BOOKS RECEIVED

Aspects of slow and persistent virus infections

Edited by D. A. J. TYRRELL. 1979. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. Pp. xii and 286. Dutch guilders 80.

This volume records the papers and discussions at a workshop, sponsored by the Commission of the European Communities on the advice of the Committee on Medical and Public Health Research, which took place in London in April 1979.

Interest in slow and persistent viruses has spread during the past few years, but a clear view is difficult for those unacquainted with this large, growing and heterogenous field. This book does not attempt to provide a comprehensive cover but comprises accounts of current areas of interest together with some topics of more general relevance.

Four papers (from Belfast, Wurzburg, Cambridge and London) are devoted to subacute sclerosing panencephalitis with particular attention being paid to the immune response and to the nature of the measles-like virus responsible for this condition. The biology of the scrapie agent and the pathogenesis of the disease are described in papers from the Agricultural Research Council establishments at Compton and Edinburgh. Maedi-visna receive attention in reports from Iceland and the Netherlands. Areas that would not immediately spring to mind as examples of slow or persistent infection, but were alluded to, include the RNA tumour viruses, with an account of their general biology and a review of the evidence for their presence in man. There is a review of the biological effects of interferon. Persistent infections, particularly with the ECHO viruses, in sex-linked hypogammaglobulinaemia, have recently attracted some attention and a paper is concerned with this problem. A final report deals with the recently described virus-like agents that have been detected in patients with psychiatric illnesses. The full discussions which these papers provoked are briefly summarised.

This volume forms one of a series entitled "New perspectives in clinical microbiology" and succeeds admirably in this aim. The papers form more than merely a record of scientific meeting and the reader will obtain a useful conspectus of the growing points, clearly described by active and authoritative workers. This book would form a valuable addition to any microbiological library and, by present day standards, is possibly cheap enough for the professional microbiologist to purchase for himself. With the exception of the omission of some authors from the list of contributors, there are very few errors and, again by present day standards, publication has not been unduly delayed.

R. N. P. SUTTON

Comprehensive virology—vol. 14. Newly characterised vertebrate viruses

Edited by H. FRAENKEL-CONRAT and R. R. WAGNER. 1979. Plenum Press, New York. Pp. xviii and 544. US\$45.00.

It was an ambitious plough to which Fraenkel-Conrat and Wagner put their hand when they started this series, and now they have reached volume 14 it is clear that there is no looking back. The volume contains chapters on particular groups of viruses, and also on the special topic of fish viruses and virus infections. The subjects covered are Bunyamaviridae, arenaviruses, coronaviruses, caliciviruses, arboviruses, and the icosahedral cytoplasmic DNA viruses. The eighth chapter, on the human viruses of hepatitis A and B, completes the volume. Each of these chapters is complete—perhaps too complete—in itself, which inevitably makes the book a collection of monographs rather than a coherent volume. However, the standard of the individual contributions is high, and the value of the book as a reference book is considerable. It is, perhaps, invidious to single out individual contributions, but the chapter on arenaviruses is