

us amount to about one quarter of the total world production of oil. A brief and well-written introduction deals with the nomenclature of alicyclic hydrocarbons, which is in a confused state. The author has set out rules based on the Geneva Nomenclature Conference of Organic Chemistry with his comments, and uses the terms cyclanes, cyclenes and cyclynes for cycloparaffins, olefines and acetylenes respectively.

The tabular text is broken up into sections listed in the table of contents; each substance has its formula clearly set out and references are given to the original literature for each physical constant.

(2) Sachanen's monograph, which is likewise of trans-Atlantic origin, is a timely exposition of the principles and methods of the production of high-octane fuels. The subject is so extensive that the

scope of the book has had to be limited, and consideration of the vast patent literature has been omitted as well as any account of the historical development.

Whilst thermal cracking remains the most important process in the conversion of crude oil into motor spirit, the newer processes are coming more and more to the front, including those dealing with refinery gases.

This is a book essentially for the petroleum technologist, and criticism in detail of the author's method of treatment of the problem is best left to a more technical journal. The chemist at large will gather from it the enormous amount of scientific work which lies behind the practical effort that enables us to buy a gallon of reliable petrol for our car.

E. F. ARMSTRONG.

SCIENCE AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE IN POLITICS

Marxism

A Post-Mortem. By Henry Bamford Parkes. Pp. vii+246. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940.) 7s. 6d. net.

THIS is a straightforward and readable criticism, written primarily from an American angle. The author describes how history has deviated from the path which Marx marked out for it; he shows up the dreary unrealities and illogicalities of the Marxian theory of value: he shares, in the main, with the orthodox economists and the neo-socialists, the conviction that extensive economic planning is incompatible with personal freedom, and that only under a free market system, where the consumer is king, can the public be well served with the goods and services of its choice; and finally he delivers a relatively mild attack upon the metaphysical foundations of Marxism.

Most of this has been said before. The author is perhaps most effective in his historical section, where he is also most concrete. He produces here some facts that are very awkward to assimilate in the orthodox doctrinaire Marxist analysis of contemporary society. Revolutions, for example, have proved themselves to be more at home among peasant than among industrial communities; and the industrial proletariat and its trade unions have shown markedly conservative tendencies, while the rise of a new middle class has thrown the Marxian class war right out of gear. Further, whatever else may have been accomplished by the professedly Marxist revolution in the Soviet Union, the level of prosperity and the range of personal freedom to be enjoyed there still remain behind that of States like Sweden.

The depressing thing is that there is so little reason to believe that this book will shake the faith of a single Marxist. For Marxism is a faith, and not a hypothesis based upon considered and precise observation of facts; and the root of the trouble is that social matters are still considered even by eminent men of science (many of them calling themselves Marxists) to be an appropriate sphere for faiths. What is wanted, in fact, is not just a post-mortem on Marxism, but a post-mortem on the whole apparatus of systems and 'isms' with which the study of social problems is cluttered up, and the substitution of an empirical, concrete approach. The job of the social organization is to see that people are properly fed, clothed and housed, and that they have opportunity to form mutually satisfying relationships with one another. Generalities about socialism, communism, fascism, Marxism and what-not now contribute very little towards the solution of these problems. These generalities are, in fact, mostly quite meaningless.

The whole approach to social and political questions is still pre-scientific. Until we have renounced tribal magic in favour of the detached and relentless accuracy characteristic of science, the unconquered social environment will continue to make useless and dangerous our astonishing conquest of the material environment. The weakness of Dr. Parkes's book, and of its many predecessors, is not that it does not say things that are sensible and true, but that the debate is conducted on the wrong plane. The abracadabra of Marxism will only be finally disposed of as an incident in a much more comprehensive mental revolution.

BARBARA WOOTTON.