

BRITISH ASSOCIATION, EXETER

The 1969 annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science was held in September at Exeter University.

The purpose of the Association is inferred in the title and the annual meeting is geared to this end. It aims to achieve this firstly by enabling scientists to discuss their work with colleagues in their own and related fields; secondly, by providing a bridge between the world of science and the general public, using press, radio and television to disseminate scientific information in an easily understood form.

In his Presidential address on the *Effecting of all things possible*, Sir Peter Medawar examined the role of philosophic thinking in scientific progress to date and its contemporary value as an impetus to progress in the future. His paper clearly

infers no intellectual horizons, no limit to scientific discovery, no near perfection that cannot be improved.

A one-day Symposium held in conjunction with the meeting, entitled "Management of the National Environment", emphasised a concern with industrial and agricultural pollution of the biosphere and the need for greater attention to amenity and conservation in land use development. Both these aspects of environmental management are of particular significance to foresters, and the theme set by the symposium was later reflected in lectures read to the Forestry section and other disciplines.

The nature and implications of chemical control (Dr. K. Mellenby, C.B.E., Director, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Huntingdon):—

Chemical pesticides have been a boon to agriculture and have saved millions of people from insect-borne disease every year. Unfortunately, insecticides may have harmful ecological effects which, unchecked, could be disastrous. Ideally these chemicals should be selective, sufficiently persistent to do their job and then quickly decompose into non-harmful substances. The main problem facing scientists in the future is how to get the benefits of chemical control without seriously damaging the environment.

The nature and advantages of biological control (F. Wilson, Sirex Biological Control Unit, Silwood Park, Berks.):—

Biological control is essentially the use of natural enemies to reduce the abundance of pest organisms. Biological control methods have been successful in the past and Dr. Wilson emphasises that the techniques are often low-cost, permanent, self-regulating control systems, generally free from harmful side effects.

Management for Amenity (T. W. Wright, Assistant Adviser on Conservation and Forestry, The National Trust):—

Amenity in its widest sense embraces those aspects of forest management concerned with beauty and public enjoyment. Our concepts of beauty in a forest is conditioned largely by what we are accustomed to, and conversely ugliness in the landscape is often closely associated with the emotional shock when a familiar pattern is disturbed. The economic and amenity aspects of forestry are often in conflict and to rationalise problems amenity must occupy a fundamental place in long-term and short-term forest planning.

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