

**Professor V. C. Wynne-Edwards** has been appointed chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council in succession to **Sir Graham Sutton**, who is to continue as a member of the council. Membership of the NERC is arranged so that approximately five members retire each year. This year **Sir Edward Bullard**, **Dr F. K. Hare** and **Professor M. V. Laurie** have retired and **Professor J. H. Taylor** has died. The following have been appointed new members of the council: **Professor J. N. Black**, professor of forestry and natural resources in the University of Edinburgh; **Professor W. A. Deer**, professor of mineralogy and petrology and master of Trinity Hall in the University of Cambridge; **Mr N. L. Falcon**, formerly chief geologist with the British Petroleum Company; **Professor J. D. Matthews**, professor of forestry at the University of Aberdeen.

## Announcements

**Mr W. Ashworth**, librarian and information officer at ICI Fibres Ltd at Pontypool, has been nominated as president of the Library Association for 1969.

**Mr Eamon de Valera** and **Sir Mortimer Wheeler** have been elected fellows of the Royal Society under the statute which provides for the election of persons who either have rendered conspicuous service to science or whose election would be of signal benefit to the society.

The **Drummond Prize** for 1968 will be awarded to **Dr R. G. Whitehead**, Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge, at a meeting of the Nutrition Society on June 21 at University College, London. Further information can be obtained from **Dr M. E. Coates**, NIRD, Shinfield, Berks.

Three **Unilever European Fellowships** of £1,500 per annum will be awarded for the academic year 1969–70, one for (a) research in biochemistry in a laboratory in continental Europe by British citizens resident in Great Britain, one for (b) work in Britain by European nationals, and one for either (a) or (b). Applicants should hold a PhD degree or equivalent qualifications. Further information can be obtained from the Executive Secretary, The Biochemical Society, 7 Warwick Court, London WC1.

A new engineering society, to be called the **Electron Probe Analysis Society of America**, has been established and its purpose is to advance and diffuse knowledge concerning the principles, instrumentation and applications of electron microprobes. Further information can be obtained from **Dr S. Moll**, Advanced Metals Research Corporation, Burlington, Massachusetts.

The University of Denver Research Institute has established a new **Center for the Study of Planetary Radiation Environments**, under the direction of **Professor Juan G. Roederer**. The chief purpose of the centre is to identify and understand the interactions of energetic particles and electromagnetic radiation with the medium surrounding the planets and the influence of the Sun and the interplanetary plasma on its behaviour. Further information can be obtained from **Professor J. G. Roederer**, Department of Physics, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, 80210, USA.

## Meetings

July 23–24, **Structural Analysis and Structure of Materials**, University of Bristol (J. P. Berry, Materials Science Club, Rubber and Plastics Research Association of Great Britain, Shawbury, Shrewsbury, Shropshire).

September 12–13, **Biochemical Aspects of Host-Parasite Relationships in Plants**, University of Hull (Dr J. B. Harborne, Hartley Botanical Laboratories, The University, Liverpool 3).

September 16–20, **Cell Physiology**, Louvain (Professor J. Berthet, Department of Physiological Chemistry, 6 Dekenstraat, Louvain, Belgium).

September 18–19, **Explosive Welding**, Hove, Sussex (Mr J. L. Sanders, Institute of Welding, 54 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, London SW7).

September 19–20, **Structure of Liquid Water, Solute-Water Interactions and their Role in Biological Processes**, University of Bradford (Dr F. Franks, Unilever Research Laboratory, Colworth House, Sharnbrook, Bedford).

September 23–27, **Electronics Design**, University of Cambridge (The Conference Department, The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London WC2).

September 24–26, **Progress in Nuclear Instrumentation**, University of Oxford (The Conference Department, The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London WC2).

**ERRATUM.** In the article "New Directions in Education and Science" (*Nature*, 218, 825; 1968) it was inadvertently implied that **Dr Gerhard Stoltenberg** was no longer the German Federal Minister for Scientific Research. In fact, **Dr Stoltenberg** remains responsible for scientific research in the Federal Republic.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### New Name for the Kilogram

SIR,—Attention has been drawn by previous correspondents, **C. W. Allen** (*Nature*, 218, 209; 1968) and **P. J. Groenen** (*Nature*, 218, 797; 1968), to the desirability of having a non-multiple name for the kilogram, the fundamental unit of mass in the SI system of units. A very simple solution to this problem, not without precedent, is to rename it the Gram or Gramme (symbol G) and to use the symbol g for the multiple prefix giga ( $10^9$ ).

Another problem, on which international agreement is desirable and not forthcoming, concerns the symbols used to mark the decimal position and the subdivision of large numbers into groups of three digits. Primarily these symbols should be convenient and not susceptible to confusion, in print, in manuscript and also in typing, for the typewriter plays a very large part in communications and in computer input and output. The raised decimal point has great merit in manuscript work, where a low decimal point (full-stop) is too easily converted to a comma by a slip of the pen; but there is no raised decimal point on a typewriter keyboard, so that either the full-stop must be used or the platen must be adjusted manually. Again, there is a very simple solution, namely, to use the comma for the normal subdivision into groups of three digits, and the semi-colon or raised decimal point, to mark the decimal position. The semicolon is the only symbol on the typewriter keyboard which will print the raised decimal point correctly and at the same time only print another symbol (the comma beneath it) which is simply redundant and in no way confusing. In print and manuscript it would not matter whether the redundant comma in the decimal position were included or omitted.

Yours faithfully,

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