vices, and exhaust gas scrubbing systems.

Any industrial firm operating a process involving a hazardous isocyanate should have three copies of this booklet—one for their production manager, one for their safety officer, and one for their medical advisor.

A. MUNN

Proceedings of the Symposium on Absence from Work Attributed to Sickness. Edited by Ward Gardner, updated by Peter Taylor. (Pp. 162; £3.25).

This is a reissue, with some additional material, of the proceedings of a symposium organised by the Research Panel of the Society of Occupational Medicine and held at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in June 1968. The additional material consists of a short account by Dr P. J. Taylor of recent work on 'sickness absence' with an appended list of the more important papers published in English since the symposium. The list makes no claim to be comprehensive. Even so, over 60 publications are included, evidence of the importance now attached to the subject; the bibliography in the original report went back to 1833 and contained only 240 references. The symposium has certainly played a part in this quickening of interest, although, curiously, there is nothing in the publication to indicate where anyone interested in the subject can obtain a copy of it. Presumably these are available through the Secretariat of the Society of Occupational Medicine (11 St Andrew's Place, Regents Park, London, NW1 4LE).

The symposium, although now ten years old, reads remarkably well. Most of the points underlined in it are still very relevant and should be of great interest to personnel managers and trades' unionists as well as to doctors and nurses working in the field of occupational health. Although absence rates in the UK are not, comparatively speaking, unduly high (rates in Holland and Sweden are much higher) nevertheless they continue to move upwards in spite of improvements in social and medical services and a presumed improvement in the health of our population. The reasons for this are uncertain. There is fairly consistent evidence that when additional sickness benefits for short-term absences are introduced, short-term absences increase, that an increased amount of sickness benefit paid weekly tends to be followed by an increase in the mean duration of spells of absence, that shift workers tend to have lower levels of absence than day workers, that there are

striking (and largely inexplicable) regional and occupational differences and that there are remarkable differences between doctors in the time they keep their patients in hospital, in bed and at home for apparently identical illnesses.

Anyone short of ideas for research should have no difficulty in finding plenty here to pursue.

C. R. LOWE

Notices

Health Hazards Affecting Pregnant Women in the Workplace

The nature of occupational health hazards and the ways to protect pregnant women and the unborn foetus from exposure to toxic chemical agents will be discussed at the subject session on this topic at the National Safety Congress and Exposition to be held in Chicago, 3 October 1978. The various biological mechanisms affected by exposure to industrial materials will be described. This session will be co-sponsored by the Occupational Health Nursing Committee of the Industrial Conference. For further information, please contact Julian B. Olishifski, Director, Industrial Hygiene, National Safety Council, 444 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611, USA. (Telephone 312-527 4800, ext. 233).

Science in the Service of Safety

A symposium on this topic, organised by the Association of Consulting Scientists, will be held in the Assembly Rooms, Bath, Avon, England, from 31 October to 2 November 1978. Lectures will be given on the topics of industrial safety, the use of contract research in safety evaluation, and aerosols, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. The registration fee is £54 (including VAT) for members of the Association of Consulting Scientists and of the Union Internationale des Laboratoires Independants, and £65 for non-members. Copies of the full programme and registration forms are available from the Secretary, Association of Consulting Scientists, Owles Hall, Buntingford, Herts, England (Telephone 0763-72665).

Fifth International Conference on Pneumoconioses

The Fifth International Conference on Pneumoconioses, which is being convened by the International Labour Office and the National Pneumoconioses Committee of

Venezuela, will be held in Caracas, Venezuela, 29 October-3 November 1978. The agenda includes 1) evaluation of dust hazards in the working environment; 2) recent progress in the aetiology and pathogenesis of pneumoconioses; 3) biological and functional tests in early diagnosis and rehabilitation; 4) developments in control and suppression of dust in all aspects of mining and industry. Two Round Table sessions will deal with A) occupational hazards due to exposure to asbestos and their prevention; B) combined effects of exposure to dust and other occupational hazards in the working environment. Related meetings will also be held on the international classification of radiographs of pneumoconioses, and on the safe limits of exposure to mineral and vegetable dust. In addition, the National Organising Committee will hold short courses on basic training in diagnosis, treatment and prevention of pneumoconioses and other occupational respiratory diseases. Simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Spanish will be provided. Participants are invited to submit communications on the topics covered by the agenda. Three copies of abstracts of written communications (about 200 words) in one of the Conference languages should be sent by 30 August 1978, and three copies of the full text (up to 2000 words) not later than 30 September 1978, to the International Labour Office, Occupational Safety and Health Branch, CH 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Other information may be obtained from Dr Manuel Adrianza, President of the National Pneumoconioses Committee of Venezuela, El Algodonal Antimano, Caracas, Venezuela.

University Education and Research in Safety

A symposium on this topic will be held at the Delft University of Technology on 11-12 October 1978. The symposium will deal with the demands for a system theory approach to safety problems in the systems in which we live, work and travel, and on the education and research necessary to achieve this. Further information is available from Symposium-bureau Academische Opleiding Veiligheid, Elektrotechniek, kamer 3-14 H, Mekelweg 4, Delft, Holland. (Telephone 015-781080).