

Department of Scientific and Industrial Research

SIR FRANK SMITH, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.Sc., F.R.S., relinquished, on January 31st, his appointment as Secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

The King has approved the appointment of Professor E. V. Appleton, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., to succeed Sir Frank Smith.

INDEX TO THE LITERATURE OF FOOD INVESTIGATION†

As previously stated, steps are being taken to bring the *Index to the Literature of Food Investigation* up to date, and it is hoped to complete Vol. VII, No. 2, and Vol. VIII, which will deal respectively with the literature published in 1935 and 1936, within the next few months. Current literature is being dealt with at the same time, and the present issue (Vol. X, No. 2) deals with papers received between April 1st and June 30th, 1938. Henceforth each annual volume will be issued in four quarterly numbers, dealing respectively with papers received up to March 31st, June 30th, September 30th, and December 31st.

FOREST PRODUCTS RESEARCH

THE PRINCIPAL DECAYS OF SOFT WOODS§

This publication gives descriptions of twenty-six of the principal fungi that cause decay in soft woods used commercially in Great Britain, together with notes on their economic importance, and a key by which they may be identified. Speaking generally, timbers from coniferous trees, with a few important exceptions, are only moderately resistant to the attack of fungi and insects. Only two or three of the commercial softwoods used in this country can be considered as sufficiently durable to be used in an untreated condition in exposed situations. Species that are very resistant to decay include yew, cedars, Californian redwood and Southern cypress. Practically none of the very light-coloured soft woods (*e.g.* spruces and firs) are durable; those species that have a definitely coloured heartwood usually offer greater resistance to decay.

* H.M. Stationery Office, York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2. 1938. Price 2d. net.

† Third Interim Report of the Local Government and Public Health Consolidation Committee, Cmd. 5628. H.M. Stationery Office. Price 1s.

‡ H.M. Stationery Office, Vol. X, pp. 187. 1938. Price 4s. 6d. net.

§ H.M. Stationery Office, Forest Products Research Records, No. 7, 1939. Price 2s. 6d. net.

In timber that is properly stacked decay should never develop, but even when the timber is properly piled with adequate ventilation around the boards sap stain will frequently appear. To prevent the formation of such stain or of mould it is often necessary to dip the freshly-sawn boards in an antiseptic solution. It has been shown that the life of wood props can be extended from five to tenfold by an inexpensive treatment in an open tank with a solution of sodium fluoride or zinc chloride.

RISKS IN SURFACE CREOSOTING.—The growth of most fungi is inhibited by creosote, but one species, *Lentinus lepideus*, which is the most important fungus causing decay in railway sleepers, telegraph poles and wood-paving blocks, can withstand considerable amounts of that preservative. If the spores of the fungus can gain access through cracks to untreated wood in the interior of the timber, decay will spread throughout the whole piece. Sleepers may therefore appear superficially sound, while the interior is extensively decayed. Hence, to secure sufficient penetration of preservatives, it may be necessary to make incisions in certain timbers.
