for the engineers and scientists of Cincinnati. There will be an auditorium seating 300, a smaller meeting room for about 100, several committee rooms, a large library, reading rooms, reception rooms, office and recreation space, with possibilities of kitchen and dining-room facilities.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE BIRTHRATE OF GREAT BRITAIN

COMMENTING on a debate before the British House of Lords opened by Lord De La Warr and participated in by Lord Nathan, Viscount Samuel, Lord Geddes, Viscount Dawson of Penn and the Duke of Devonshire, *The Times*, London, on June 19 writes editorially as follows:

Lord De La Warr yesterday performed a useful service in the House of Lords by once again drawing attention to the implications of the decline of the birthrate; for the numbers and age composition of the population are, as he said, "the very basis" on which all plans of reconstruction must rest. The significance of present population trends is brought out by a comparison of the position in the 1930's, when there were over 41,000,000 people in England and Wales, with the position in the 1850's, when there were 18,000,000 people. To-day there are just under 10,000,000 women capable of bearing children, compared with only 2,250,000 in 1851. Yet in the ten years 1933–42 390,000 fewer babies were born in England and Wales than in the ten years 1851–60. The reduction of infant mortality since the middle of the last century has greatly improved a baby's chances of survival. Nevertheless there are scarcely more children under fifteen than in the early 1870's, and 2,250,000 fewer children to-day than just before the last war. In fact Britain, in peace as in war, is now living on human capital accumulated in a more fertile past. British mothers and fathers in the twenty years before the last war, although somewhat less fertile than their Victorian ancestors, produced a greater number of children than were born in any period of similar length previously or subsequently. Those children are the young and middle-aged adults of to-day. This generation of potential parents is of record size; and upon them falls the responsibility of bearing and rearing the children of the coming generation. Yet, although they show no aversion from marriage, such is their apparent aversion from parenthood that, if present trends continue, the succeeding generation will fall at least 20 per cent. short in numbers.

At the same time the present generation of potential parents will, in the next thirty years, grow into a generation of old-age pensioners. The proportion of old people over 64 in the total population has doubled itself in the past ninety years; it may well double itself again in the next thirty years. The present generation of adults under 50 is building up for itself far larger claims on the national income for its old age—in the form of pension rights—than any previous generation, and simultaneously it is failing to produce the workers who will have to maintain it in its years of retirement to a far greater extent than any previous generation. In the last analysis the aging of our population—with all that it implies in politics and social life, in economic policy and in imperial and international affairs—is a far more serious issue than the total size of the population. It is the fundamental long-term problem which Britain—in common with all the peoples of Northern and Western Europe—will have to face. Ultimately Britain must have a population policy conducive to social views and social conditions which favor parenthood instead of frustrating it. There can be no question of waiting twenty or thirty years for such a policy. The consequences are certain and action can not be postponed.

Little, however, is yet known about the economics of family life, or about the ways in which, in different income and social groups and in families of different size, parents spend their money on children. Practically nothing is known about current attitudes to parenthood, about the reasons why childbearing is increasingly avoided, or about the whole complex of economic, social and psychological factors which now apparently frustrate parenthood but might be transformed in a cultural and material environment favorable to family life. On all these issues there are many opinions, but a startling lack of factual knowledge. Even although large-scale reforms to encourage parenthood must inevitably wait until victory has been won, there remains an immense task of basic fact-finding investigations, which should be begun without delay. A Royal Commission, suggested by Lord Geddes, may not be the most appropriate instrument for this work. But, however undertaken, there is a strong case for putting it in hand at the earliest moment.

THE BOTANIC GARDEN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE University of Cambridge correspondent of *The Times*, London, gives the following account of the history of the Botanic Garden of the University of Cambridge in connection with the large bequest to the garden received from the estate of Reginald Cory.

After several abortive attempts to found a physic garden in Cambridge University in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the first botanic garden was established in 1762, through the generosity of Dr. Walker, then vice-master of Trinity College, on a site five acres in extent now occupied by laboratories on the north side of Downing Street. Until a few years ago one of the trees originally planted, a fine specimen of *Sophora japonica*, still existed there.

Early in the nineteenth century the garden fell into neglect and, being in a confined space in the middle of the town, it became unsuitable for its purpose. In 1831 the university bought 40 acres of land along the Trumpington Road, on the outskirts of the town, for the site of a new botanic garden, which was officially