

The Central Register

IN reply to a question asked by Sir Herbert Williams, the Minister of Labour and National Service stated in the House of Commons on December 11 that as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, the present Central and Supplementary Registers are to be merged in a new Appointments Department of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. This new department will deal with persons possessing specified administrative, managerial, professional, or technical qualifications and with others who, though not possessing specific qualifications, have a normal salary in excess of £420 per annum. It will operate through its staff at headquarters or through staff under the control of the Regional Controllers, according to the nature of the vacancies for candidates. It will maintain a separate register of persons within its scope who are known to be seeking an engagement and will endeavour to find suitable employment for such persons in some form of national service. The provincial organization of the department will be closely associated with the new district man-power boards.

Gas-producer Poisoning in Sweden

ACCORDING to the October issue of the *Anglo-Swedish Review*, medicine and technology in Sweden are collaborating in the problem of poisoning from gas-producers, with the result of the establishment of the first clinic in the north at the Sabbatsberg Hospital in Stockholm. The work is being conducted on the following lines: (1) Examination in the laboratory of specimens of blood for carbon monoxide content. Up to the present 4,300 analyses have been made. (2) A clinic of ten beds has been set up and an out-patient department where over 700 cases have been examined. (3) Physiological examinations are being made to discover the most suitable form of treatment and the proportion of chronic cases. (4) Examination of the cerebrospinal fluid in patients who have died from asphyxia is being carried out. The experiments are being made on human volunteers and on porpoises and rats.

Use of Pitch as Fuel

It is well known that modern life in peace and especially in war depends on fuel in liquid form. While consumption of the lighter and more volatile fuels in internal combustion engines is more apparent to the layman, there is a large consumption of heavier fuel oils consumed for industrial furnaces and on board ships. In peace-time practically all the supply of such heavy oils used in Great Britain were imported and a relatively low price was efficiently maintained. Indeed, industry was furnished with a fuel often superior in quality to what was essential to the purpose in question. The reduction in available supplies of imported oil has compelled the use of heavier and lower grade petroleum oils and indigenous materials such as cresote and pitch-cresote blends.

An interesting development is the use of coal tar pitch itself, both solid—as pulverized pitch—and liquid—as molten pitch. Such materials find their

application particularly where consumption is large and continuous—for example, in steam boilers and large furnaces. The fuel has certain attractive properties—low sulphur content, freedom from ash and water, uniformity in quality and calorific value. For use it must be heated to 200°C. and conveyed in pipes to the furnaces at this temperature. This has produced unusual engineering problems, the solution of which has required great skill, because the consequences of failure are serious, if ever the pitch solidifies in the mains. The plant used for this purpose was described at a meeting of the Institute of Fuel in London on October 30. This is a valuable technical achievement, because production of pitch has for years exceeded demand and there is in stock a very large quantity which can replace much petroleum oil formerly employed.

Standardization in the Electrical Industry

A THOUGHTFUL address was delivered on October 27 by Mr. H. G. Taylor, chairman of the Liverpool Centre of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, on "Co-ordination and Standardization". He regards co-ordination as the best means of arriving at standardization. He said it would be disastrous if the end of the War found engineers unprepared to face the problems of peace in a changed world. Immediately after the War of 1914–18, a major happening in the history of the electrical supply industry in Great Britain was the appointment by the Board of Trade of the Electricity Commissioners as a technical body under the chairmanship of Sir John Snell. As a result of their investigations and in conjunction with the Weir Committee, the Central Electricity Board was established in 1926, its function being to supply electricity in bulk to various distributors and concurrently to increase the availability of supply. This entailed co-ordinating the existing supply authorities, their personnel and plant, while the question of interconnexion of plant involved standardization of frequency, the necessity of which Sir John Snell foresaw, and powers to enforce a national standard of 50 cycles were consequently included in the Act of 1926. As a theory, standardization in electrical engineering is almost as old as the science itself, but its application in Great Britain has lagged too far behind technical progress to maintain a healthy condition in the industry, the development of the heavier engineering commodities having continued, for the most part, on individual lines.

The recognized centre now for dealing with standardization is the British Standards Institution, which now has more than a thousand committees, with about six thousand professional men who have given their time freely to this national work. It is an independent body in close touch with industrial requirements and modern technical knowledge, with the fullest Government support but free from Government control. It co-operates with the central standardization bodies in various parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and participates, directly or indirectly, in the work of international standardization.