

are, so far as disease is concerned, the most healthy segments of the earth's surface. This is due to the simple fact that most of the disease-bearing organisms cannot live throughout the year in the low temperatures typical of those regions. It is reasonable to suppose that residence in those latitudes should be able to effect a cure for many of those diseases which depend on germs or are spread by infection. There have been some remarkable cases of complete cures from pulmonary affections in the case of members of expeditions. How far this would be true in the cases of actual patients remains to be proved. Medical faculties and foundations such as that of the Rockefeller Institute, whose business is the study of remedial medicine, are urged to endow and carry out research into these possibilities. There seems to be difficulty in securing endowment for such an investigation, which might be of permanent benefit to the sufferers of temperate lands, although there has been heavy expenditure of money on recent flights to the poles.

Examining the value to science of research in the polar regions, Prof. Debenham is of opinion that probably the science of meteorology has most to gain from a continuance of such co-operative work as was carried out in 1882 and 1932, and he commends the natural inclination of young men to visit the polar regions in search of either adventure or results of scientific interest.

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### Economic Nationalism and International Trade

THE presidential address to Section F (Economics and Statistics) by Prof. J. G. Smith discusses the problems created in the field of international trade by the great accentuation of economic nationalism which has taken place throughout the world owing to the trade depression in the past five or six years. He points out that this policy of economic self-sufficiency is not a new one and that there may be something to be said for a moderate dose of it, especially in countries the history of whose economic development is different from that of Great Britain.

There are two sets of broad influences to be considered which make for economic nationalism or autarchy: those due to the War and to the economic upheaval resulting from the War, and those due to what may be called long-term changes consequent on progress and on scientific invention applied to industry and to commerce. Among the latter are improvements in agricultural technique, which have removed the fears of food scarcity in industrial areas that were once a dominant factor making for freedom of trade, and the development

of intricate machine tools, growth of technical education and wide distribution of electrical power, which enable new industries to be set up with equal prospects of success almost anywhere. Again, the vulnerability of modern large-scale rationalised industries causes a struggle for markets (in which Governments are necessarily involved) and high protection for the home market, which is the only one capable of effective control. Further, nationalism which originally had merely political aims has now changed its character and become largely an economic movement. Government control of the whole of economic activity exists already in the three totalitarian States of Europe; and Government regulation is growing rapidly even in such liberal States as France and Great Britain; while recent experience in the United States of America is very significant.

The short-term influences due to the War and to the depression have reinforced powerfully these longer-term movements. Undue concern about the balance of trade, the exact significance of which is frequently misconceived, has led to curious consequences. Quotas, control of foreign exchange, prohibitions of imports, originally designed with one object, have been developed for other purposes. The general result has been a diminution in the volume of international trade which is felt especially severely by a country in the position of Great Britain. It is probable that the desire on the part of Governments to exercise quantitative detailed control over foreign trade may disappear when the depression passes and that these short-term influences making for economic nationalism will lose their force; but it is unlikely that freedom of international exchange will soon return.

Prof. Smith considers the general policy most likely to help in the eradication of these more extreme influences and comes to the conclusion that, as they are due very largely to the instability of currencies and the unforeseen and violent movements of prices which always accompany unstable standards of value, the remedy is to be found in currency stabilisation. This, he considers, can only be attained by a return to a gold standard of some form or other. On the whole, he favours an early decision to link again with gold; for the refusal to act soon will tend to accentuate the difficulties which will be encountered when postponement can no longer be avoided.

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### Stability in Engineering

IN his presidential address to Section G (Engineering), Mr. J. S. Wilson, a practising civil engineer, has chosen to discuss a branch of engineering to which he has devoted much of his