

agreed is fairly comprehensive and there are clear provisions for revising and strengthening the agreement once an industry is established.

Further, all the nations likely to be involved in sealing have adopted the convention, with the exception of Canada which was not a signatory to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, but is expected to sign the convention. As one British Foreign Office official said last week "you can either have a convention that's perfect and signed by the wrong people, or one that's imperfect but signed by the right people".

ASTRONOMY

Changes at Cambridge

THE appointment, announced last week, of Professor Donald Lynden-Bell to succeed Professor R. O. Redman in the chair of astrophysics at the University of Cambridge has been welcomed among the astronomical community in Britain. This is not only because of the skills which Professor Lynden-Bell brings to Cambridge, but because the appointment also provides the first indication of the way in which the new Institute of Astronomy might develop.

In July 1971, the merger of the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy and the University Observatories into the Institute of Astronomy was announced to take effect from August 1972. In part, the decision was made then because of the impending retirement of Professor Redman, Director of the Observatories, and the recent retirements of Dr H. von Klüber, Assistant Director of the Solar Physics Observatory, and of Dr E. H. Linfoot, Assistant Director of the Observatories.

Under the new arrangements the Director of the Institute of Astronomy will be appointed from among the professors of the institute for a period not exceeding five years. In all probability, the first director will be Sir Fred Hoyle, Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy, and currently Director of the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy. But, as Professor of Astrophysics, Lynden-Bell will be a member of the advisory committee which will run the new institute, and in due course he may be expected to take his turn as director.

How might this new appointment be interpreted with regard to the future of astronomy in Cambridge? It is perhaps significant that Professor Lynden-Bell has interests ranging from problems connected with the overall structure of the universe to the structure of galaxies and the construction of telescopes. Although he modestly claimed last week that his experience of practical astronomy was "completely negligible", he has, in fact, worked closely

with observers at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, where he has been a Senior Principal Scientific Officer since 1965. This collaboration exemplifies how many people hope the new institute will develop. Professor Lynden-Bell also sees the development of strong links between the astronomers at the new institute and the radio astronomers at the Cavendish Laboratory, which will soon be moving to a new site near the institute.

It is interesting that Professor A. H. Cook, now at the University of Edinburgh has been appointed Jacksonian Professor of Natural Philosophy at the Cavendish with effect from October 1, 1972. Professor Cook's interests in spectroscopy and instrumentation encourage the speculation that there might well be collaboration on the problems of optical astronomy, as well as on the problems of radio astronomy. In spite of some doubts about the future of the highly successful programme of visiting fellowships which has helped to place the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy in the forefront of world astronomy, it seems that the future of astronomy within the University of Cambridge is assured.

Sir Brian to Stay

SIR BRIAN FLOWERS will continue as chairman of the Science Research Council for a further three years after his term of office expires next September. The announcement, made last week, has stilled speculation that Sir Brian would return to academic life at the end of this year but even though he has resigned his position as Langworthy Professor of Physics at the University of Manchester he said last week that this does not mean that he is completely shutting the door on the academic world.

Sir Brian said that the major reason for his acceptance of the invitation to stay on as chairman of the SRC is "to steer the SRC and the research council system generally through this difficult and confused period". He will strive to ensure that the white paper that the government is to publish on the future of government research development will be acceptable to the scientific community.

There is no doubt that a new man at the helm of the SRC at the end of this year would have created difficulties for the council in implementing any changes necessitated by a change in government policy. The scientific community will welcome Sir Brian's extended stay in command.

POLLUTION

A Clean Sea

TWELVE European countries, including Britain, signed a convention in Oslo last week aimed at preventing ships and aircraft from dumping waste indiscriminately in the North Sea and parts of the North-East Atlantic and Arctic oceans.

Under the convention—which has yet to be ratified—the dumping of substances likely to find their way into the food chains is completely prohibited—these include organohalogen and organosilicon compounds, carcinogenic substances, mercury, cadmium and persistent synthetic materials. The dumping of certain less harmful substances will be allowed under certain well defined conditions but only if a permit is obtained from the relevant national authority. If material is dumped, it must be unloaded into a depth of not less than 2,000 metres at least 150 nautical miles from land.

Mr James Prior, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, said that as far as Britain was concerned the convention would simply make legal the conditions and prohibitions under which British industry had already been operating by voluntary agreement. It does, however, ensure that all the countries involved will live up to the same standards. Asked what penalties there would be for ships breaking the agreement, Mr Prior said that these would not be fixed until the ratification of the convention by Parliament (which should take place next session) but they will be "very severe". A commission is to be set up to oversee the working of the convention.

The area covered stretches westwards to Greenland and southwards to near Gibraltar but the agreement excludes the Baltic and Mediterranean seas. Dr Herbert Cole, Director of the Fisheries Laboratory at Lowestoft, said that he hoped the present convention would be followed by agreement in these areas.

Mr Prior pointed out that he and the other signatories were well aware that most pollution in the sea comes from rivers and pipelines. Urgent consideration is being given to controlling these sources, however, and he felt that the dumping convention was "a convenient starting point to deal with the broader problems".

The convention could be the first of a series of international agreements over the next few years to protect the sea and fisheries. A United Nations intergovernmental committee is discussing world anti-dumping measures which can be expected to follow the same principles as the present convention, and future agreements on the carriage of potentially dangerous cargoes may also result.