

ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

IN view of the fact that the organisation of work in the nuclear sciences in India would require suitably trained scientists in large numbers in the near future, the Atomic Energy Commission recently convened a Conference of some of the leading scientists in the country to consider what steps should be taken to meet this demand. Since the universities would naturally be the proper nurseries for training such personnel, all universities and prominent research institutions were invited to send delegates to this Conference, which met in New Delhi, on the 21st and 22nd January. Prof. H. J. Bhabha, Chairman of the A.E.C., presided over the deliberations. The important decisions reached at the Conference were: (1) Steps should be taken immediately to draw up a uniform and suitable syllabus for the teaching of theoretical and practical physics, mathematics and chemistry in Indian Universities; (2) Refresher courses, like summer schools, should be organised for willing teachers of the universities so that the suggested syllabus may be taught in the universities by them.

By way of implementing the first decision, the Conference appointed a Committee to go into the question of drafting a suitable syllabus for theoretical physics, experimental physics and chemistry going up to the M.Sc. standard which could be easily adopted by the universities without the necessity of radically changing the existing curricula overnight.

The following were nominated on this Committee:—Dr. S. N. Bose, Dr. D. S. Kothari, Dr. B. C. Majumdar, Dr. N. R. Sen, Dr. R. S. Krishnan, Dr. D. M. Bose, Dr. H. J. Taylor, Prof. S. Bhargava, Dr. Mata Prasad, Dr. G. P. Kane, Dr. P. B. Sarkar and Dr. Jagdish Shankar.

The following are the terms of reference of the Committee:—

1. To scrutinize the syllabus of teaching in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics in the different Indian universities and to make recommendations with the object of bringing these courses to the level of modern standards. The Committee will pay special attention to the inclusion of basic knowledge in each subject which every student should know. The Committee will also draw up more advanced courses for those who specialise in atomic sciences.

2. To circulate the courses drawn up by the Committee to all the universities for suggestions and on receipt of replies, to submit a final report to the Atomic Energy Commission.

3. To examine whether the courses suggested by the Committee can be divided conveniently into under-graduate and post-graduate courses.

4. To submit a preliminary report by the end of February 1949 so that the document could be communicated to different universities well in advance before the commencement of the next academic year.

It may be pointed out the decisions arrived at this Conference called by the A.E.C. when implemented, will constitute a concrete step in organisation and development of the atomic sciences in India. This is perhaps the first time that representatives from all the teaching and research institutions in India have met together to formulate uniform syllabi for physics, mathematics and chemistry for adoption by all Indian universities. It is earnestly to be hoped that the lead given by the A.E.C. will be followed by other groups of sciences.

ISOTOPE PRODUCTION

BRTAIN'S large atomic pile has just started work on the production of radio-active isotopes.

When operating at full power it will be able to produce all the artificial radio-active isotopes required by medical, industrial and other research workers in the U.K. as well as increased supplies for export, for which a steadily increasing demand is anticipated.

Opened at Britain's Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell in July last year,

the pile has a rated output of 6,000 kilowatts and was designed primarily for experimental purposes. Materials which it irradiates will be 20 times more active than those so far irradiated.

Radio-active isotopes have already been delivered by Harwell to various research institutions, including hospitals, universities and industrial organisations in the U.K. and abroad.

The first deliveries from this large pile will start early in March.