

## Appointments

**Sir Robert Aitken**, who is to retire from the post of vice-chancellor and principal of the University of Birmingham on September 30, has been appointed to serve on the **University Grants Committee** as a member and deputy chairman. **Professor C. H. Stuart-Harris** and **Sir George Franklin** have also been appointed members of the committee.

**Professor D. V. Donnison** has been appointed chairman of the **Public Schools Commission** on the resignation of **Sir John Newsom**.

**Dr George C. Sponsler** has been appointed secretary of the Division of Engineering of the **US National Research Council** in succession to **Mr John C. Kohl**.

**Dr James M. Roxburgh** has been appointed first full-time secretary of the **Medical Research Council of Canada**.

## Announcements

**Dr Winifred Watkins** of the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine, London, **Dr Anne-Marie Staub** of the Pasteur Institute, Paris, and **Dr Hiroshi Nikaido** of Harvard University, Cambridge, have been awarded a **Paul Ehrlich Ludwig Darmstädter Prize** by the Paul Ehrlich Foundation, Frankfurt. Dr Nikaido is cited for his contributions to the biochemical aspects of bacterial mutants, Dr Staub for her contributions to the immunochemistry of bacterial antigens and Dr Watkins for her contributions to the immunochemical and genetic aspect of human blood-group specificity.

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Letter to an Imaginary Soviet Scientist

SIR,—It was a bitter surprise to me to read in one of the numbers of *Nature* the "Letter to an Imaginary Soviet Scientist" (*Nature*, 217, 123; 1968).

I have been a regular reader and subscriber of the journal for more than three decades and I know that your journal enjoys popularity and respect with Soviet scientists. We appreciate the fact that the journal carries articles produced at high scientific level and that it tries to encompass a broad range of problems and provide maximal information on the development of modern science. However, I do not remember a single case when this serious journal would feature an article whose author, beginning with words of cheap flattery, would then take the liberty to use the superficial form of a newspaper article claiming to be witty, so as to present in an unseemly manner the highest research establishment and the scientists of a friendly country.

Besides, I am of the opinion that this letter does not, putting it mildly, in the least promote the strengthening and development of Soviet-British scientific contacts. I had the impression that the author was trying to introduce an attitude of distrust to the possibility of Soviet-British scientific co-operation.

We have a Soviet journal which is the namesake of your *Nature*—it is called *Priroda*, and is in some measure similar to your publication. However, we cannot even imagine our journal carrying an article which would ridicule and present in an unfavourable light the Royal Society or its fellows.

There are old traditional scientific contacts between Soviet and British scientists, contacts which have been systematically growing in size and strength in the past few years. Incidentally these contacts have been substantiated by inter-state treaties and agreements. Your country has been visited by many Soviet scientists, outstanding researchers and capable young specialists. During

1966 and 1967, about 700 Soviet scientists participated in congresses, conferences and other events which took place in London and British research centres.

In the same period over 1,000 British scientists visited the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and went to different Soviet towns. We regard this as a very welcome fact.

Soviet scientists receive dozens of invitations, and sometimes it is difficult for them to decide finally where they should go and in which congress or conference they should take part without interrupting their daily research work or scientific and educational activities.

I would like to explain to the author of the letter that it is precisely the Academy of Sciences of the USSR which is the centre that decides which of its members and research associates should take part in this or that international scientific conference. And in this case we have the decisive word, instead of having "our expert advice followed at least".

I can say from my personal experience as the director of one of the institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR that in less than a decade of its existence dozens of its research associates have been to Britain. And I do not know from my practice a single case of the kind which the author of the letter described, apparently due to his inordinately rich imagination. He deliberately singles out rare and regrettable events and raises them to the level of general rules; this does not do honour to his way of thinking. The letter is devoid of the traditional English humour and of the element which the Britons, being good sportsmen that they are, call fair play.

I would like to express my sincere feelings of regret that you have been misled by those who are trying to spoil for some reasons the scientific contacts which have been established between British and Soviet researchers.

In conclusion, I would like to appeal not to an imaginary British scientist, but to all British scientists. We have many true friends among them, and the number of these friends keeps growing with every year. I have no doubt that the appearance of such a production in *Nature* can evoke nothing but a feeling of regret. I would like to assure my British colleagues that the scientists of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR will always be glad to see British scientists at the international and national conferences and congresses held in the Soviet Union. Our hospitality will remain the same, and I hope that in 1968 Soviet scientists will also have numerous opportunities to participate in various science forums held in Britain.

Yours sincerely,

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USSR.

This refers to an article by Dr John Ziman, of the H. H. Wills Physics Laboratory at the University of Bristol. In the form of a letter to an imaginary Soviet scientist, Dr Ziman complained of the difficulties and confusions which arise when Soviet scientists are invited to scientific conferences in the West. Editor, *Nature*.

## Platelet Aggregation

SIR,—In the recent paper by Baumgartner and myself (*Nature*, 218, 137; 1968), in the caption to figures 2 to 6 inclusive and in the descriptions of their abscissae, the words "log" and "logarithm of" should be deleted. The time intervals are plotted on a logarithmic scale.

Yours sincerely,

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