

FOREWORD

It has become a tradition of Western science that from amongst practising scientists there should regularly appear a substantial proportion who find a lively interest in the humanistic aspects of science. There is a long line of men who became both knowledgeable and articulate about the history of science, especially in its relation to their own special field. In more recent years we have seen a steadily increasing number of scientists who have been impelled to speak and write about the place of science in our modern society. It is no more than a truism now to say that the main political problem today is to adjust Government to the ever-changing achievements and outlook of science.

The Academy claims something equivalent to apostolic succession from the Royal Society of London and its activities in the past have necessarily taken very much the same form. Sooner or later they are bound to diverge, but until circumstances compel such divergence we can find no better model to follow. For the present, these Records of the Academy will have a somewhat wider role than the "Notes and Records of the Royal Society". In the first place, our journal will provide a suitable place where the personality and achievements of deceased Fellows may be placed on record in a form equivalent to that of the Obituary Notices of our parent body. For the time being at least, it will be the medium for publication of the Flinders Lecture and any other noteworthy contributions of suitable character made in the course of Academy functions.

The lasting justification of the 'Records', however, will be as a repository for articles of scholarship and distinction on the history of science and scientists in Australia. Here we hope its activities will mesh closely with those of the Basser Library.

Perhaps it is enough to say that we should hope to include all that material, outside of technical papers and reviews, which can be expected to have a topical interest to a significant proportion of Fellows and which should be readily accessible in Australian libraries.

I believe that this move initiates an undertaking that in due course may grow to a form and stature beyond our imaginings. As a purely personal opinion, I should like to see it gradually become a forum for discussion of the interaction of science and the community and where necessary to help resolve tensions of motive, prestige and expediency within science itself. Here in the 'Records' I hope to see some day the writings of Australians who can look beyond the short term interests of scientists and write cogently the changing aspects of that major segment of human thought and activity which is science.