

Contractual Relationships

Prof. G. V. R. Born (London) said he knew of scientists who had experienced difficulties with their publishers. How can scientists be warned about publishing difficulties? Contracts often contain an arbitration clause which may delay decision in disputes; would it be better for authors if there was no such clause? Can a publisher be asked for an audited account? Miss Barber said that an author is entitled to detailed royalty statements and that, if he had good reason to doubt their accuracy, he had a common law right to inspect the publishers' books of account, though this was a little cumbersome to enforce. The name of an unreliable firm cannot be published openly or broadcast; but a name can be omitted from a list of recommended firms. Mr. Bacharach said that the good publisher presents no difficulty: contracts are necessary, because there are bad publishers who try to manipulate an agreement to the author's disadvantage. Sometimes contracts contain a clause giving the publisher the right to call on the author to prepare a new edition; they should include also a clause requiring the publisher to let the author make such revisions as he may wish to a new issue. This is particularly desirable in scientific broadcasting; the B.B.C. has agreed that there should

be no repeat after six months without giving the author a chance to revise.

Dr. Moelwyn-Hughes referred to an eminent scientist who had been cheated by a publisher. Something needs to be done in the scientific world to combat the recent development of mushroom firms that are financially slick and trade on the business incompetence of the scientist. Dr. D. Richter (Carshalton) said that British publishers have built up a high reputation in the past, so that authors have come to trust their publishers as they would their doctors or solicitors, but recently publishers of a different type, interested mainly in quick profits, have entered the scientific field. There have been instances when the publisher has sold rights without informing the author, when inaccurate royalty statements have been given and when scientists have received no royalties at all from sales of their books. Unfortunately the reliable old-established firms tend to be slow and do not always appreciate the special requirements of the scientist. The mushroom firms are exploiting the good faith of the scientific writer and giving British publishers a bad name. Prof. G. W. Harris said there is a need especially for the younger scientists to be informed of the situation.

D. RICHTER

SOUTH-EASTERN UNION OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES ANNUAL CONGRESS

AT the invitation of the Haslemere Natural History Society and the management committee of the Educational Museum, the South-eastern Union of Scientific Societies held its sixty-sixth annual congress at Haslemere during May 26-28, under the presidency of Prof. S. W. Wooldridge. The Council's choice of the theme for the congress of "The Changing Countryside" proved successful, allowing the lecturers full freedom in the presentation of their subjects and of focusing attention on the need for preservation and the desirability of intelligent management in Nature conservation. The delegates were welcomed by Dr. Rolston, chairman of the management committee of the Museum.

The young naturalists' evening included a brains trust with questions answered by a panel of experts, under the chairmanship of Maxwell Knight, followed by the screening of a film "Journey into Spring", introductory to the visit to Selborne.

The presidential address was given by Prof. S. W. Wooldridge, whose subject was "The Land and Man in the Western Weald". He commenced by emphasizing that, although the land existed before man, it was not an environment until man entered on it and reacted to it. The notion that the Weald is a denuded simple anticline has existed for some 150 years, from the time of John Fairry, who also introduced the use of the term 'denudation'. His observations of the area were made from the top of a stage-coach in the days of leisurely travel. It is now known that between the south coast and the Thames valley there are six anticlinal crests, somewhat resembling corrugated iron in form. For convenience of understanding, Prof. Wooldridge defined the country west of Stane Street as the Western Weald, wherein the Hythe Beds suddenly expand to form a major feature. It was

important to remember that at one time the Chalk stood 2,000-2,500 ft. above the present land-level near Haslemere. Dealing with the influence on sub-soil and soil types, it was pointed out that the intermediate and loamy soils are not derived from one particular formation, but have different soil parents. Our ancestors chose the Upper Greensand at the base of the chalk as good growing land, the best arable ground. It should be remembered that the dry valleys were not dry even in Romano-British times. Prof. Wooldridge next dealt with the succession of occupants. During Mesolithic times, about 6,000 B.C., when the climate was wetter than at present, the area on the Surrey-Sussex border was occupied. Evidence of man's later activities, during Neolithic times, had been found in the ditches at the Trundles. The following early Bronze Age had the same type of life and culture, and it was not until the late Bronze Age that the real cultivation of the land began. There is evidence of industry and trade during the Iron Age, 500 B.C.; the so-called hill forts are really the beginnings of cities on the hills. A later stage was the creation of the village communities, about A.D. 600, located by the early Saxon place-names, often those of pagan deities. The last stage is indicated by the distribution of the Domesday vills, the parish boundaries showing a remarkably even pattern, especially along the edge of the Tertiary beds.

The zoological section was addressed by John Sankey, on "Invertebrate Life in South-east England". He has for 14 years been fighting a campaign for greater investigation of the lesser-known invertebrate animals. The butterflies and beetles had been studied well enough, but such groups as centipedes and spiders need far more attention, especially observational work on their life-history and ecology.

Unless this can be done now, the changing countryside will eliminate them before they can be studied. Foam, muck and dirt are polluting many of their habitats. Specimens of the lesser-known invertebrates do not make a great display, but the need is for the collection of information rather than of specimens. Information is especially required of the habits of the fresh-water sponge, flat worms, millipedes, spiders and molluscs; the life-cycles of many are not known. The only locality in the south-east of England for the raft spider is at Frensham bogs, and it would be a great pity if the area is drained, causing its extinction. Mr. Sankey emphasized the necessity for a true understanding of conservation, not by leaving areas alone, but by proper management by people who know what they are doing.

The address to the botanical section was given by J. E. Lousley on "The Changing Flora of South-east England". He said that conditions are changing constantly and rapidly, but all changes are not necessarily bad; things need not always remain as they were when one was young. In a progressive world one must be progressive, and it is well to remember that the quarries and sandpits excavated by our grandfathers are now some of our best habitats. There was considerable upheaval by the building of railways, but there has been good recolonization of the railway embankments. The canals, many of which are now abandoned, are rich in aquatic plants, some of which had been introduced by the barges, and the filled-in canals provide habitats for many species. The greatest losses have been through building extensions; that around London has destroyed many habitats, while drainage has reduced the number of boggy areas. The indiscriminate dumping of rubbish is deplorable; the example at Mitcham Common was to be avoided. Changes are to be seen in the village ponds (no longer required for animals), which have now become the receptacles for rubbish. A further undesirable change is brought about by the use of the ground by the Army for tank training, and the carelessness of the public is a constant threat, by fire, on heathlands. Great changes in the vegetation have been brought about by the reduction of grazing and the deplorable elimination of the rabbit, resulting in the vast increase of scrub. It is now necessary for a conservation corps to be constantly clearing the scrub to maintain the survival of the interesting plant life.

The general interest of the public has increased, particularly in the British flora, and this aids the propaganda for the need of preservation and conservation.

Miss Phyllis Bond addressed the delegates on "Birds in a Changing World". The change in south-east England was swifter than in most areas, owing to its proximity to London, increasing greatly since the beginning of the century. The spread of residential building may increase the bird population, gardens providing a variety of habitats, but the occupants are the so-called common birds and the need is to provide suitable habitats for the rarer species in danger of elimination. One of the hazards of progress is that a large part of the resident population is not indigenous and is always tidying up, thus removing the habitats necessary for some birds. Nature and man have from the earliest times moulded the shape of the countryside, and man's effort is often not to its advantage. Miss Bond regretted the passing of the rabbit; the change in the nature of the herbage has been to the disadvantage of many birds, depriving them of their usual nesting sites and reducing the

insect population, which provided their food. She deplored the practice of spraying road-side verges and hedgerows with poisonous compounds, especially between the months of April and August. The shrubs and herbage which were the breeding places of many birds are either killed or starved; there is a chain of detrimental reaction the ultimate result of which cannot be perceived. Poisoned seed is also responsible for much injury, for not only are birds and animals killed by directly taking the seed, but also their food of worms and other invertebrates carries the poison and thus adds to the casualties.

The attitude of the public towards birds has changed for the good; the shooting of birds and the collection of eggs are now regarded as belonging to past generations.

Dr. J. F. D. Frazer, conservation officer for England of the Nature Conservancy, chose as the title of his address, "Problems of Managing Nature Reserves". The Royal Charter granted to the Nature Conservancy included a clause enabling it to acquire and manage nature reserves. Land left alone becomes a wilderness so the principles of management have to be studied and applied. First, the type of nature reserve desired has to be determined, and the drawing up of a management plan is the work of two or three years. The past history of the area has to be studied, its geology, the arrival of man, up to its present state. The climate and existing species have to be studied; it has to be decided what is wished to be done and how it is going to be achieved. In some cases the public can be allowed access without harm being done, but when sand dunes are the subject the public must be kept off. An area may need to be managed correctly, as at Blean Wood, Kent, for the protection of one butterfly or as at Wye for the preservation of an orchid population. The desirability of introducing 'foreign' animals and plants or the re-introduction of those that have become extinct has to be discussed and the good relations with the owner of adjacent property encouraged.

Dr. Frazer showed slides of areas taken from the same point yearly during 1954-60 showing clearly the evil results of the extermination of the rabbit, which controlled the growth of ragwort, gorse and the scrub. Without grazing, the only way to reproduce the former condition is by cutting, and a corps of conservationists is required to work on this, under the direction of a conservation officer, who determines the areas to be cleared, the amount necessary and the regularity of the period of clearance to ensure success. Favourable weather conditions enabled the full programme of excursions to be carried out. The archaeologists visited Selborne Priory and church, and a general natural history party after visiting 'The Wakes' at Selborne continued to Nore Hill for the Chalk flora. Botanists and zoologists went to the Juniper Hall Field Centre, Box Hill, and the surrounding countryside for the Chalk flora and invertebrates; particular interest was shown in the trap-door spiders at their only known locality in south-east England.

The excellent arrangements for the congress were undertaken by a local committee with John Clegg as secretary.

The sixty-seventh annual congress of the Union will be held at Colchester during June next year, and it is hoped that the meeting will provide an opportunity to stress the importance of the natural sciences in the curriculum of the new university to be established there.

F. J. EPPS