

Royal Agricultural Society of England Medal :

Dr. G. D. H. Bell

THE Royal Agricultural Society's Medal "for research work of outstanding merit carried out in the United Kingdom which has proved, or is likely to prove, of benefit to agriculture" has been awarded to Dr. G. D. H. Bell, director of the Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge. Bell's success as a plant breeder is not unrelated to his wide knowledge of plant husbandry and his ability to anticipate agricultural developments. In 1943, at the time when autumn-sown cereal crops were gaining favour, he introduced his two-row winter-hardy Pioneer barley, a variety that represented a new departure in malting barleys. Then came the six-row winter type Prefect of reasonably good malting quality. Prefect was followed by Proctor, a barley that combines to a very considerable extent malting quality and responsiveness to intensive cultural treatment. This variety, coming at the time it did, offered at least a partial solution to the mounting conflict between the brewer who looks for malting quality, and the farmer who wants yield and is aware of the potentialities of some modern varieties under liberal manuring. The next of Bell's barleys, Provost, perhaps carries this reconciliation a stage further, for here we have a variety which in malting tests has given a higher average extract than Proctor. Another of his products is the Minerva Maple pea.

While these new varieties represent the more tangible expressions of Bell's contribution to British agriculture, his work on breeding techniques, particularly his investigations in the *Triticinae* involving the study of interspecific and intergeneric hybrids, their disease reactions and the cytology and fertility of F_1 hybrids and derived amphidiploids, has materially added to the store of information fundamental to future progress. Incidentally, it is work of this kind that emphasizes the futility of attempting to draw a line separating the 'pure' and 'applied' sides of science; indeed, progress demands that research goes hand-in-hand with the application of available knowledge. Dr. Bell has made numerous contributions to the literature of plant breeding, and he is well known to the agricultural reader for his able articles entitled "Crops and Plant Breeding" that are a feature of the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*.

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

REAR-ADMIRAL EDWARD H. SMITH has retired from the directorship of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, having reached the age-limit, and has been succeeded by Dr. Columbus O'D. Iselin, senior oceanographer in the Institution and associate professor of physical oceanography in Harvard University. During his six years as director, Admiral Smith has expanded both the shore and ship laboratories and equipment of the Institution and broadened its interests. It was largely due to his efforts that the research vessel *Crawford* was acquired recently for studying the formation of hurricanes (see *Nature*, August 18, p. 349, and July 28, p. 181). His successor, Dr. Iselin, has been with the Institution since its inception in 1930. A former student of Dr. H. B. Bigelow, he started his oceanographical career on an expedition to Labrador in his own schooner *Chance* in 1926. In 1931 he took command of the research vessel *Atlantis* on her first cruise in the North Atlantic after the ship was built in Denmark. Dr. Iselin served as director of the

Institution during the Second World War and resigned in 1950 to devote more time to scientific studies. For his work for the United States Navy on the application of science to undersea warfare, he was awarded in 1948 the Legion of Merit. In 1951 he received the Agassiz Medal of the U.S. National Academy of Science.

The Functions of the Press Council

THE broadsheet, "Performance of the Press", recently issued by Political and Economic Planning (22, No. 397; pp. 20; 2s. 6d.), considers three aspects: current criticisms of the Press; the Press Council and its objects; and the functions of the Council. In considering the first, PEP does not specifically consider the reporting of science, but notes that the tastes and attitudes of readers govern the nature of the Press at least as firmly as the Press moulds the opinions of the public. After reviewing the work of the Press Council during the three years of its existence, PEP points out that the purposes of the Council, as envisaged by the Royal Commission and adopted in the Council's objects, cover three different functions: as an institute; as a trade association; and as a tribunal. It seems clear that the present basis of the Press Council is too narrow to allow it to carry out the institutional aspects of its work satisfactorily. Its aspects as a trade association include such matters as newsprint, recruitment and training, labour relations, and productivity, some of which are already dealt with by other means, and it appears that most members of the Council consider that the Council should not concern itself with these affairs. PEP notes particularly the importance of the training of journalists, suggesting that the whole subject of education, recruitment and training of journalists deserves a study by itself. The Press Council has, however, concentrated its attention on its function as a tribunal, dealing with points of conduct in a quasi-judicial capacity. It has provided a possibility of appeal both for the public and for journalists themselves and must have made many people think twice before leaving the way open for criticism. Nevertheless, PEP considers that the Council may never develop into the kind of body envisaged in the broadsheet or by the Royal Commission unless it extends its activities, and that the next stage should be to strengthen and develop the Council to enable it to carry out all its professed objects effectively.

Duck Stamps

FOLLOWING the great droughts of the early 1930's when farmers in the 'dust bowl' of the United States were panic-stricken and in poverty, the number of waterfowl reached the lowest recorded point in American history. Soon after, the Biological Survey was set up and Government funds were set aside for the purchase and restoration of submarginal and other lands for wild life, with special emphasis on migratory waterfowl. These funds were insufficient for the national need, and the Duck Stamp Act, formally known as the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, came into being. Its purpose was to supplement and support the Migratory Bird Conservation Act by providing funds for the acquisition of areas for use as migratory-bird sanctuaries, refuges and breeding grounds, for developing and administering such areas, for the protection of certain migratory birds, and for the enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Since 1940 there has been little in the way of con-