

28 May 1959

The Glaciers of Nanga Parbat

by

DR. F. LOEWÉ

In opening the colloquim of May 28 the chairman on behalf of all present congratulated Dr. H.M. Treloar on his share in the 1958 Award of Merit by the Professional Officers Association of Australia.

Dr. F. Loewe, Meteorology Department, University of Melbourne, who during 1958 worked for UNESCO establishing a Training Institute for Meteorology and Geophysics in Pakistan, then gave an account of a six weeks expedition with Mrs. Loewe and Mr. W. Krick, a German surveyor, to the Nanga Parbat region in the Himalyas. The approach was made by train, plane, jeep (along mountain paths on which even a jeep often had to "cut" several times to get around a bend), horses and finally on foot. Apart from providing a temporary escape from the trying climatic conditions of Karachi the expedition served for a renewed survey of various glaciers explored some 25 years earlier by a German expedition. It was hoped to establish as to whether the recent shrinking of glaciers in most, though not all, other parts of the world also had occurred in the Himalyas. The results are being analysed at present.

The glaciers of Nanga Parbat differ from those in the European Alps and Norway in that they lack firm source regions. Instead they are nourished by ice falls from the very steep mountain sides and as a result carry a great mass of debris which almost completely covers the ice in the lower reaches of the glaciers. The survey work involved climbing the sides of the adjacent mountains to a height (usually between 14,000 and 16,000 feet) which provided unobstructed views of the various ice streams on the flanks of Nanga Parbat. Details were recorded by means of a photogrammetric theodolite. In addition Dr. and Mrs. Loewe cooperated in a series of radiation balance measurements using a net radiometer loaned, with other equipment, by the Division of Meteorological Physics, C.S.I.R.O., Aspendale.

Just as all the survey measurements had Nanga Parbat towering in the background so the 26,620 feet mountain dominated Dr. Loewe's talk and especially the striking colour slides that concluded it. Above all a series of views of the South Face, the world's greatest rock wall which descends without a break for 15,000 feet from the summit ridge to the valley of the Indus, will not easily be forgotten by those privileged to hear Dr. Loewe's report.