

peptides of α -substituted α -amino-acids; and Dr. M. Rothe (Berlin) on the synthesis of cyclic peptides. A paper on the synthesis of optically active peptides from racemic amino-esters, by Prof. M. M. Botvinnik (Moscow), was read in her absence. The proceedings, with the discussion, are to be published in a special issue of the *Collection of Czechoslovak Chemical Communications*. It was generally agreed that the meeting had been most rewarding, and that an attempt should be made to gather regularly in this fashion.

World Low Air Temperature Record

THE world low air temperature record of -102.1°F . at the South Pole on September 18, 1957 (*Nature*, 181, 1109; 1958), was exceeded in the polar night of 1958 at the Russian International Geophysical Year Antarctic stations Sovetskaya ($78^{\circ} 24' \text{S}$, $87^{\circ} 35' \text{E}$, elevation about 3,700 m.) and Vostok ($78^{\circ} 27' \text{S}$, $106^{\circ} 52' \text{E}$, about 3,500 m.) The Sovetskaya station recorded -86.7°C . (-124.1°F .) between 1900 and 2000 L.M.T. on August 9. The measurement was made with a distant-reading electrical-resistance thermometer of known correction. The temperature is stated to have been lower immediately afterwards but there was no calibration for the thermometer. Other readings nearly as low at these stations were:

Vostok :	-80.7°C . (-113.3°F .) on June 15
	-85.8°C . (-122.4°F .) on August 8
Sovetskaya :	-81°C . (-113.8°F .) on June 19
	-83°C . (-117.4°F .) on June 25

The extremes in June occurred in periods of light winds and clear or nearly clear sky, which is the weather most favourable for very low temperatures. No information is available about the weather at the time of the August readings. The values were stated in reports from the American meteorologist, Mr. Morton Rubin, at the Russian base at Mirny, published in the *Monthly Weather Review* of the U.S. Weather Bureau.

Oystercatchers and Mussels

R. E. DRINNAN, of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada and formerly of the Fisheries Experiment Station, Conway, has described the feeding of the oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) on the edible mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) in the estuary of the River Conway, Caernarvonshire, during the winter 1955-56 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Fishery Investigation, Ser. 2, 22, No. 4). Feeding was studied on the mussel beds at the mouth of the River (Morfa) and in an area higher up the estuary above the suspension bridge (Pensarn). The oystercatcher populations of these areas are discrete. The birds are present between August and late March and are probably British breeding birds. Feeding follows the tidal cycle, continuing throughout the period when mussels are uncovered, high water periods being spent in non-feeding roosting flocks. This cycle continues during darkness. Quantitative data on food intake for the daylight feeding period show that each bird eats about its own weight of wet mussels a day. No precise measure of the effect of oystercatcher predation on the mussel population was made; but, at the Morfa, population samples through the winter showed the steady removal of the larger size groups by the birds. The present work is compared with previous results obtained by Dewar in the Firth of Forth and many divergences noted. These can all be ascribed to differences in feeding behaviour of the birds in the two studies.

Harwell Reactor School Courses

A SECOND course on the Control and Instrumentation of Reactors will be given at the Harwell Reactor School, Berkshire, during July 7-17, and will be open to British and overseas students. The topics to be treated will include: revision of elementary reactor kinetics, control and instrumentation; automatic control of reactors and nuclear power plants; application of computers; reactor transfer functions and function analysers; neutron flux scanning; radiation detectors and their siting in reactors; reactor safety circuits; conventional instrumentation; use of transistors in reactor instrumentation; burst slug detection; spatial instabilities in reactors; and data-reduction problems on large reactors. In addition to the lectures, there will be visits to zero-energy and high-flux research reactors and other relevant parts of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. The fee for the course will be 50 guineas, exclusive of accommodation, and application forms, available from the Reactor School, must be returned by May 7 to the Principal.

United States Atomic Energy Commission Training Courses

THE U.S. Atomic Energy Commission has established a training programme at the Shippingport Atomic Power Station for supervisory personnel of domestic and foreign organizations engaged in or planning the design, construction or operation of nuclear power plants. The training programme is being conducted at the Shippingport Atomic Power Station, Pa., a joint project of the Commission and the Duquesne Light Co., because it is the only large-scale nuclear electric power plant at present in operation in the United States. It will be conducted by the Duquesne Light Co. for the Commission, and will enrol twenty-five participants every three months for a six-month training course, which will include lectures and practical plant work. The courses, the first of which started on January 5, are designed to acquaint the participants with the operation of the Shippingport plant and to provide operational training within the plant. The tuition charge is 2,000 dollars to cover associated operating costs.

University News :

Birmingham

THE Council of the University of Birmingham has received from the firm of Joseph Lucas, Ltd., a gift of £100,000, to be used for building a hall of residence for graduate students in engineering.

The title of reader in experimental pathology has been conferred on Dr. K. W. Walton, senior lecturer in experimental pathology, and that of reader in mathematical economics on Dr. F. H. Hahn, senior lecturer in economics. The following appointments have also been made: Dr. D. B. Idle, to be lecturer in botany; Dr. B. John, to be lecturer in cytology in the Department of Genetics; Dr. R. G. O. Kekwick, to be lecturer in malting and brewing and applied biochemistry.

Leeds

MR. J. TRENAMAN has been appointed to the Granada Television Research Fellowship, endowed by Granada TV Network, Ltd., in the University of Leeds, for a minimum period of five years, with provision for the necessary staff and services. The purpose of the Fellowship is to undertake research