

News and Views

Long Distance Air Record

THE Russian pilot, Colonel Michael Gromoff, with two companions, flying an Ant 25-1, landed at San Jacinto, California, on July 14—a flight estimated to be of about 6,625 miles from Moscow, over the North Pole which lasted 61 hours 7 minutes. The existing record of 5,675 miles, was held by the French airmen Codos and Rossi. The Soviet Government has been interested in this route, which follows practically a direct line across the North Pole. The pilot's log mentions the points Moscow, south-west Novaya Zemlya, North Pole, northern British Columbia, Oregon, San Francisco, and San Jacinto. So recently as last June, Chekaloff with two others on a similar machine flew over the same course, reaching Portland, Washington, a distance of 5,500 miles. The machine, also an Ant 25-1, was specially fitted for long-distance work, carrying extra fuel tanks and liquid oxygen, presumably for flying at considerable altitudes. The total loaded weight of the machine was $11\frac{1}{2}$ tons, about 6 tons of which is stated to have been fuel for the flight.

ONE result of this flight, although possibly of a negative order, is the confirmation of the fact that the severe storms encountered, added to many hundreds of miles of ice-bound regions in which forced landings would be impossible, make it questionable as to whether such a route can ever be a commercial possibility, even though it may be the shortest distance from northern Europe to North America. Apart from this, such flights have an obvious interest to the Russian authorities, whose internal air transport and military defence problems over the long distances in northern Siberia, are of a very similar nature. Colonel Gromoff is a well-known Russian test pilot, who has been connected with the development of Russian aviation since about 1917. His name has been particularly associated with the principal Russian research station, the Moscow Central Aerodynamic Institute. It is interesting to remember that he broke a world record in 1934 with a continuous flight of 7,765 miles in a closed circuit.

Commercial Production of Oil from Coal

ON July 14, the House of Lords debated a Motion by Lord Mottistone that plant for obtaining oil from coal should be set up in Durham and South Wales in the interests both of national defence and increase of employment. Lord McGowan said that the experience of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., has established the technical possibility of such processes but at capital and operating costs so high that the process, even with the assistance of existing protection, is not attractive to private capital. Success would have to depend not on private initiative, but on Government policy. The production of heavy oil for marine purposes from coal is at present un-

economical. The effect on employment ought not to be exaggerated. A plant capable of producing 150,000 tons of petrol annually provides work for 6,000 persons of whom 2,500 would be miners. Low-temperature carbonization and hydrogenation are complementary processes, and increased use of smokeless household fuels would promote both national security and national welfare. Hydrogenation processes, he emphasized, are a question of high national policy and beyond the purview of an ordinary limited liability company. Reference was made to the Fischer process and other methods of developing the use of coal. Lord Hutchinson, in reply, said the Government is awaiting the report of Lord Falmouth's Committee before deciding its policy for the production of oil from coal. Meanwhile, it is encouraging the establishment of plant for carbonizing coal at low temperatures, and another will be in production in South Wales next year.

Observations of the Longest Eclipse

INFORMATION has come to hand of the success of Prof. J. Q. Stewart, of Princeton University, and Mr. T. Stokley, director of the Planetarium in Philadelphia (representing the Franklin Institute and the Cook Observatory), in observing the recent total solar eclipse for an uninterrupted period of 7 min. 6 sec. from the S.S. *Steelmaker* of the Isthmian Steamship Co. The ship was at $133^{\circ} 38' W.$, $9^{\circ} 49.5' N.$ and the sun's altitude was $75^{\circ} .8'$. Owing to the ship's motion, totality lasted an extra four seconds for the observers. Prof. Stewart was engaged in visual study of the corona, while Mr. Stokley took photographs of the corona and measures of its total brightness at mid-eclipse. Preliminary measures show that this was of the same order as that of the full moon, while the observers on Canton Island have reported a value about half the full moon. The difference is in the opposite sense to what would be expected from purely geometrical considerations of the amount of low corona uncovered. The eclipse is described as a bright one. Despite the shadow extending around in all directions for seventy-seven miles, there was no need of flashlights to read the instruments, while ordinary newspaper print could be read with ease. Only Venus, Mercury and a few first magnitude stars could be seen, and there was indication of a high layer of haze in the sky. The corona was of late intermediate type, approaching maximum, made up of radial spikes and with no very long streamers.

Price Chair of International Economics

THE Council of the Royal Institute of International Affairs announces the appointment of Prof. Allan G. B. Fisher, of the University of Western Australia, to the newly established Price chair of international economics at Chatham House. The purposes of the chair is to provide the Institute with the means for