With the post-war expansion of the Imperial College and its consequent need for a considerable building programme, the then rector, the late Sir Roderic Hill, found it necessary to appoint a full-time planning officer and Dr. Sparkes was seconded from his Department to that post in 1953. In 1955 the importance of this work was recognized by making him director of building works. In that position, Dr. Sparkes has carried considerable responsibility for the new buildings already completed—the Roderic Hill Memorial Building to house the Departments of Aeronautics and Chemical Engineering, large extensions to the City and Guilds College and the Royal School of Mines, and additions to the Students' Union—as well as for much bigger work now under construction or on the drawing-board. Dr. Sparkes's research work has been in the experimental study of problems relating to building and ship structures and in the correlation of stresses as calculated in the design office with those found by measurement on actual buildings. With the large constructional programme now in progress in connexion with the expansion of the College, Prof. Sparkes will have unrivalled opportunities for continuing this work which is so necessary for a real knowledge of the behaviour of engineering structures.

Corday-Morgan Medal and Prize

THE Corday-Morgan Medal and Prize of the Chemical Society for 1956 have been awarded to Dr. K. W. Bagnall (Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell) in consideration of his contributions to the knowledge of the chemistry of polonium. This award, consisting of a silver medal and a monetary prize of 200 guineas, is made annually to the chemist of either sex and of British nationality who, in the judgment of the Council of the Chemical Society, has published during the year in question the most meritorious contribution to experimental chemistry, and who has not, at the date of publication, attained the age of thirty-six years. Copies of the rules governing the award can be obtained from the General Secretary of the Society at Burlington House, London, W.1. Applications or recommendations in respect of the award for the year 1957 must be received not later than December 31, 1958, and applications for the award for 1958 are due before the end of 1959.

The Comptrollership of the Patent Office

QUESTIONED in the House of Commons on March 18 by Mr. F. T. Willey regarding the professional qualifications held by the newly appointed Comptroller-General of the Patent Office, the President of the Board of Trade, Sir David Eccles, said that the officer appointed has a first-class record as an administrator, and that he considered that to be the qualification most urgently required at the present time. When Mr. Willey asked Sir David if he realized that Britain is now the only major country in the world without a man of high professional reputation at the head of its Patent Office, thus reversing a policy thirty years old, Sir David replied that he considered the office required men of administrative ability at the top, but that he has requested the new comptroller to give scientists on the staff better administrative opportunities, with the view of reverting next time to the old method of selection. In a written reply to Mr. P. G. Williams on the same day regarding the reasons for the appointment, Sir David said that the functions of the Patent Office extend beyond the administration of the Patents Acts to questions relating to trade marks, designs and copyright, as well as to other matters such as international negotiations and agreements about industrial property. About two-thirds of the staff of 1,200 of the Patent Office, costing about £1 million a year, is non-professional, and the size of the Office and the complexity of management problems due to pressure of work and shortage of scientific staff have made the appointment of a comptroller-general of particular importance at this time. After weighing carefully the many considerations, Sir David said he decided that the primary need is for a comptroller-general with qualities of leadership and wide administrative and managerial experience. The appointment would be without prejudice to the selection of future comptrollers-general from within the Office.

The Patent Office appointment was discussed in an editorial article in *Nature* of March 15, p. 725.

Exchange Visits with the Soviet Union

MR. IAN HARVEY, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, replying to a question in the House of Commons on January 27, said that there is a growing exchange of visits by students and teachers between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R., many of the visits being organized on the initiative and with the support of the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council. In particular, the Committee, in partnership with British youth organizations, has invited 300 Russian students and young people to visit Britain for short periods. The Committee has also offered an annual exchange of twenty students of the Russian and English languages as well as two British Council scholarships for a full academic year and short courses for teachers, both on a reciprocal basis. Mr. Harvey also referred to the assistance given in these exchanges by universities and training colleges, and agreed that expansion of these facilities might contribute to mutual understanding between the two countries in a manner acceptable to both Governments. On March 17, Mr. Harvey said that the Committee still awaits a definite answer from the Soviet Union, although some progress has been made with the arrangements for the visit of 300 Soviet students and young people and two groups have already visited Britain. Any delay with the other proposals is entirely due to the Soviet side.

New Reactor at Harwell

HAZEL, a new zero-energy reactor, is now operating at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell. HAZEL (homogeneous assembly—zero energy) uses enriched uranium fuel in the form of a salt of uranium (uranyl fluoride) which is dissolved in the heavy water used as a moderator. The core of the reactor is a stainless steel cylinder (7 ft. high × 2 ft. in diameter) surrounded by a graphite reflector. The fuel solution is pumped into the cylinder from two nearby storage vessels. The system is controlled by adjusting the level of the fuel solution in the reactor vessel and by moving a vertical neutron-absorbing cadmium plate into the gap between the steel cylinder and the graphite reflector. Two cadmium plates similar to the control device are used as 'shut-off' rods : two additional 'shut-off' rods can be dropped vertically into the fuel solution in the reactor vessel. The reactor will be operated at a power of less than a watt and cooling is not necessary. HAZEL will be used to obtain basic nuclear information. An earlier system at Harwell, ZETR (zero