

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

[DELIVERED at the Annual Meeting at Wellington on 29th May, 1936, by the Right Reverend Bishop H. W. Williams, M.A., Litt.D. (Cantab. and N.Z.), F.R.S.N.Z.]

I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the honour you conferred upon me last year in electing me President of this Society. I wish also to acknowledge the courtesy shown me by the members of the Standing Committee, who have from time to time altered the date of meeting, and have thereby enabled me to be present at the majority of their meetings; and also to thank the Vice-President for his friendly co-operation, and for relieving me of much of the drudgery of my office.

In welcoming the three new members of the Council I am sure you would wish me to place on record our thanks to the retiring members whom they replace. Dr. Farr has been a member of the Council for ten years, and was elected President in 1929 and 1930; Professor Speight came on to the Council in 1931, and was for two years my immediate predecessor in the Presidency; Dr. Kidson became a member of the Council a year later than Professor Speight, and has at the same time been a member of the Standing Committee; all of them have in their official capacity done valuable service for the Society.

Since our last Annual Meeting the Society has lost by death one Honorary Member, Professor J. S. Haldane, of Oxford. Born in 1860 at Edinburgh, he was educated in that town and at Jena, and has from 1885 been engaged in teaching and scientific investigation. He was for some time Demonstrator and Reader in Physiology in the University of Oxford, and by his valuable researches became recognized as the leading authority on the subject of respiration. This brought him into touch with the problems arising in mining, and he was President of the Institute of Mining Engineers from 1924 to 1928, and was later Honorary Professor and Director of the Mining Research Laboratory, Birmingham University. He wrote a number of works on such widely divergent subjects as Respiration, Colliery Explosions, Deep Diving, Heat Engines, Air Analysis, and Philosophy. His work has been of outstanding value in the mining industry, but he was also keenly interested in the problems of the stratosphere, and was strongly of opinion that researches in that field would revolutionize the practice of aviation. He was a Fellow of New College, Oxford, held honorary degrees in a number of universities and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. He is survived by a son, J. B. S. Haldane, the biologist, and a daughter, Mrs Mitchison, the novelist.

Of the members of our Society who have died during the year, I would mention Sir G. Fowlds and Sir J. Coates, of the Auckland Institute; Professor J. M. Garrow, formerly Professor of Law at Victoria University College, Mr. W. Ferguson, at one time Engineer

to the Wellington Harbour Board, and Mr. A. D. Crawford, of the Wellington Philosophical Society; and Dr. J. K. H. Inglis, late Professor of Chemistry in the Otago University, of the Otago Branch of the Society.

The reports and accounts of the Standing Committee and of the Member Bodies, together with the recommendations of the Awards and other committees will be presented to you in due course.

I would call your attention particularly to several points mentioned in the Report of the Standing Committee. At the last Annual Meeting a committee was set up to go into the question of the consolidation of the Rules of the Society. In order to bring the matter to a conclusion the Standing Committee decided to call a special meeting of the Council. As a result the Rules have been rearranged, a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities have been removed, and the Rules so amended have been gazetted. This task will inevitably be a recurring one, in the course of years amendments and additions are certain to be made, which will ultimately necessitate a re-editing of the whole. Some amendments will, as a matter of fact, be proposed at this meeting; but it does not seem to be worth while on that account to perpetuate the Committee on Rules; that committee can now be discharged, and it will be competent for the Standing Committee to recommend to the Council from time to time such further amendments as it may deem necessary. We have on the agenda paper appointments to be made on various committees. The constitution of these committees is nowhere adequately stated in our Rules. The Standing Committee has made arrangements for the retiring in each year of one member of the Fellowship Committee. Provision for such retirement in the case of this and other permanent committees should be made in the Rules. The question might also arise of the position, in regard to retirement, of a member who had been elected to fill an extraordinary vacancy. It may not be considered necessary to deal with these points forthwith, but the matter should not be deferred beyond the next Annual Meeting.

A question of great importance held over from last year's meeting is that of the future of the Society's Library. The pros and cons of several proposals are very fully set before you in Professor Kirk's valuable Report. Personally I think that the advantages offered by incorporation in the National Library outweigh the disadvantages. The main question is, What course will conduce to the widest use being made of the Library?

It is early yet to report on the Society's relations with the Dominion Museum. The Society has been given a large representation on the Committee of Management, but that Committee has as yet held only one meeting, and will presumably not be functioning normally until the Museum shall have been fully housed in its new quarters.

It is desirable that you should express some opinion on the subject of liaison with kindred Societies, which is mentioned in the Report of the Standing Committee. The sub-committee set up to deal with this matter found a difficulty in the part to be assigned to such societies in the government of our Society, and was unable

to make any definite recommendation. It will be within the recollection of many that in the early days of the Institute a considerable amount of space in the *Transactions* was occupied by papers dealing with subjects relating to the Maori. But early in 1892 the Polynesian Society was founded, and since that date most of this material has been diverted to the Journal of that Society. It is obviously undesirable that there should be any competition between ourselves and the Polynesian Society, and there has never been any suggestion of such a thing. On the contrary, amicable relations exist, under which some of the papers read at our Science Congress have appeared in the Journal of the Polynesian Society, and at least one paper read before one of our Member Societies has also been similarly published. Might not further interchange be developed along these and other lines, and later, if necessary, rules be enacted to foster and govern such partnership in action, not only with the Polynesian Society, but with other Societies interested in scientific pursuits. The whole question might be referred to the Standing Committee for further consideration.

The Honorary Editor of the *Transactions* is making proposals for assistance in his work. The members of the Standing Committee, to which he reports periodically, can testify to the weight of the burden imposed upon him by his voluntary task. It need hardly be explained that a great deal more is involved in that task than the mere arranging the order of the papers and correcting the proofs.

Negotiations for the next meeting of the Pacific Science Association have been advanced a stage, and it now seems probable that it may be held in Fiji, and that the following meeting may come to New Zealand, perhaps in 1940, our centenary year. In this event it will be necessary to ask for Government assistance. I took the opportunity recently of mentioning the matter to the Premier and the Minister of Finance, and am glad to say that they received the suggestion sympathetically. In the meantime we are being asked for suggestions for the forthcoming meeting.

The response to the appeal for the Cockayne Fund has been disappointing; but it is to be hoped that with improving financial conditions further subscriptions may come to hand. In view of this it would be unwise to be hasty in closing the Fund.

Mention was made at the last Annual Meeting of the meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science to be held in Auckland next year. The date has now been fixed for the 14th of January. We are not directly concerned with the arrangements; but the sympathetic and practical interest of all our Member Bodies may be confidently assumed.

We have no Report, as yet, from the Research Committee. It will be remembered that the question of obtaining assistance from the Carnegie Trust for this department of our activities was discussed at the last Annual Meeting. The possibility of such assistance should not be lost sight of; but it must be remembered that we are not likely to receive any grant unless we can formulate a satisfactory programme for the consideration of the Trustees.