

The Times Diary

five years. It carries a modest salary of about £300 a year, and a fairly modest workload of one lecture a term.

Stern said: "We are putting Ali forward to show the pomposity of lightweights evaluating serious poets, whose poetry they are not competent to judge. I think Ali's got a good chance, but it depends on the good humour of the electorate."

Unstop it

If there is one thing my readers do know about it is how to remove a stopper stuck in the neck of a decanter. My plea for advice on behalf of A. E. Grant-Crofton of Malta, a frustrated whisky-drinker, has brought a fine response.

Unusually, there is broad agreement about what he should do. Most of the methods suggested have the same scientific basis—that the glass of the decanter neck has to be expanded to free the stopper.

One reader suggested pouring penetrating oil over the stopper, but this would pollute the whisky. Brian Ford of Cardiff thinks the stopper may be jammed with whisky solids and recommends standing the decanter upside-down in a glass of whisky for a month before applying the heat treatment.

Neville Harton of Ipswich makes the point that the trouble can be prevented by drinking whisky more often. Perhaps Grant-Crofton will try these suggestions and let us know how he gets on.

Meat and drink

During my ruminations last week about the quality of catering in organ factories, I reported one reader's praise of the lunches at Grant, Degens and Bradbeer. It now appears that Frank Bradbeer is known inside and outside the trade for his gastronomic achievements.