THE ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

THE Association of University Teachers were the guests of the Southampton Association of University Teachers and the University of Southampton during December 17-20, and their meetings were presided over by Prof. W. W. Chambers of the University of Glasgow.

The deliberations were dominated by the effects of the Government's financial policy towards universities. The effects which were reported to the Council included losses of staff, failure to provide places for some 2,500 well-qualified candidates and postponement or changes in plans for expansion affecting every institution in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Although most attention was given to problems of expansion, the long-delayed issue of salaries gave rise to heated debate when representatives learned that the claim for increases of about 30 per cent, substantially agreed with the vice-chancellors, had not been discussed with the University Grants Committee, as provided for in the procedure laid down by the Treasury. The University Grants Committee had not arranged the necessary meeting. This news, together with Press reports and rumours that the matter was to be referred to the not yet constituted National Incomes Commission, led to demands that the subject be taken up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer through Parliament. The Council in a resolution objected to the discrimination inherent in the National Incomes Commission but left the Association free to present data to the Commission if university salaries were referred to them by the Government.

The discussion of university expansion was centred on what was described as the "18+ Crisis", and the Council passed a policy resolution submitted by Liverpool:

"That the policy of the A.U.T. on expansion should be based on the following principles:

"(1) The A.U.T. recognizes and welcomes the necessity for a substantial expansion of the universities for reasons both of national need and social justice. It insists, how-

ever, that neither purpose will be served if expansion leads to deterioration in the quality of the education offered.

"(2) The special quality of university education derives from the active participation of university teachers in fundamental research and scholarship. Therefore, the A.U.T. regards the provision of adequate time and facilities for these activities to be essential to the successful fulfilment of the universities' role.

"(3) The A.U.T. considers that the maintenance of the quality of university education must have precedence over expansion if lack of money or other resources forces a choice. No lowering of essential standards can be contemplated.

"The first duty of the A.U.T. in the present situation is to intensify the campaign for an immediate and substantial increase in the resources available to the universities.

"Further, it is the duty of the A.U.T. to warn the public that grave injury to the national economy will result if university research is sacrificed in an attempt to expand undergraduate teaching without the necessary resources."

The Council then went on to discuss proposals for making the problems of university expansion widely known to the general public.

The growth of the Association to a membership of some 10,000, almost all non-medical university teachers, in universities other than Oxford and Cambridge had created problems of organization which were the subject of further discussion, and proposals were made for changing the form of one of the half-yearly meetings.

Other matters which were discussed included proposals to improve the status of university technicians, the problems of student selection and the improvement of general degrees and possible ways of raising the popular esteem of the general degree.

D. CHAPMAN

ZOOLOGICAL EXPEDITIONS

THE twenty-eighth annual meeting of the Association of British Zoologists was held at the Offices of the Zoological Society of London on January 5. The president for 1963, Dr. F. Fraser Darling, was unable to attend, and the chair was taken by Prof. C. F. A. Pantin. After the business meeting several papers were read on "The Scientific Aims, Planning and Results of Zoological Expeditions".

Mr. N. A. Holme (Plymouth) outlined his present work investigating the bottom of the English Channel. Since the pioneer dredging activities of the *Porcupine* and *Challenger* expeditions the faunistic exploration of the benthos is now fairly complete, except for the deep sea. In the English Channel the present surveys are concerned with assessing biomass and productivity, dispersal and aggregation, and the factors which limit the distribution of bottom-living animals. There is no ideal sampling apparatus, either qualitative or quantitative: trawl, dredge, Petersen bottom-sampler, anchor-dredge and automatic camera all have their disadvantages. On a rapid survey only one type of gear can be used at each station, and Mr. Holme stressed the importance of careful planning to make the most of the ship's time. After dealing with the practical aspects of sorting, preserving and working-up samples of benthos, Mr. Holme made a plea for the early publication of results.

Dr. Anna Bidder (Cambridge) gave a lively account of her trip to the South Seas to study living specimens of the pearly nautilus in 1960-61. Local people in New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands and New Britain brought her *Nautilus* caught in traps baited with putrescent fish and meat. In this way she was able to study, in the public aquarium at Nouméa or, elsewhere, in aquaria improvised from slop-basins on the foreshore, specimens of three species of this nocturnal, bottom-living mollusc. The chambered shell of the pearly nautilus has been sung by poets and worked over by every zoology student, and yet we have known scarcely more than Aristotle could tell about the habits of the animal within. Now Dr. Bidder has not only been able to confirm the Aristotelian account, but answer much which was speculative concerning one of the most bizarre forms of cephalopod radiation.

Prof. C. F. A. Pantin (Cambridge) described how, during a war-time holiday, his chance find in an English oakwood of the terrestrial nemertine worm *Geonemertes* led him in subsequent years to pursue studies on the taxonomy and world distribution of this genus, and on its anatomy, physiology and ecology, whenever opportunity could afford during visits to Europe, Africa, New Zealand and various oceanic islands. Prof. Pantin made the point, which was further emphasized in discussion by Prof. G. C. Varley (Oxford), that whereas the objectives of an expedi-