

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE BRITISH NATIONAL UNION OF
SCIENTIFIC WORKERS

THE annual meeting of the council of the National Union of Scientific Workers was held at King's College on November 13. We learn from *Nature* that in his address Dr. J. W. Evans, the retiring president, dealt with the subject of "Research at the Universities." Dr. Evans paid a tribute to the achievements of scientific workers during the war, and pointed out that the task ahead of them was of even greater consequence and allowed of no relaxation of effort. After summarizing the activities of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, he expressed dissatisfaction with the present attitude of this department towards the scientific and technical faculties of the universities. He considered that a teaching staff engaged in research work, both in pure science and in its applications to industry, was in a more favorable position to discover and develop new principles than research workers isolated and restricted in the laboratories of research associations of even government research institutions. In conclusion, Dr. Evans urged the importance of universities including in any course in science some training in research methods. This he embodied in a resolution which was supported by Professor Soddy, who stated that Professor Perkin had already applied this principle to the chemistry courses at Oxford University. Chemistry students there had shown by their enthusiasm how much the change was appreciated.

Continuing, Professor Soddy said that since the president had prepared his address there had been a complication brought about by a request from the War Office that the universities should undertake research into the development to the utmost extent of chemical warfare research for offensive and defensive purposes. He expressed the view that it was a matter that must inevitably be considered, sooner or later, by the union. It ought to be considered before rather than after the occasion arose. He was glad that the executive

of the union had already decided to appoint a committee to go into the whole question.

The resolution disapproving of the policy of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, in establishing and financing research associations, which hands over to the private use of profit-seeking monopolies valuable knowledge obtained at the expense of the whole community, and places the research associations in a position to exploit the scientific workers of the country for their own benefit, was carried unanimously. Professor Soddy stated that the government had capitulated to the big business interests in politics and departed altogether from its original intentions. There was no greater example of unfair competition than in the chemical industries.

Mr. A. A. Griffith, in moving a resolution that for the present Advisory Council of the department should be substituted a council elected on different principles pointed out that there could be little effective criticism of the department under the existing arrangement whereby the government practically appointed its own critics. It was certain that a council part of which was elected by democratically constituted scientific organizations would result in more careful scrutiny and criticism of the acts of the department.

A resolution by Mr. F. A. Potts to the effect that scientific workers employed as whole-time officials in government departments should enjoy status and pay not less than those enjoyed by the administrative class of civil servants was carried unanimously.

Professor Leonard Bairstow was elected president for the ensuing year.

PLANT PATHOLOGY AT THE BROOKLYN
BOTANIC GARDEN

IN the ninth annual report of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for 1919 attention was called to the need in this country of additional provision for fundamental research in plant diseases, and to the desirability of establishing at the garden a laboratory or institution of plant pathology. This institution is strategically located for the prosecution of certain phases of plant disease research since it is at the