

carried out safely does not in any sense absolve the United States Government from the need to discuss what it proposes fully with other nations which have expressed an interest. The fact that there is at present no legal requirement for the United States to seek permission in this way is quite beside the point—the best way to encourage the adoption of internationally acceptable restraints is to behave with restraint in advance of the formalities. The fact that the present operation merely repeats what has been done before is also irrelevant—a great deal of international experience in the past few years has only gone to show that precedents are false guides when the susceptibilities of other nations are concerned.

100 Years Ago



MR. DARWIN AND THE FRENCH INSTITUTE

THE judgment of foreign nations gives the best clue to that of posterity; and it is therefore with peculiar interest that the countrymen of Mr. Darwin have watched the reception of his works in France and Germany. In the latter country his theory of the origin of species has been more or less completely accepted by those best qualified to judge, including men like Gegenbaur and Haeckel; and it has produced a complete literature of arguments and facts "für Darwin," without encountering any very serious opposition. In France, the truth of the theory is far less extensively admitted, and has been lately the subject of prolonged discussion in the Academy of Sciences. The debate on Mr. Darwin's claims has now been adjourned for three months, but so far as it was reported in our last number it furnishes much ground for reflection.

At the present time, Imperial France is, perhaps, the most conservative in science of any country in Europe. It is not, therefore, surprising that, with a few exceptions like M. Claparède, French naturalists refuse to accept the theory of Natural Selection, and do not see (as others, and notably the Germans do) that it has already made a new epoch in human knowledge. Some, like M. Robin, object that it is not "demonstrable," and therefore not scientific at all; as if gravitation or the atomic theory had been, or could ever be, demonstrated like a proposition of Euclid. The Darwinian theory offers an explanation of acknowledged facts by the help of others equally indisputable, and it will only be "disproved" when it ceases to furnish an adequate explanation, or is superseded by a more simple and equally sufficient hypothesis. Meanwhile it fulfils, at any rate, one object of every theory, by stimulating research in all directions, and awakening new interests for the fresh investigations which it suggests.

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OLD WORLD

RESEARCH COUNCILS

Social Science Emergent

THE annual report of the Social Science Research Council for the year ending on March 31 this year is a reflective document, containing not merely a record of how the council spent £2.27 million during the year (an increase of 65 per cent in a year) but also a thoughtful definition of the problems which arise in making research policy for the social sciences. To its credit, the council is the first to draw attention to the comparatively high cost of spending its money—£242,323 or close on 11 per cent of the total budget went on administration in the financial year just past. The council says that its comparatively high rejection rate (among research councils) is a part of the explanation, but there is also substance in the council's view that in present circumstances, there is bound to be a greater variety of opinion on the merits of particular research proposals than in other fields of inquiry. In practice, the council spent more than half of its budget on the support of postgraduate education in the social sciences, mostly in the form of studentships tenable at British universities. Research grants, as such, used up £0.86 million, compared with £0.58 million in the previous year.

The council's report says the open-ended character of social science research is no doubt part of the reason why potential applicants have found it hard to formulate convincing proposals for research projects. The council's goal is a research programme which promises a substantial advance of knowledge of "a connected series of social phenomena". Although the council rather wistfully regrets that much of its load of paperwork derives from the lack of scale and continuity which characterizes research in the social sciences, it acknowledges that a part of the trouble may be that social scientists are not yet as skilful as the natural scientists "in formulating viable research programmes". The council also says that new projects in the natural sciences can often be commended indirectly by the willingness of an existing institution to accommodate new work, and that the social sciences have not yet reached the point at which a substantial group of people in one place, possibly centred around equipment of common usefulness, can lend a pattern to the development of research.

On the development of criteria for deciding which projects to support, the council reaffirms its view that research grants cannot be distributed according to principles such as the urgency of the underlying issues of social policy. At the present stage in the development of the social sciences, the council says, nobody can say with certainty that a well designed piece of research will be irrelevant to the development of understanding in any discipline. The Social Science Research Council seems to have been encouraged in this view by the advice of the Science Research Council that the less radical policy of singling out areas of research within which work should be encouraged is not feasible so long as the difficulties and rewards of social science research are comparatively ill understood. That said, the council is not unwilling to single out particular research problems and has indeed, in