

THE Medical Research Council is to set up a new unit for research in clinical oncology and radiotherapeutics at Cambridge; at the same time, the Cancer Research Campaign has provided an endowment of £275,000 to establish a new university chair of clinical oncology. Professor Norman Montague Bleehen has been appointed Honorary Director of the MRC Unit and Professor of Clinical Oncology. He will take up both posts at the beginning of the academic year in October. The unit officially starts operation in October and will be provisionally housed at the new Addenbrooke's Hospital. It is hoped that purpose-built accommodation can be provided within five years. Professor Bleehen is at present Professor of Radiotherapy at the Middlesex Hospital. Under his direction, the new unit's general aim will be to improve the results of current methods for the treatment of cancer and to develop improved methods of measuring the clinical and biological response of tumours to treatment. The programme will include investigations on lung cancer, rectal cancer and osteosarcoma, with particular reference to occult metastatic disease. Staff at the new unit will collaborate closely with other workers there with oncological interests. In particular, it will provide a clinical link for the laboratory research now being carried out in Cambridge by a Tumour Biology Group led by Dr Sydney Brenner at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology.

The new chair in clinical oncology is the fourth to be funded by the Cancer Research Campaign. Chairs have already been set up at the Institute for Cancer Research in London and at the universities of Manchester and Glasgow. A fifth is to be established shortly at the University of Southampton, and when complete the scheme will have cost about £3 million. The Cancer Research Campaign is the largest supporter of research into cancer, including leukaemia, in the UK and in 1974 awarded grants totalling more than £4.5 million.

● In this year's list of prizes and medals awarded by the Institute of Physics, aficionados of the entertaining experimental demonstrations at the Royal Institution lectures will be glad to see the award of the Bragg Medal and Prize to Mr W. A. Coates "for his contribution to education through the design and execution of demonstrations illustrating the many lectures held at the Royal Institution". Mr Coates first joined the Royal Institution in 1948 as a technical research assistant on X-ray diffraction experiments and became Senior Experimental Officer in charge

of preparation and production of teaching demonstrations under the directorship of Sir Lawrence Bragg.

After more than 10 years organising the demonstrations, which Mr Coates admits he embarked on with some reluctance when Sir Lawrence asked him to help with the lectures for schools started in the late 1950s, Mr Coates still thoroughly enjoys a job which can have its unexpected hazards. Recently, after setting up a demonstration for measuring the potential of an electric eel, an ugly customer which can give a shock up to 400 volts, he returned from a meal to find the tank empty and the eel gone. Luckily it had landed on a rubber mat nearby and so was returned to its tank with no further mishap; the demonstration was a complete success.

Round Britain

● The publication this week of the latest annual report of the Science Arm of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) of the Ministry of Agriculture (HMSO, £5.50) should prove a good reference book for agricultural research scientists looking for sources of useful but often unpublished data, and of problems which would repay further research.

In their role as scientific troubleshooters to the agricultural industry ADAS has amassed a unique collection of field and experimental data (which of its nature is usually not publishable in the conventional scientific literature) on a wide variety of agricultural problems ranging from heavy metal contamination of sewage sludges used as fertilisers and water pollution by agricultural wastes, to the optimum feed formulations for cattle. As well as highlighting problems in need of further research, such data will prove invaluable in drafting pollution legislation, for example.

Much of this work had previously been hidden in internal reports but with the formation of ADAS in 1971 from several of the ministry's advisory services, it was felt that the work could be usefully brought to the attention of a wider audience. Formal links between ADAS and the Agricultural Research Council have also been strengthened recently with the formation of the Joint Consultative Organisation for Agricultural Research Policy, on which ADAS is represented.

Britain's entry into the EEC has also involved ADAS in the collection and evaluation of technical information and advice for the negotiating teams in Brussels trying to harmonise the many regulations concerning agricultural

practice and produce throughout the community—for example those dealing with the antibiotic content of animal feeding stuffs and the tests used to determine the quality of milk and milk products. The service has also been involved in the analytical tests to determine standards of produce submitted to the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

● Professor Jack Meadows, of the University of Leicester, has been given a £16,000 grant by the British Library to study how scientific ideas get to the mass media and how they are used by television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Part of the grant will be used for research into the way in which journals monitor research papers and why some work is rejected and some accepted in a situation in which the journal is receiving more 'good' papers than it can publish.

This work stems from a study in the United States by Merton and Zuckerman, who monitored the rejection rate of the leading specialised journals over a range of subjects and found a definite correlation with subject. Journals of the physical sciences had lower rejection rates compared with biological journals, and the rate was even higher for psychology and learned journals of the humanities. The American workers also found that the rejection rate was positively correlated with the degree of disagreement among the referees.

Professor Meadows and his team hope to extend this type of investigation into the British system, as the influences at work may well be different from those in the United States. He hopes to find out in detail what happens in the refereeing process, and whether some of the myths surrounding refereeing are in fact justified. Needless to say this type of investigation must be organised so that the confidentiality of the refereeing system is maintained. In tune with the times, the team will also investigate how the economic situation, as reflected in decreases in the number of journal pages, has affected the refereeing process by perhaps making it more stringent.

● Much head-scratching and pen-chewing in Cambridge these days. Professor J. W. Linnett, Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Physical Chemistry, is worried that university research is being poor-mouthed by certain 'ladies and gentlemen'. So he has circularised departments to enquire of any "useful research . . . of clear value in the relatively short term". If the right sort of stuff comes up he then intends to alert ministers, MPs, newspapers and industrialists to the merits of the place.