

News and Views

The National Institute of Industrial Psychology

In his speech at the annual general meeting of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology held on December 16, Lord Dudley, president of the Institute, referred to the ever-widening field of its work. This was particularly shown in the investigations of environmental conditions in schools. The vocational guidance department has had more demands for assistance in the choice of a career than ever before, the figures for the year being 1278, an increase of 17.5 per cent on those of the previous year. In its industrial investigations, the Institute offers a service to industry which it endeavours to make as complete as possible. While all the Institute's work is approached from a psychological point of view, the part which pure psychology plays varies from branch to branch. Devising selection tests, for example, and finding and ameliorating staff grievances depend almost entirely on psychological considerations. On the other hand, problems of heating and ventilation, of lighting and of movement study, involve largely physiological considerations. Sir John Keane, chairman of the Institute, said that alterations and additions have been made to the Institute's premises, but that there is an urgent need of new accommodation. In speaking of new developments, Sir John referred particularly to the promising start that has been made in the north-western area by the Institute's new branch office in Manchester. It is hoped, he said, to develop in other areas regional sections for membership which might lead to the formation of further branch offices. It is also hoped that in the future the Institute's advisory service on the heating, lighting, and ventilation of schools will be extended to hospitals.

Science and Social Service

In his address on "Science and Social Service" given to members of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology at the annual general meeting, Sir Richard Gregory stressed the urgent need of the application of scientific method to social and international problems. Although scientific discoveries may be prostituted in the cause of war, it must be acknowledged that the advance of science has on the whole led to an enormous alleviation of human suffering and an increase in the capacity and facilities for happiness. As science is responsible for the industrial developments and economic changes which have caused violent disturbances in our social structure and provided also the means by which civilization may commit suicide, it has a duty to guide the human race in the wise use of the powers it has created. The personal and group loyalties of men, their fears, ideals, passions and ambitions all

lend themselves to scientific study with the view of providing a basis for effective social action. It is fashionable at the present time to blame the machine for the mechanization of life. To do this is to make the fundamental mistake of regarding the machine as the master and not the servant of society, and to forget that the most regrettable results of industrialization are not for the most part the direct fault of technological progress, but of lack of consideration for human needs. One of the prime needs of the present time is the development of research in the social and biological sciences on a scale commensurate with that of the physical sciences. The principal aim of any such studies should be to increase the comfort and promote the intelligence of the worker in order to combat the evils due to conditions arising out of mechanization in industry. Most of the work of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology is designed to this end, and is thus assisting in the adjustment of society to the changes caused by technical development.

New Buildings for the University of London

AN important modification of the building plans of the University of London on the Bloomsbury site is announced. Mr. Charles Holden's original model published in 1932 proposed a building nearly a quarter of a mile long with two towers and long façades on Malet Street and Woburn Square. This was afterwards modified by the introduction of two bays on the Malet Street frontage. The design received almost complete commendation from the lay and professional Press. NATURE in an article by "T. L. H." published in the issue of July 9, 1932, was the first journal to express misgiving. "Questions of style apart," it was suggested, "air, sunlight, and accessibility are crucial in considering the design. Is it wise, from these viewpoints, to build a single huge building, possibly the largest in London, a break-air, if the word may be coined?" Attention was directed to the difficulty of ventilating a large building and the plea put forward "that the idea of a single great building should be abandoned and an alternative design adopted treating the problem in a more free and characteristic way". This policy has now been officially adopted and a group of buildings surrounding the garden of Torrington Square will be substituted for the northern part of the site. Sites have been offered to Birkbeck College and the School of Oriental Studies. Birkbeck College has in recent years greatly developed its work in scientific teaching and research, particularly for evening students, and will presumably require large laboratories, lecture theatres and other accommodation.