

Environment Research Council (NERC), would like to see some inter-departmental organisation established—perhaps within the Cabinet Office—“to demonstrate that the energy problem is regarded as transcending departmental boundaries”. Factual data are, he claims, entirely inadequate at present for the general public, and the conventional public inquiry is too narrow in its scope to allow for truly informed decisions. In his opinion, the research council system could be of value in providing independent and authoritative data for such enquiries.

SRC appointment

The UK Science Research Council last week announced the appointment of Mr A. M. Adye (49) as its first Director of Marine Technology. He became Director on 2 May and is on second-

ment from British Petroleum Ltd.

The SRC's Marine Technology programme itself is new: it was announced only last year. Its aim is to involve academic institutions in all aspects of marine technology and to encourage postgraduate engineers to take up opportunities in the exploitation of the sea and sea-bed resources. Eventually, the Marine Technology Directorate hopes to promote the development of centres of expertise in marine technology in universities and polytechnics.

A Management Committee of six members will determine the outline of the programme, and three assessors from the Department of Energy, Department of Industry and Ministry of Defence will also be involved.

Energy body announced

The UK Secretary for Energy, Mr

Benn, announced last week the composition of the Energy Commission which is being set up to advise the government on the development of an energy strategy for Britain.

Seven members of the 23-man Commission will be the chairmen of the National Coal Board, the Electricity Council, the British Gas Corporation, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, the British National Oil Corporation, the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the Petroleum Industry Advisory Committee. Seven others will be drawn from the TUC Fuel and Power Industries Committee, and the remaining seven, whose names will be announced shortly, will represent other industries and consumer interests. The Minister of State for the Scottish Office will also be a member and the chair will be taken by the Secretary of State for Energy.

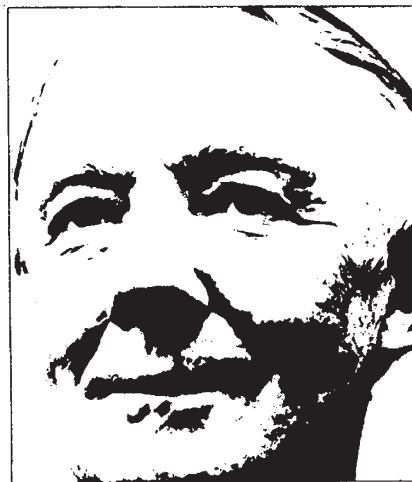
As an entomologist I spent many years killing insects. During the 1939-45 war I played some part in controlling medical pests in Britain, Africa and South East Asia, and was involved in operations where large amounts of toxic insecticides were widely and effectively distributed. I have also had some experience with agricultural pests, and nuisance problems such as swarms of gnats breeding in sewage plants. I was not the friend of the insect world, and so should not have been surprised when I suffered from its attentions.

As an undergraduate, I took part in an expedition to the Canadian Arctic. We made botanical collections and anthropological measurements of Eskimos, but it was the biting insects which impressed me most and which probably diverted my career from either medicine or botany. The most effective repellent then available was citronella oil, but liberal applications of it, a thick veil and army puttees did not prevent me from receiving thousands of mosquito bites. There are probably drops of blood from my wounds on the dried plants which were eventually sent to the herbarium at Kew in England.

Another revolting creature which has added to my sufferings is the bed-bug. As a young research student at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, I lived in a seedy flat in Soho which we kept reasonably bug free, but on hot summer nights these insects, moving out of less well maintained property, crawled in at the windows until these were surrounded with sticky bands of the grease used to stop pests climbing up fruit trees. I met bedbugs in every

country I visited—in wicker chairs in Ceylon, where they bit the backs of my bare knees, in a rather grand hotel in Calcutta where I caught over 200 in an hour and sent them to the

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manager with my compliments, and even in Stockholm, Sweden, in a cheap hotel in a picturesque part of the old city, now replaced by hideous modern buildings.

Then about ten years ago I lectured to the British Association for the Advancement of Science on 'Insecticides'. Halfway through my talk I felt a painful jab in my scalp; I had been stung by a wasp. With true British *savoir faire* I remarked, casually, to my audience, "I've been stung by a wasp", and continued my lecture. But somehow the press got to know, and next morning the

national newspapers contained the story with the headline: 'Insect world strikes back'.

And now it has struck again. This summer my seventeenth century farmhouse in rural England has developed a massive attack of Death Watch Beetle. I was laid up in bed for a few days, and on a warm afternoon towards the end of May I observed hundreds of these beetles emerge from what the house agents would call the 'wealth of old oak beams'. They crawled actively in all directions, and, when the temperature was above 22 °C, many flew vigorously and dashed themselves against the window panes. It was only the bedroom I occupied that produced swarms of beetles; the rest of the house yielded very few. The attack was obviously aimed at me, personally.

In some ways this is a bit unfair. For the last few years I have mended my ways, and have been mainly involved in wildlife conservation. I have helped to control the use of the more dangerous insecticides, as part of an attempt to safeguard the environment. I have banned pesticides from my garden, and have relied on the inefficient help of beneficial insects. But the Death Watch Beetle has gone too far. Now I have willingly agreed to have my house impregnated with one of the organochlorine insecticides. This is being done with care, and I hope that little will escape to harm the birds and insects in the garden. But this is war to the death, and nature must take its chance. I am even reconsidering my policy for pest control in our garden.