

NEWS and VIEWS

Council for British Archaeology: Scientific Research Committee

ON October 1, the Executive of the Council recommended the formation of a Scientific Research Committee. This is to co-ordinate, and advise on, the applications of scientific research to archaeology, to organize and screen the submission of archaeological material for expert examination, and generally to act as a clearing house for information and ideas which are of mutual value to archaeologists and other scientists. When the Council was formed in 1944, one of its first actions was to consider the many ways in which the natural sciences might be used to interpret and expand the results of archaeological field-work. Much, for example, can be learnt of the ecological conditions in primitive settlements from a study of buried soils, peat, pollen and charcoal, while animal bones and even snail shells provide further valuable information about environment in early times. The petrological examination of stone axes, a study already begun by the Council for British Archaeology, and the metallurgical analysis of implements and coins also throw light on prehistoric trade and intercourse.

These and other methods of augmenting the results of archaeological discoveries were briefly outlined in "Notes for the Guidance of Archaeologists in regard to Expert Evidence", published in 1947, which gave details of the facilities then available. The "Notes" are now out of date, not simply in detail, but also with respect to new scientific techniques such as the dating of archaeological material by carbon-14 and fluorine content. Developments in science and technology are continually yielding new methods of potential use to archaeologists who, in turn, are able to contribute to scientific research by providing accurately dated evidence for the study of metallic corrosion, cellulose degradation, and the earth's magnetic field. To promote further co-operation between scientists and archaeologists, therefore, the Council had been considering the establishment of some form of permanent liaison. The proposal was first put forward earlier this year by Mr. L. Biek; and in April, a conference on "Archaeology in the Laboratory" was held by the Council, at which scientists of various disciplines were invited to give their views. As a result of the conference, the Executive of the Council decided to recommend the formation of a Scientific Research Committee. Further information may be obtained from the Secretary, Council for British Archaeology, 10 Bolton Gardens, London, S.W.5.

National Technical Information Services Officers

THE first meeting of National Technical Information Services Officers, organized by the European Productivity Agency of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation, was held at the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research during September 27-October 2. Representatives from the following countries attended: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. On September 27 Dr. A. King, chairman of the Productivity and Applied Research Committee of the European Productivity Agency and head of the Intelligence Division of the Department of Scientific and

Industrial Research, welcomed the delegates. In the United Kingdom, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has been convinced for some time that technical information has an important part to play in the productivity drive; recently attention has been diverted from the mechanics of putting out information to the arrangements made in small and medium-sized firms to use such information. Speaking of the way in which technical information services at the national level can be run, Dr. King said that in the United Kingdom, which has a number of information services, the general policy is decentralization, leaving certain residual and co-ordinating functions to the Headquarters staff of the Department. This arrangement may not be suitable in many O.E.E.C. countries.

At one session of the meeting, 'question and answer' services in the United States, Germany and Great Britain were described, and there was general agreement that such services cannot be organized so that they pay for themselves. It was felt that O.E.E.C. could help by preparation of a paper on how question and answer centres were financed in different countries. As regards the interchange of questions and answers between national centres, it was thought that so far as possible questions should be directed to those countries in which specialized sources of information exist appropriate to the question. O.E.E.C. could facilitate this by treating as urgent the preparation of a guide to specialized technical information services in Europe. The preparation and distribution of technical digests were discussed, and in particular the problem of developing a European digest service was considered. It was thought that the best way of starting such a service would be for the European Productivity Agency to place contracts for the preparation of digests from the national literature in member countries. So far as possible these contracts would provide for the translation of the digests into one of the official languages, and would specify the type and quantity of digests required. In the meantime, the United Kingdom offered to make available copies of the United Kingdom digests at present prepared for circulation within the United Kingdom to any interested national centres. During the conference visits were made informally to the different sections of the D.S.I.R. Headquarters information services, and to the British Productivity Council, the Science Museum, the Patent Office and the Chemical Research Laboratory, Teddington.

Human Relations in Industry

A LEAFLET, "Human Relations in Industry" (London: H.M.S.O., 1s. net), which is being distributed through employers' organizations, trade unions, industrial and professional organizations and other agencies in Great Britain, contains the recommendations and conclusions of a Sub-committee of the National Joint Advisory Council. The Sub-committee concluded that neither the hard facts of Britain's economic and trading position nor the differing circumstances of individual firms are sufficiently understood in industry. The remedy for this does not lie solely within an individual firm, and the Sub-committee accordingly calls for much greater clarity and consistency in government pronouncements on this subject. The Press and other organs which help to mould opinion can also do much more to help by ensuring that what they say is itself informed by a clear and consistent understanding of