

Research for Industry

*The Aims of the Fulmer Institute:
Its Founder Commemorated*

IT is an unfortunate fact that, as a recent official report states, "Striking examples can be cited of manufacturing operations which, though having their origin in this country, have been left to other countries to develop or modernize, with the result that they are now operated here under foreign licence or in plant either purchased from abroad or constructed to foreign design."

It was to combat such tendencies that the late Col. W. C. Devereux, C.B.E., founded the Fulmer Research Institute in 1946. Although such establishments have been a great asset to the U.S.A. and Germany for many years, the Fulmer laboratory is understood to be the first attempt at sponsored research to have been made in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to enable any organization with an industrial technical problem to hire a first-class team of research workers, complete with their equipment.

In the five years that Fulmer has been in use the staff has been doubled and the income has trebled. About half the income comes from Government departments for defence research; but this is by no means an unusual feature of such sponsored research establishments. All kinds of industrial concerns, including some dozens of private firms, have availed themselves of the comprehensive facilities offered. The work at Fulmer has included such diverse fields as: recovery of metal residues from fluxes; metal-ceramic aggregates; refining of beryllium and titanium; friction and wear between yarns and metals; design of boxes for the transport of fish; and the catalytic distillation of aluminium.

The Institute distributes no dividends to shareholders and receives no grants from the Government. The work undertaken frequently results in a process or apparatus being patented; 88 patents, both at home and abroad, have already been applied for on behalf of sponsors.

A memorial plaque was recently erected at the Institute in



The memorial plaque is of simple and dignified design.

commemoration of the founding of the establishment by the late Col. Devereux, who died in June of this year. As we briefly reported last week, the plaque was unveiled on September 30th by Sir Archibald Rowlands, G.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Supply. During the ceremony, the director of research at Fulmer, Mr. E. A. G. Liddiard, M.A., F.I.M., paid a personal tribute to the founder, with whom he had worked for some six years.

"The finest memorial to any man," he said, "is the successful continuation and expansion of the work that he started during his life. I think this is particularly true in the case of the Institute. . . ." Mr. Liddiard later turned to what he termed the "least satisfactory" side of the picture, namely, support from British industry. He admitted "somewhat ruefully" that the value of sponsored research was more fully recognized on the other side of the Atlantic, and read a letter from an American sponsor illustrating the high regard in which the Institute was held in the U.S.A.

He continued: "By the contacts that we have established and the reputation that we enjoy in the U.S. and Canada, we are able to offer to British sponsors the possibility of exploiting their research results on a much wider scale than would be possible if we confined our activities strictly to this country or, indeed, to the British Commonwealth."