National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Cambridge: Report for 1953

At the annual general meeting of the Fellows of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Cambridge, on July 16, the chairman, Prof. T. J. Jenkin, presented the annual report of the Council for the year ending December 31, 1953 (pp. 48. From the Institute), and referred to some new developments in the work of the Institute proposed for the future. From the report, it is evident that the year under review was one of both progress and consolidation, and the improved staffing, authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1952, has been fully implemented. Since publication of the results of field trials is one of the Institute's chief concerns, it is satisfactory that two issues of its *Journal* appeared during the year, together with new or revised editions of seven "Farmer's Leaflets", while interim comments on the performance of some seventy different varieties of cereals, varieties or strains of root and fodder crops, beans, peas, vegetables and potatoes were available in the report itself. Development of the Field Inspection and Certification schemes co-ordinated by the Seed Production Committee of the Institute continued, and the acreage of cereal seed crops inspected under the Field Approval Scheme reached a total of 66,000 in 1953, compared with 26,800 in 1947.

As regards the future, Prof. Jenkin announced that the Ministry of Agriculture has agreed to the request of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station that the Institute should accept responsibility for the production of stock seed and for the certification of the Aberystwyth strains of grasses and clovers. It is recognized, however, that two or three years must elapse before the necessary equipment and facilities can be provided to enable the Institute to undertake full responsibility in this matter. Developments in the international field are also contemplated, for help of the Institute has been sought by the Organization for European Economic Co-operation to co-ordinate two new projects. The first of these is a scheme for international grass strain trials designed to test the value of strains. This will involve three stages—namely, identification and classification, preliminary assessment and agronomic trials—and will be undertaken in close co-operation with the Grassland Research Station at Hurley. The second is an attempt to obtain greater uniformity in the terminology used to designate the different stages of herbage seed production, for at present each country has its own system, and confusion is liable to occur with regard to certification schemes. The meeting concluded with an address by Sir John Russell (see p. 446 of this issue).

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

With the publication of the first number of the *Kew Bulletin* for 1954, the work of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, during 1953 is reviewed in some detail. This is a matter of general interest, to the public and to professional botanists alike. During the year the centenary of the Herbarium and Library was celebrated by an exhibition illustrating the work of these Departments during the past hundred years (see *Nature*, **171**, 1086; 1953). The continuing activity of the herbarium is well illustrated by the following statistics: specimens received from outside sources, 60,496; sheets received on loan, 4,558; sheets sent on loan, 4,446; sheets distributed as duplicates, 12,268; sheets mounted (with certain exclusions), 46,465; and so on. Visits by botanists numbered 3,964. Inquiries and plant consignments dealt with numbered 2,667. In the midst of the routine tasks, of which there are many, the long-term projects have been pursued, for example, the preparation of the "Flora of Tropical East Africa", and other floras, and members of the staff have taken an active part in contemporary botanical and other activities. Special work on particular systematic groups has also been undertaken, for example, Bignoniaceae, Orchidaceae, vascular cryptogams, etc. An outstanding event of the year was the publication of Supplement XI (1941–50) of the *Index Kewensis*, and progress has been made with the succeeding volume. The work of the Library, the Museum and of the Jodrell Laboratory, where work on the systematic anatomy of the monocotyledons is being steadily pursued, as well as routine inquiries, some of a curious character, is also reviewed. In the Gardens, the work in the arboretum, the alpine and herbaceous sections, and the temperate, decorative, tropical and other departments is recorded and discussed. The *Bulletin* concludes with a list of publications and the roll of scientific and administrative staff.

Science in China To-day

An interesting but pessimistic appreciation of the position of scientists in Communist China is contributed to *Science* (**119**, 785; 1954) by A. Z. Chang, now working at the Centre for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Reviewing the education and activities of those of the fifty scientific workers constituting the national committee of the 'Ko-lien' (All-China Association for Natural Sciences) for whom information is available, Dr. Chang points out that their average age so far as is known is more than fifty-five years, and none is a product of post-war education. Of the eleven institutes within the Academia Sinica, six are directed by leading scientists who are members of the 'Ko-lien' National Committee and three others by scientists who are not members of that Committee. Most of these leading scientists retain their teaching positions while serving in government positions; of the fifty members of the 'Ko-Lien' National Committee, fifteen retain full-time professorships and five serve on committees. A few hold key positions in functional departments. Throughout the Second World War there was no evidence that the Communists made any progress in training or absorbing scientific personnel, while the leading scientific workers of the older generation are being subjected gradually to as great pressure as any other intellectual group. Dr. Chang considers that the most serious challenge is the particular Communist concept of science in general and the Communist inherent antagonism against 'bourgeois science' in general; in main construction projects the Communists rely more on their ability and ruthlessness in organizing masses than on technical knowledge. Indigenous technology and the scientific approach on the China mainland are in a highly State-controlled condition to-day, and the future of science in this area is likely to conform to that within the general Soviet pattern.

Scientific Research in South African Universities

The Library and Information Division of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Pretoria, has published a "Register of Current