

At the present time there are some schemes on foot to provide London with what might be called a conference centre which among other things would contain auditoria in which individual scientific societies could hold their meetings if they so desired and which would be invaluable for international gatherings. These schemes vary from the grandiose to the inadequate, but it is possible that if all scientific societies could agree to support the idea of a building in the nature of a conference centre something might be accomplished. This matter is under consideration by the officers.

In an ancient society it is perhaps easier to look backwards than forwards, but in the rapidly changing world in which we live it becomes urgent to adapt ourselves to the prevailing scientific environment. Perhaps new and elegant accommodation will give us a base from which the Society can move forward into the exciting times that await us.

As Fellows can see from the annual report of Council, the activities of the Society have been maintained and indeed they have had to be increased in view of the turmoil surrounding the reorganization of science and technology. This has thrown a great burden on the secretaries in particular. It is with regret that we part with an able, amusing and energetic biological secretary, Sir Lindor Brown. I am grateful to him, for he has been of the greatest assistance to me personally and has, on many occasions, propped me up when I clearly did not know what I was doing. He has served the Society not only by his wise advice in its internal affairs, but also by acting as its representative on many external bodies. The surviving officers will all miss him and not least for the

anecdotes with which he has cheered us up from time to time.

The work of the secretaries has been somewhat lightened by the so-called active vice-presidents. Sir Gordon Sutherland has held this office for two years and is now retiring. He has been of very great help to us and particularly in directing attention, through his Committee on Emigration, to the seriousness of the loss of our scientists and technologists. I would like now to thank him for all he has done for the Society and for science in a wider context.

It remains only for me to welcome the new biological secretary, who is just beginning to realize the strenuous nature of his new office; but he is, I am happy to say, a very vigorous man [*Nature*, 200, 1049; 1963].

No year can close without recording our continued indebtedness to the Executive Secretary for his unremitting labours on behalf of the Society and its manifold interests. He is backed by an able and well-informed staff, and to them also we give our sincere thanks.

With the blurring of the conception of the British Commonwealth one of the functions of the Society, which may become more important with the passage of time, is to see that our close associations with actively growing and sympathetic countries are fostered in every possible way. In this connexion, the Executive Secretary paid a visit to New Zealand in August and I joined him in Australia. I need scarcely say that we were both treated with unbounded hospitality and that our glimpses of antipodean scientific activities were greatly stimulating. We hope that the close contacts we have with the Australian Academy may be strengthened by visits of a similar character at not too infrequent intervals.

## OBITUARIES

### Prof. F. E. Zeuner

PROF. F. E. ZEUNER, head of the Department of Environmental Archaeology in the University of London Institute of Archaeology, died on November 5 at the age of fifty-eight.

Zeuner came to London from Germany in 1933. He joined the staff of the British Museum (Natural History) as a research associate in palaeontology in 1934 and, with the aid of a Leverhulme studentship of the London Museum, also worked on the problems of the Quaternary deposits of the Thames Valley. The results of this work were later incorporated in *The Pleistocene Period*, first published by the Ray Society in 1945. In 1937 he joined the newly founded Institute of Archaeology, then established in St. John's Lodge, Regent's Park, as honorary lecturer in geochronology, and thus established on a systematic basis the study of human environment in the past as it had not previously been attempted. After the Second World War (in which he worked with the locust control unit at South Kensington) Zeuner's was one of two chairs created by the University when it accepted full responsibility for the Institute, the term 'environmental archaeology' being substituted for geochronology.

Zeuner's breadth of interest was already apparent before he left Germany as a young man, and he maintained and developed this throughout his career. He visited many parts of the world in pursuit of his subject, usually returning with material which then became the subject of research undertaken by himself or by his students. He was associated with many foreign learned societies and institutions, and as a result of his many contacts—he was, incidentally, a good linguist—had built up a collection of separates which was invaluable to his students, who were allowed free access to it. Although at times the centre of controversy, his best-known book, *Dating the Past*, demonstrates his grasp of the environmental sciences. Its fourth edition appeared in 1958 and

it has been translated into a number of foreign languages. Among his other activities, for several years he directed the operation of the carbon-14 dating apparatus which the Royal Institution set up and maintained in Albemarle Street. It was this machine, which was functioning at a time when others in Britain were having difficulties, which produced the then surprising date for the early appearance of an agricultural community at Jericho in the early seventh millennium B.C. Just before his death he was in process of inaugurating, with the aid of a grant from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, a big programme of research into sea-level and soil evidence for climatic fluctuations in the Quaternary period. His last book, *The History of Domesticated Animals*, was published earlier this year (*Nature*, 198, 45; 1963).

Zeuner's work and example must have a lasting effect on the study of the past in its scientific aspects. Many archaeologists owe their introduction to the scientific connexions of their subject to him. He was an excellent teacher, with an enthusiasm for all branches of natural history which he communicated to all who listened to him, whether in his class-room or in the field. Students from many parts of the world were attracted to the Institute of Archaeology by his reputation, and returned to their own lands equipped to apply his ideas to their own problems.

W. F. GRIMES

### Dr. Frank L. Howard

DR. FRANK L. HOWARD, chief of the Pure Substances Section in the Analytical Chemistry Division of the National Bureau of Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce, died suddenly on October 15, at the age of fifty. He was a staff member of the Bureau for more than twenty-six years.

Dr. Howard was born in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1913. He was educated at the University of Maryland, complet-