

Age of Election to the Royal Society

IN a recent note, Prof. A. V. Hill has discussed the age of election to the Royal Society of London (*Not. and Rec. Roy. Soc., Lond.*, 11, No. 1; January 1954). For many years, up to and including 1930, the number of annual elections to fellowship of the Royal Society (apart from 'special' elections under Statute 12) was fifteen. During 1931-38 it was seventeen, during 1939-45 it was twenty, and since 1946 it has been twenty-five. The 'median' age of election (that is, the age above which as many elections occur as below it) has been shown as: 1848-72, 42; 1873-97, 43; 1897-1922, $44\frac{1}{2}$; 1920-38, 47; 1939-45, $48\frac{1}{2}$; 1946-53, $47\frac{1}{2}$. These figures include elections in all scientific categories. In eight different categories the median ages have been:

	1920-38	1939-53
Mathematics	42	42
Physics	39	44
Chemistry	45	45
Engineering	55	54
Geology	53	51
Botany	51	52
Zoology	48	50
Physiology	48	49

This confirms the general conclusion that there has been little change over the past thirty-four years, though this is probably due mainly to the fact that the number of annual elections has increased in the ratio of 5:3. The median age of election differs greatly between the categories; and this difference is the more striking when it is recalled that practically no elections take place under thirty-two, so that, for example, half the elections occur in ten years in mathematics and in twenty-two years in engineering. One reason for this difference is that in some subjects experience is far more important than in others, where natural ability is the chief element in success. Prof. Hill writes that the number of scientific people qualified for election is rising rapidly and that, if seventeen elections annually were appropriate in 1931, twenty-five will be too few before long. The number of annual elections should be adjusted from time to time so that the median age of election could be kept around forty-five.

Impact of Science on Society

RECENT copies of the quarterly magazine, *Impact*, have contained articles of considerable interest to those interested in the social aspects of science. In the latest issue, Dr. A. King states that international collaboration in scientific research and development can be extremely valuable only if the projects are appropriate for international effort and present real advantages over normal national or institutional means. International scientific co-operation should be based on real needs rather than on idealistic or political principles (4, No. 4; Winter 1953). An earlier issue of the journal contains an article by Dr. C. Sarnie on the scientific detection of crime; he shows that the introduction of scientific methods in the detection of crime is of great social value because it makes for greater certainty in the administration of justice (4, No. 3; Autumn 1953). In the Summer 1953 issue (4, No. 2), R. T. Eddison has contributed a valuable article on the social application of operational research, and Dr. Armando Cortesaa, the distinguished Portuguese historian of science, has shown how the application of nautical science made possible the great geographical revolution at the end of the fifteenth century. *Impact* is available at H.M.S.O., price 2s. 6d. for each issue.

Imperial College of Science and Technology, London

AN account of research activities carried out at the Royal College of Science during the three years, 1950, 1951 and 1952, has recently been published. The publication is a brief general review and is written in non-specialized terms similar to the booklet issued by the City and Guilds College last year to describe its research in engineering. Contributions are included from eight departments of the College, including botany, inorganic and physical chemistry, organic chemistry, geology, mathematics, meteorology, physics and zoology and applied entomology. The greatest range of investigation has been carried out in the Department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry and varies from analyses of the structure of solids to the physical chemistry of ion-exchange resins as well as problems of crop nutrition and insecticide chemistry. In the Department of Geology, studies have been carried out on the Caledonian Mountains of Britain, while, in the Department of Mathematics, theoretical cosmology has been one of the fields of investigation. The report is admirably written and discreetly illustrated. It is hoped that, next year, the Royal School of Mines will publish a similar booklet, so completing a trilogy of publications of this sort for the three colleges which make up the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

Rugby School Natural History Society

THE Report of the Rugby School Natural History Society for 1953 is the eighty-seventh in the series and reveals that the Society is in a flourishing state and is keeping up a long and splendid record of work. The museum has been redecorated and extended, and the vivarium improved mainly by clearing, cleaning and restocking the pond. During the year, four lectures were given by visiting specialists. The ecology of a pond has been the subject of study for about thirteen years. An account of the period 1940-46 was published in the Report for 1946, and in the present Report the account, with illustrations, has been brought up to date. A bird census for 1953 is given. T. Fawcett describes work on an excavation at Brownsover, where pieces of interesting medieval pottery were unearthed; so also were two St. Neots ware sherds dating from late Saxon time and believed to be the first found in Warwickshire. Reports of the library, museum and vivarium and of the Society's field sections—zoological and entomological, ornithological, geological, archæological—are here published. (It is curious that the Society seems to have no botanical field section, though judging from the report of the zoological and entomological section, its members also admit botany.) Affiliated sections also report their year's activity; they comprise architectural, meteorological, photographic, astronomical, chemical and physical, railway, wireless and aero-modelling. Numerous prizes covering many aspects of science are being offered. Rugby School is to be congratulated on the excellent work being done by its Natural History Society and affiliated sections.

Science Service of the Canadian Department of Agriculture: Annual Report for 1952-53

THE annual report of the Director of Science Service of the Department of Agriculture, Canada, for the year ended March 31, 1953 (pp. 56+4 plates. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), which is reprinted from the report of the Minister of Agriculture,