

PHYTOCHEMISTRY

SPONSORED jointly by the Government of the Federation of Malaya and Unesco, a symposium on phytochemistry was held in the new Government chemical laboratories at Petaling Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, during December 4-8. The symposium, under the chairmanship of Prof. R. A. Robinson, was attended by sixteen overseas visitors, together with eighteen scientists representing the University, Government departments and research institutions in Malaya and Singapore.

The symposium was opened on Wednesday morning by the Hon. the Minister of Health, Mr. V. T. Sambanthan, and by the Unesco representative, Mr. Lennart Mattsson, both of whom emphasized that this was the first occasion since Malaya had achieved independence that a meeting of scientists including overseas delegates had been held in this territory and that in view of this region's dependence on plant products it was particularly appropriate that the first symposium should concern itself with phytochemistry.

Twelve original papers were presented to the symposium: "Avicennin, a new coumarin from *Zanthoxylum avicennae*", by Dr. H. R. Arthur (Hong Kong); "Constituents of *Phebalium nudum*", by Prof. L. H. Briggs (New Zealand); "Alkaloids of Apocynaceous Plants", by Dr. A. Chatterjee (India); "Preliminary Investigations on the C.N.S. Action of Indonesian *Rauwolfia* spp.", by Prof. A. J. Darman (Indonesia); "The Occurrence of some Optically Active Compounds in Anacardiaceous Exudates", by Dr. H. H. Hatt (Australia); "Testing for Anti-Arrhythmic Action of New Compounds in Dogs with Ventricular Tachycardia", by Prof. A. S. Harris (United States); "Chemical Constituents of the Plants of

Coniferae and Allied Orders", by Prof. T. Kariyone (Japan); "The Isolation and Separation of Alkaloids of *Kopsia singaporensis*", by Dr. Kiang and Mr. R. D. Amarasingham (Singapore); "Recent Advances in Tea Chemistry in Japan", by Dr. Y. Sakato (Japan); "Bis-coclaurine Alkaloids from *Phaeanthus ebracteolatus*, with special reference to Phaeantharine", by Prof. A. C. Santos (Philippines); "Experimental Research on the Toxicity of Rice infected by *Penicillium citrinum*", by MM. Tran-Vy, Truong-Van-Chom and Bui-Duy-Tam (Vietnam); and "Preliminary Investigations on the Separation of Alkaloids of *Rauwolfia perakensis*", by Mr. Wan Sai Cheong and Dr. A. K. Kiang.

Surveys were presented by delegates from Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaya, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam describing the phytochemical work already done in their areas and outlining their future programmes. These surveys were integrated with round-table discussions of the problems associated with the collection of plants and their dispatch from field to laboratory, the chemical and biological methods used in the screening of plants for useful products and the exchange of further information between delegates on return to their own countries. The desirability of depositing specimens in recognized herbaria was stressed and the meeting expressed the opinion that in all publications from this region the herbarium number should be quoted. Unesco was asked to publish the proceedings and also to issue from its regional office in Djakarta a periodical newsletter containing items of phytochemical interest.

R. A. ROBINSON

THE SHIRLEY INSTITUTE

THE thirty-eighth annual general meeting of the British Cotton Industry Research Association was held at the Shirley Institute, Manchester, on October 10, with the chairman of the Association presiding. In his address, Mr. N. G. McCulloch said that he believed that the Institute could be of immense service to higher management in the field of operational, as well as technological, research. The chairman was also convinced that some kind of common policy among the directors of the 2,000 firms in the industry was essential if it were to be in a position to compete successfully in the European Free Trade area. He was very happy to be able to report considerable progress in the matter of the co-ordination of research with the British Rayon Research Association, and also to announce a generous offer by the British Man-made Fibres Producers' Committee which, subject to equal support being obtained from the industrial rayon users, would assist materially in financing the Association's work. Mr. J. Lindley, honorary treasurer, in reviewing the statement of accounts for the year, reported that although the new terms of the Government's grant-in-aid were potentially more generous, there would have to be a considerable increase in the industrial income, if the Association's funds were to achieve the full benefit.

Dr. D. W. Hill, director of research, then presented his report on the year's work which once again had

shown intense activity in all branches of the Institute's activities. In selecting a few of the recent developments for comment, Dr. Hill mentioned the great success of the dust hood, now re-named the Shirley pressure point system for dust extraction, in ridding the industry of byssinosis, an occupational disease of the card room for more than 100 years. The director also referred to the complete success in prolonged mill trials of the Shirley separator for hard waste breaking-up machines, a simple and inexpensive device which could be fitted to existing machines to separate out the harder waste which could then afterwards be reprocessed. The dry feed system for the automatic size box had been further developed to give precision and accuracy, and a new automatic size box was also being developed to deal with all types of continuous filament yarns. The Shirley loom for high quality fabrics, the prototype of which had been undergoing prolonged mill trials, was now working satisfactorily. The comprehensive programme of fibre blending was yielding results which were becoming rapidly available to members. Dr. Hill also made special mention of the work on flame-proofing, the new rapid ager for colloresine printing, the intensive survey of industrial mangling, and the bulked yarn programme. He pointed out further that in spite of petrol rationing, the Institute had had almost 11,500 technical transactions with its members (against 12,000 in the previous year) including 2,999