

obituary

Robert Franklin Mehl, Professor-Emeritus of Metallurgy at Carnegie-Mellon University, who died in Pittsburgh on January 29 at the age of 77 was undoubtedly one of the greatest academic metallurgists of the American scene. After studying at Franklin and Marshall College, Princeton and Harvard Universities, he went to the Naval Research Laboratory in 1927 as Director of the newly formed physical metallurgy laboratory. In 1932, after a brief period in industry, he became the first Director of the Metals Research Laboratory at the then Carnegie Institute of Technology, and launched on what was to be his greatest achievement. He collected around him an extremely talented group of physicists, chemists and metallurgists who in the next decade were to make outstanding contributions to physical metallurgy, particularly in the fields of diffusion, phase transformations and precipitation hardening. But perhaps Mehl's greatest contributions were towards a basic understanding of the various reactions involved in the heat treatment of steels, in particular the formation of ferrite from austenite and the pearlite and bainite reactions which he and his colleagues analysed so

thoroughly that they elucidated many of the principles from which the physical metallurgy of steels has developed.

In 1935 Mehl also became Chairman of the Department of Metallurgy, instituting scientifically based courses of high standard which in a few years made Carnegie Tech. a premier place for the study of metallurgy which had a large impact not only on the local steel industry but also throughout the United States. During World War II his laboratory was thus well placed to carry out work which greatly aided the production of guns and armour, though Mehl was often frustrated by reactionary attitudes in industry towards scientific endeavour!

After the war, he continued to stimulate the activities of the Metals Research Laboratory over an extremely wide range until 1960. Possessed of a very strong personality, he wielded his influence far and wide; inevitably his scientific contributions were now made with a broad brush rather than a rapier; however, the rapier was always ready at hand to deal decisively with anyone who might venture to take an opposite viewpoint. Numerous names of scientists in the MRL during the period 1945-60 now adorn

the faculties of many well known departments of metallurgy and leading industrial laboratories, a constant reminder of the high standards on which Mehl insisted.

He became a familiar figure in Europe between 1960 and 1966 when he was European consultant to the US Steel Corporation. The combined role of ambassador and interpreter of the European metallurgical scene suited Mehl at this stage of his life, when he was already one of the grand old men of metallurgy; he returned, however, to the USA in 1966 to become visiting professor at the University of Delaware and later at Syracuse University. Latterly, retired in Pittsburgh very close to his beloved University, he suffered severe ill-health, but set a fine example by his great courage, and by maintaining an active interest in his subject to the last. A paper he wrote in 1975 for the Annual Review of Materials Science is an excellent summary of his scientific career and is spiced with his own unmistakable philosophy. It is indeed a fitting epitaph.

R. W. K. Honeycombe

Appointments

Dr Mart de Groot as Director of the Armagh Observatory.

Dr Thomas Anthony Connors as Director of the MRC Toxicology Unit.

Dr Peter Cardwell Elmes as Director of the MRC Pneumoconiosis Unit.

Dr R. R. Dils as Professor of Physiology and Biochemistry at the University of Reading.

Dr A. F. G. Wyatt as Professor of Physics at the University of Exeter.

Announcements

May 27-28, **Biology of Chemical Carcinogenesis**, London (The Executive Secretary, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG).

June 3, **Contributions of Protozoa to Genetical Knowledge**, London (The Executive Secretary, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG).

June 17-18, **Quantitative Mass Spectrometry in Life Sciences**, Ghent (Prof A. De Leenheer, Laboratoria voor

Medische Biochemie en voor Klinische Analyse, Academisch Ziekenhuis, Rijksuniversiteit Ghent, 135 De Pintelaan, B-9000 Ghent, Belgium).

June 22, **Reclamation and Recycling of Metals**, London (The Meetings Secretary, The Institution of Metallurgists, Northway House, Whetstone, London N20 9LW).

June 26, **Educational Technology for the Handicapped Child**, Birmingham (P. R. Davie, Prospect Hall, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham B29 6LE).

October 16-20, **Molecular Basis of Host-Virus Interaction**, Varanasi, India (Dr M. Chakravorty, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005, India).

October 18-21, **Annual Meeting of the Association of Official Analytical Chemists**, Washington DC (L. G. Enslinger, Executive Secretary AOAC, Box 540, Benjamin Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044).

November 17-19, **ACTH and Related Peptides: Regulation, Action and Structure**, New York (Conference Department, The New York Academy

of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street, New York, New York 10021).

Erratum

In last week's **Appointments** section the new Professor of Botany at Royal Holloway College was incorrectly given as Dr J. D. Hodge. It should have been Dr J. D. Dodge.

Reports and publications

Great Britain

Family Planning in Five Continents: Africa/America/Asia/Europe/Oceania. Pp. 28. (London: International Planned Parenthood Federation, 18/20 Lower Regent Street, W1, 1975.) 65p; \$1.45 plus postage.

Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History). Geology. Vol. 27, No. 1: A Reappraisal of *Prophaethon shrubsolei* Andrews (Aves). By C. I. O. Harrison and C. A. Walker. Pp. 1-30 + 3 plates. (London: British Museum (Natural History), 1976.) £2.85.

Mineral Resources Consultative Committee. Mineral Dossier No. 15: Mica. Compiled by R. N. Crockett. Pp. v + 22. (London: HMSO, 1975.) 85p net.

Department of the Environment. Register of Research 1975. Part 4: Environmental Pollution. Pp. v + 258. (London Headquarters Library, Department of the Environment, 2 Marsham Street, SW1, 1975.) [102

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Agricultural Chemicals Approval Scheme: Insecticides/Fungicides/Herbicides. 1976 List of Approved Products and their Uses for Farmers and Growers. Pp. 190. (Hatching Green, Harpenden: Agricultural Chemicals Approval Organization, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Plant Pathology Laboratory, 1975.) [112