

## NEWS and VIEWS

## Importation of Books into Britain

LORD BALFOUR OF INCHRYE, speaking in the House of Lords on February 19, directed attention to the effects of the present restrictions on the import of books into Britain. He said that we cannot afford to fall behind in the application of modern scientific developments, and due to the difficulty in publishing books there is danger that Britain will be cut off from the exchange of ideas and knowledge. He suggested the imposition of a maximum time-limit for dealing with applications for import licences, that the permissible quantities of book imports be increased, and that there should be blanket licences of specified amounts for universities, libraries and approved scientific bodies. Lord Chorley, Lord in Waiting, in reply, said that the President of the Board of Trade is discussing with representatives of the learned institutions their difficulties in obtaining books, particularly from the United States. As a result of those discussions, an increase in the quota may be granted, though he would not hold out a promise that it would be up to the 200 per cent of the pre-war amount which had been suggested.

## Conscription and Industry

AN article by D. R. O. Thomas (*J. Inst. Personnel Management*, 29, No. 293; September-October 1947) directs attention to the possible effect on industrial efficiency of the withdrawal of large numbers of young men for national service requirements. Under the Act, which becomes operative on January 1, 1949, men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six years are to be called up for national service for a period of twelve months, the actual call-up age being eighteen, and thereafter each man will serve 5½ years with the reserve, during which he is required to do sixty days training. This, and the new developments under the 1944 Education Act in respect of the raising of the school age to sixteen years and the establishment of county colleges, will mean that industrial organisations will be faced with the prospect of starting youths in employment at sixteen years and afterwards releasing them for one day in five up to eighteen years, when they will disappear altogether for twelve months. On return to employment, the young man will be required to do two weeks Service training per year for 5½ years, which, together with his annual holiday, may mean his being absent from industrial employment for one month in every twelve until he is about twenty-five years of age.

Remembering, too, that the effects of the lower birth-rate will be strongly felt within the next decade, these national service requirements are bound to cause difficult problems for management in industry. It is essential, therefore, as Mr. Thomas points out, that the national service period should be used as efficiently as possible and should fit carefully into a scheme of training and experience, from school-leaving age to twenty-one or so, which will provide a useful apprenticeship to the responsibilities of work and citizenship. To offset the loss of industrial time, industry itself must make the best possible use of the time available in providing young people with specific training for their jobs. The rest of the article makes cogent suggestions for training schemes for various types of recruits and indicates how the difficulties of deferment for apprentices and students can be overcome.

## U.N.E.S.C.O. : New Appointments

THE following new appointments in U.N.E.S.C.O. have recently been announced:

Dr. Clarence E. Beeby, director of education in the New Zealand Government, to be assistant director-general, concerned chiefly with the co-ordination of educational activities. Dr. Beeby, head of the New Zealand Delegation to the Second Session of the General Conference in Mexico City (November-December, 1947), was also chairman of the Programme and Budget Commission and thus is already well familiar with the aims and the activities of the Organisation.

Prof. Emile Auger, member of the French Atomic Energy Commission, to be head of the Natural Sciences Section. Prof. Auger was a member of the French Delegation to the General Conference of U.N.E.S.C.O. and has for the past year been a member of the Executive Board of the Organisation. He will replace Dr. Joseph Needham in that post. Dr. Needham, after nearly two years service with U.N.E.S.C.O., is returning to his post at the University of Cambridge.

Prof. Pedro Bosch Gimpera, to be director of the philosophy and humanistic studies section. Prof. Gimpera was formerly Dean of the Philosophy Department of the University of Barcelona. He has lately been professor in the University of Mexico.

Mr. Gordon Menzies (Australia), to be director of administrative services.

## War-time Work of the American Academies

"THE ETHNOGEOGRAPHIC BOARD", by Wendell C. Bennett (*Smithsonian Misc. Coll.*, 107, No. 1; 1947), is a history by one of its members of an organisation for harnessing the academic institutions of the United States to the war machine. It was set up by the National Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council and the Smithsonian Institution in June 1942 and continued until the end of 1945. It was not an official body and it was financed and supported by the organisations which founded it, particularly the Smithsonian; but it was very largely used by the Armed Forces and Government departments, and is described as a "clearinghouse for Government needs and Academic knowledge". It consisted of a directorate, situated in the Smithsonian, which was the Washington office of the Board and did most of the work, and the Board proper, which was advisory. It produced reports on various areas, and lists of people with knowledge of foreign parts, and it undertook special projects, of which a booklet called "Survival on Land and Sea" was one of the most valuable and was widely circulated to the Armed Forces in the Pacific theatre. It had no equivalent in Great Britain, where the type of information supplied was collected by Service departments, such as the naval and military intelligence organisations and the Inter-Services Topographical Department.

Dr. Bennett gives a straight account of the Board and its activities, pointing out its strength and its weaknesses, and makes suggestions as to how such a body should be organised if needed again. (One of these is that it might have a better name!) Some points are of general interest, particularly the first paragraph on war-time Washington, beginning "For the millions who milled around Washington in the first half of 1942, no statement about the fabulous confusion could ever be adequate . . .", and the following statement about the search for people who

could compile special reports: "The Board found that those who were still in their academic settings managed to find time for something within their competence which was directly concerned with the war. Once a scholar was in Washington it was hard to get much out of him, and once he got into uniform, however sedentary the assignment, it was almost impossible."

### Science and Society in Ancient China

IN his Conway Memorial Lecture, "Science and Society in Ancient China", delivered on May 12, 1947, Dr. Joseph Needham attempts to sketch a pattern of the organisation of Chinese feudal society and its relation to Western European society (London: Watts and Co., Ltd. 2s. net). While the Taoist hermits who withdrew from human society to contemplate Nature had no scientific method, they tried to understand Nature in an intuitive and observational way, and the earliest chemistry and astronomy in Asia had Taoist connexions. In ancient China, although Taoist empirical mysticism favoured the development of science, Confucian ethical rationalism was antagonistic, and it could not be claimed that all through history rationalism had been the chief progressive force in society. While inventions and technological discoveries such as gunpowder, paper, printing, the magnetic compass and efficient animal harness, which changed the course of civilization, were made in China, modern science and technology did not develop them. Dr. Needham points out that the status of military technology may deeply affect the crystallization of social philosophy, and that a moral question such as slavery may be closely connected with technical factors. Philosophical and ethical thought, he believes, can never be dissociated from their material basis, and he thinks that Chinese civilization was basically inhibited from giving rise to modern science and technology, because the society which grew up in China after the feudal period was unsuitable for these developments. Dr. Needham concludes by commending a closer study of the great classics of Chinese philosophy and of the parallel course of technology in China.

### Interchange of Technical Publications in Sheffield

A REPORT on the progress made during the last year by the Organisation for the Interchange of Technical Publications in Sheffield was presented to the fifteenth annual general meeting held in the Central Library, Sheffield, on December 2. This Organisation controls a system of co-operative borrowing of books, periodicals and other records, between the numerous special libraries in the Sheffield area. Recent activities of the Organisation have been directed to other ways of assisting research and development now that the effective pooling of technical publications and information has been operating for many years. The annual report shows that 1,459 publications were borrowed last year. A survey of the location of foreign patents in British libraries was undertaken; through the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux, the Patents Office was asked to close the gap in indexes and abridgments to British patent specifications left during the War; and an inquiry made as to the amount of assistance obtainable from the Nederlandsch Instituut voor Documentatie en Registratuur in foreign patent searches. At the annual general meeting, it was decided to ask the Board of Trade to have the mass of documents relating to war-time

German industry held by the Technical Information and Documents Unit of the Board abstracted and indexed on similar lines to the work done in the United States by the Air Technical Intelligence and to have the more important items translated on the advice of technical experts. It was also recommended that files of the microfilms taken by the Board of machine drawings selected from this collection should be deposited with the leading technical libraries of Britain. Twenty-four firms and seven societies and institutions now belong to the Organisation.

### Textile Laboratories at Leeds

THE International Wool Secretariat has for the past ten years given increasing support to the University of Leeds for research on wool; it has now made a gift of £10,000 for the purchase of equipment for the new Textile Laboratories, all the apparatus to be utilized for the benefit of the wool industry. At present, five men hold Secretariat fellowships in the Department, and in addition, a grant of £1,600 a year has been made during the past two years in support of research in textile engineering. The number of workers engaged on these and other wool research projects is now so great that a severe strain has been thrown on the laboratory accommodation. In 1946, however, the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers of London made a grant of £20,000 towards the building of new wool research laboratories, and a start on the work was made in December 1947. The ground floor of the new building will be used to extend the Cloth Finishing Section of the Department, while the first floor will contain several laboratories for wool research workers. The second floor will take the form of one large laboratory, which will be used to give undergraduates practical experience of the applications of chemistry at all stages of the manufacture of wool textile materials. The grant of £10,000 from the International Wool Secretariat is for the equipment of the new building and will be used to purchase the most modern types of machinery for the Finishing Section, as well as the special apparatus which will be needed by research workers and undergraduates.

### Old Scientific and Natural History Books

THE following catalogues have been issued by Messrs. Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., of 11 Grafton Street, London, W.: No. 644, Books and Periodicals relating to Mathematics, Physics and Allied Sciences including two small collections on Accountancy and Mining; No. 650, Books and Periodicals on all Branches of Zoology, Geology, Palaeontology and Botany; and a Catalogue of Books and Manuscripts issued to commemorate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the firm of Bernard Quaritch: 1847-1947. Noteworthy among these is Messrs. Quaritch's centenary catalogue. This is of especial interest to booklovers on account of the introductory matter, in which is related the growth of the firm from small beginnings in October 1847, in a shop in Castle Street, Leicester Square, London, to its present status as a business of world-wide repute. There is also a portrait of the founder, who died in 1899, and a brief sketch of his life, prepared by his daughter, Mrs. Charlotte Quaritch Wrentmore. As might have been anticipated, this catalogue is worthy of the occasion. It is a lavishly illustrated production, containing six coloured and some forty black-and-