; candidates