

NEWS and VIEWS

Hydrographer of the Navy :
Retirement of Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell,
K.B.E., C.B., F.R.S.

ON April 30, Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell retired from the post of Hydrographer of the Navy which he had held since 1932. Sir John has seen fifty-one years of service in the Navy, and had been in the Surveying Service for forty-three years. He held the post of hydrographer for longer than any other officer since Admiral Wharton (1884-1904) and had in fact done so for more than twice as long as any of his predecessors in the post save one. The work of the Surveying Service under Sir John in the major operations has been commented on again and again during the War, most notably perhaps by the late Admiral Ramsay in a report on the invaluable help given in the preparation for and the consummation of *D* day. But here it is more appropriate to refer to his interests in marine science generally. Sir John was elected F.R.S. in 1943, and was the first Hydrographer of the Navy to receive that high distinction since Sir Mostyn Field (1904-9). He has served as a member of the Port of London Authority since July 1941, and has now (it is understood) become acting conservator of the River Mersey. Shortly after he was appointed Hydrographer of the Navy, he became chairman of the Sub-Committee for Physical Oceanography of the National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics, a position he still holds. It is well known that the "Discovery" Committee has, since its early days, had exceptionally valuable assistance from the Hydrographer of the Navy in the planning and running of its fine expeditions to high southern latitudes, and since Sir John succeeded Admiral Douglas on the Committee, his help has been very greatly valued.

Sir John Edgell also takes part in the Development Commission's work on fisheries research, and, by participation in the conferences of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, has become closely acquainted with foreign oceanographers. What has so far been said touches the past and the present, but it may easily be appreciated what great hopes British oceanographers have for the future, knowing that Sir John is applying his very best efforts to the end that Britain shall become possessed of a national institution of oceanography. He has already presided over meetings of scientific men working towards that goal, and prospects seem promising, largely thanks to his energetic interest; if Britain should once again take up a foremost position in the study of the sea, it will be greatly due to Sir John.

Rear-Admiral A. G. N. Wyatt

REAR-ADMIRAL A. G. N. WYATT, who succeeds Sir John Edgell, was born in 1893, being twelve years younger than his immediate predecessor. It is interesting to note that he is the first Hydrographer to enter the Navy after the withdrawal of H.M.S. *Britannia*, and, consequently, through the Royal Naval Colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth. He had the distinction of being selected as a chief cadet captain of his term, evidence that at an early age he displayed those qualities of leadership and character so noticeable in later life, and the award of the Royal Humane Society's medal for life-saving in a yachting disaster, when only in his early teens, was

indicative of his courage and powers of endurance. He went to sea as a midshipman in 1910. During the War of 1914-18, he served in destroyers and in the battleship *Prince of Wales* as a watch-keeper, and, during the last year of the War, in command of a destroyer. As a young lieutenant, he was an expert boat-sailer, at which he excelled, even in a profession where a high standard of proficiency in that art is anticipated. It was not until 1918 that he decided, on joining H.M.S. *Melisande* as a fourth class assistant surveyor, to devote his life to that service of which he was destined, twenty-seven years later, to become the head.

A distinctive feature in the new Hydrographer's career is his long period of service in charge of surveys at sea: he has commanded six of H.M. surveying ships, extending over a period of fifteen years; in fact, except for a spell of eighteen months as superintendent of charts at the Admiralty and, early in the present War, an appointment for a similar term as assistant hydrographer, he has been in charge afloat since 1926, when he joined his first surveying command, H.M.S. *Ormonde*. His hydrographic services have taken him to such varied parts of the world as Labrador, the Persian Gulf, Australia and New Zealand. During the greater part of this War, Admiral Wyatt was in command of H.M.S. *Challenger* in eastern waters. On relinquishing this command to take over his new duties, he received a letter of appreciation from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for his services "in the valuable work of surveys completed under your direction since your arrival in the eastern theatre of war".

Educational Plans and Purposes

IN accordance with the general view that the study of education is a branch of sociology, *Nature* has duly reported to its readers the discussions that led to the Education Act of 1944, and those that have so far resulted from that event. A new step has now been taken. The Ministry is to publish a series of pamphlets, the first of which, bearing the title "The Nation's Schools: their Plan and Purpose", has just appeared (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1945. Pp. 32. 6d. net). Here the Ministry comes to close grips with the facts, the object of the pamphlet being "to set out some reflections relating planning to purpose in terms, not of the legal 'child', but of living children". Each kind of school is tersely dealt with, beginning with nursery and infant schools. Here, by the way, a curious *lapsus calami* attributes to Margaret Macmillan the great saying, "Educate every child as if he were your own". It was Rachel's saying, reverently quoted by her sister Margaret. The section on junior schools touches a sore spot when it remarks that so far "the juniors have too often had to make do with the accommodation available after the seniors have been dealt with".

It is, however, when the pamphlet leaves the subject of primary and enters upon that of secondary education that the difficulties begin. The old identification of secondary and grammar-school education is traced to its historical causes, and blamed for its unfortunate consequences. The promising junior technical schools, now in wholly insufficient supply, are explained, their vitality and successful development being attributed in part to "their freedom from the ties of any external examination". In the section on modern schools we read again that "free from the pressures of any external examination, these schools can work out the best and liveliest forms of

secondary education suited to their pupils'. In fact, the Ministry seems to entertain definite views as to external examinations. Cautious commendation is given to 'multi-lateral' experiments in organization. We note, however, that in the reconstructional plans of certain counties, the letters 'G. T. M.' frequently indicate that grammar, technical and modern education will be combined in one institution which will not be too large.

Survey of Technical Education, 1944-45

In his presidential address before the annual Whitsuntide conference of the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions held in London, Mr. C. J. Tirrell referred to some of the major problems now emerging from attempts to implement the 1944 Education Act in the technical field. At the level of secondary education, past successful experience with junior technical schools will be of great value in the establishment of practical and realistic curricula, while the extension of the school-life under the Act to at least five years opens up a wide field of educational experiment in the technical secondary school, without prejudging the issue as to the extent to which the 'multi-lateral' idea may be applied. An extension of the system of part-time day release is essential if practical experience and theoretical study are to be properly correlated, and there is an obvious need for a central council to bring together the universities, technical colleges and industry, if higher technological education is to maintain contact with industrial practice in all its stages of development. Moreover, the great importance of craftsmanship to the many small industrial firms (some 100,000) seems to demand the establishment of new national certificates in craftsmanship which would ensure due attention being paid to the necessary technical background underlying all aspects of vocational training.

Vocational Guidance

THE City of Birmingham Education Committee has issued a report of a research on "Scientific Vocational Guidance and its value to the choice of employment work of a Local Education Authority". The whole research, carefully and competently carried out, has extended over a period of no less than eighteen years, its general object being to ascertain what value there is in using psychological methods in aiding young entrants into industry, commerce and the professions, by showing clearly at the outset the likelihood of success or failure in certain branches of employment. The report suggests that on the staff of a secondary school there should be at least one teacher competent to apply psychological tests, and that he or she should work in close co-operation with a specially qualified officer. The resulting records should be used from time to time to enable decisions to be reached as to the course of a child's instruction, and towards the end of the child's school life to enable the juvenile employment officer, co-operating with the head and with the trained teacher, to give reliable vocational guidance. The report, which includes the most elaborate details, may be obtained from the City of Birmingham Education Committee for 2s. 6d.

British Council:

Formation of Agricultural Department

An Agricultural Department, which will be advised by a panel presided over by Prof. J. A. Scott Watson,

chief education and advisory officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, has been set up within the Science Department of the British Council, and Dr. W. T. H. Williamson has been appointed director of the new Department. Since the formation of the Science Department of the British Council in 1941, it has been found that many of the inquiries from abroad relate to agriculture. In consequence, the Department of Agriculture has been created to control, co-ordinate and extend the work already begun in this direction. Prominent agricultural scientific workers have made visits abroad under the auspices of the British Council and provided reports on the agriculture of some foreign countries. It will be one of the functions of the new Department to follow up these reports and to provide expert information on how far the agricultural needs of the countries concerned can be provided for by the nations of the British Commonwealth. It will present the achievements of British agriculture to other countries and keep them supplied with up-to-date information on all advances in practice and science. Experiments have already been made in the distribution of original articles for reproduction in the technical press overseas.

Dr. Williamson has been adviser in agricultural chemistry to the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. This post was a war-time creation, but he has built up a department which is now rendering valuable service to the farming community in South Wales and Monmouthshire. Before the War he was, for eleven years, chief chemist to the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture. He was entrusted with the reorganization of the department and expanded it to more than three times the size of the original, housed in laboratories designed by himself and with greatly extended activities in the way of research, advisory work and routine analysis. In 1937, in recognition of his services, he was created a commander of the Order of the Nile by the King of Egypt. Dr. Williamson has also served on the staff of the Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture and the University of Aberdeen.

Proposed North Polar Flights

SEVERAL flights over the north geographical pole have been made since Rear-Admiral R. E. Byrd, U.S.N., made the flight in 1926 using Spitsbergen as a base. Most important was the Soviet expedition of 1937-38, but more flights are required, not probably for geographical discovery but for magnetic and meteorological research. Flights over Arctic Canada have been made on several occasions. It is now announced that a series of flights over both the geographical and magnetic poles are being made by an expedition from the Empire Air Navigation School of R.A.F. Flying Training Command. The aircraft used is the Lancaster *Aries* which was flown round the world last autumn by Wing-Commander D. C. McKinley. Four new Rolls-Royce Merlin XXIV engines have been installed. The base of the expedition is in Iceland, at least for the flights over the geographical pole. A Canadian base will later be used for flights over the north magnetic pole in Boothia Peninsula. The objects of the flights are stated to be, to examine the behaviour of compasses and automatic dead-reckoning gear, and to collect data on engine handling as well as magnetism and meteorology. The plane carries food for four weeks, sledging gear and arctic kit. The crew, all told,