

University Politics

SIR,—I read with considerable interest the article in *Nature* of October 24 (228, 314; 1970) on University Politics and I would like to correct one statement. This is to the effect that "At both Universities (Cape Town and Witwatersrand) members of staff and students alike . . . talk of their Universities as liberal, but it may be significant that this attitude is not usually accompanied by a willingness to embrace modern causes such as student representation". The fact is that at Witwatersrand, student representation is a very live issue and a great

deal has already been achieved in bringing it about. Furthermore, the relationship between the Students' Representative Council and the University Administration is extremely cordial and strong.

Yours faithfully,

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Obituary

Professor T. K. Walker

THOMAS KENNEDY WALKER, professor of industrial biochemistry at the University of Manchester from 1954, when the chair was established, until his retirement in 1959, died on June 29, 1970, at the age of seventy-seven. Shortly after his death a most stimulating and remarkable account of the development of his department, written by himself, appeared in *Advances in Applied Microbiology* (12, 1; 1970). It describes his very extensive research work, his most happy relations with his students and his contacts with numerous biochemists at home, and especially abroad, and gives a strong impression of a man happy in his work and surroundings, with a growing, but quiet, satisfaction in the progress and reputation of his department. Walker's comments on the mental outlook required by those who would journey from the domain of organic chemistry to that of biochemistry should be read by all who have followed, or would follow, the same path. An article of his on the pollution of the environment will appear shortly.

After graduating at Manchester in 1915, Walker joined Weizmann's group to work on the technical production of acetone and *n*-butanol by an organism related to Fernbach's bacillus. This entailed a period of study at the Lister Institute. His life-long devotion to microbiology arose from this early work. His interest in large-scale operations was also enhanced by two years spent at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. These were followed by three years' research with Lapworth at Manchester on the interaction of diazonium salts with reactive methylene groups. From 1922 to 1925, he collaborated with Pyman

at the Manchester College of Technology in an examination of the bitter bacteriostatic substance in the resin of hop-cones. Extensions of this work continued at intervals until 1958.

In 1925 Walker began a study of the behaviour of carbohydrates and aliphatic acids in cultures of *Aspergillus niger* and *Aspergillus oryzae*, during which acetic, pyruvic, dimethylpyruvic and α -ketoglutaric acids were detected in cultures of *A. niger* on various substrates, and the effect of fluoride, iodoacetate and cyanide was examined. He was frequently consulted about bacterial infections in yeast and beer and so arose a long series of investigations, many of considerable importance, on *Candida*, *Acetobacter* and *Lactobacillus* species. He became a recognized authority on *Acetobacter*, some species of which were shown to produce cellulose. From 1948 to 1958 he directed, for the Medical Research Council, extensive work on the production of edible fat by mould fungi, in which the cultural conditions for the most suitable moulds and the composition of the fat were closely studied.

Walker's manner was always quiet, friendly and unruffled. His sympathetic and encouraging attitude to the problems of young research students caused him to spend much time at their benches. He thus imparted that "feel" for the contents of a test tube or of an unpromising mixture which is the secret of successful laboratory manipulation and is still the distinguishing mark of the organic chemist. He had many diverse interests, including poetry and philosophy, and a religious faith that deepened with the lapse of years.

Announcements

University News

Professor Frank Press has been appointed Robert R. Shrock professor of earth and planetary sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dr L. Mirsky has been appointed to a personal chair in the Department of Pure Mathematics, University of Sheffield, and the title of visiting professor in botany has been conferred on **Professor R. F. Jones**, State University of New York at Stony Brook, for the period January 1 to August 31, 1971.

Appointments

Professor Zdzislaw L. Wilhelmi, head of the Department of Nuclear Physics in the University of Warsaw, has been appointed director of the Division of Health, Safety and Waste Management in the Department of

Technical Operations, International Atomic Energy Agency.

Miss Julia Henderson, associate commissioner for technical cooperation in the United Nations, has been appointed secretary-general of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, in succession to the late Sir David Owen.

International Meetings

February 18, 1971, **Safety in Chemical Manufacturing**, London (Institution of Chemical Engineers, 16 Belgrave Square, London SW1).

March 3-5, 1971, **Environment and Cancer**, Houston (Mrs Jane Brandenburger, M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, Texas Medical Center, Houston, Texas 77025, USA).