designed to further our knowledge and understanding of basic principles. The Advisory Council emphasizes in conclusion, however, that the question of striking the right balance between short-range and long-range work, of balancing the need for giving assistance on problems of immediate and pressing importance and the need for providing the basis for more far-reaching advance in industrial technique and practice, on which the continued prosperity of the country must ultimately depend, is the major problem of policy at the present time and is likely to remain so while staff and facilities are limited.

this scheme, and its activities had commenced. A new building to accommodate collections, library and research workers was planned, and its foundation-stone was laid by the Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, on April 3. It is hoped that this Institute will be a lasting memorial to the distinguished man who was its founder and first director. Sahni was married to a beautiful and talented wife who was his constant companion and helper, and who now presides over the governing body of the Institute.

H. HAMSHAW THOMAS

OBITUARIES

Prof. Birbal Sahni, F.R.S.

PALÆOBOTANISTS in many countries heard with regret the news of the sudden death of Birbal Sahni on April 10. His slight figure, his modest personality and polished manners were well known at international gatherings of botanists and geologists; few Indian men of science can have been more widely respected. He was not only a diligent research worker but also a stimulating teacher and a good organiser. He did much to develop his own subject and the cause of natural science in India.

He was born in 1891, the son of Prof. R. R. Sahni, and was educated at Lahore and Cambridge, where he held a Foundation Scholarship at Emmanuel College. After graduating in 1914, he began research under Prof. A. C. Seward on living pteridophytes, gymnosperms and their fossil ancestors. This led to a series of remarkably able papers, several of which were published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*.

Returning to India in 1919, Sahni became professor of botany at Benares for one year, then moved to Lahore, and in 1921 went to Lucknow, where he remained for the rest of his life. There he carried out a long series of investigations on the fossil plants of India, and gathered around him a band of enthusiastic young workers in the same field. New discoveries were made in many different areas, which contributed to knowledge of the vegetation of past ages and often indicated the geological age of the plant-bearing rocks. In recent years he developed the study of micro-fossils and carried out an intensive study of the minute organic remains in the Saline Series of rocks in the Salt Range. These rocks had often been regarded as of Cambrian or Pre-Cambrian age, owing to their occurrence in the field, but they were found to contain a wide variety of micro-fossils which could not be older than Tertiary.

Sahni played a large part in the development of scientific societies in India. He was one of the founders of the Indian Botanical Society and was its president in 1924. He was president of the Indian Science Congress in 1940, twice president of its botanical section and once of its geological section. He had been foreign secretary and president of the Indian National Academy of Sciences. He was awarded the degree of Sc.D. at Cambridge in 1929 and was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1936. At the International Botanical Congresses of 1930 and 1935, he was a vice-president of the Palæobotany Section.

During the last ten years Sahni devoted much time to the organisation of an Indian Institute of Palæobotany. Considerable progress had been made with

Prof. G. H. Henderson, O.B.E., F.R.S.

GEORGE HUGH HENDERSON, O.B.E., F.R.S., E. Smith professor of physics, Dalhousie University, and chief superintendent of the Naval Research Establishment at Halifax, died suddenly at the age of fifty-six on his way to a New Brunswick fishing camp. He is survived by his wife, Ruth Wallace Ross Henderson, and two daughters, Nancy and Margaret, the former a science student at Dalhousie.

Chiefly as a result of over-work during the War, his health became seriously impaired in 1944, but he would not give up work until he had a serious breakdown in March 1948. He partly recovered, but still refused to take life more easily. During the last two weeks of his life he took part in the meetings of the Royal Society of Canada, presenting six papers, and attended meetings of the Defence Research Board and the National Research Council.

Prof. Henderson received his B.A. and B.Sc. degrees from Dalhousie University in 1914 with high honours in physics and the Governor-General's Gold Medal. Two years later he received his master's degree and was awarded an 1851 Exhibition research scholarship. Three years later he proceeded to the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, and in 1922 obtained his Ph.D. there. He then went back to Canada as a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, and in 1925 returned to his Alma Mater as professor of mathematical physics. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1927, and in 1941 was elected to the Royal Society of London.

Prof. Henderson's strong sense of duty led him to serve his country during the two World Wars—in the first as an engineer officer in the Army, and in the second he gave outstanding service to the Royal Canadian Navy in his capacity as a physicist and also in the field of operational research. For his outstanding contributions as superintendent of the Naval Research Establishment he was made an O.B.E. in 1943.

The first of Henderson's twenty-five scientific papers was published while he was still an undergraduate. It was in the comparatively new field of radioactivity, which continued throughout life to be his major research interest. His study of pleochroic haloes and his development of a new method for estimating the age of minerals containing them attracted much attention from both physicists and geologists.

Not only was Prof. Henderson a scientific investigator, but he was also an able teacher. He was revered by his students. He never spared himself and was always ready to spend time and trouble to help serious students. Two characteristics in his character stand out which would seem to conflict but did not. He was an individualist, independent, did his own thinking and made his own decisions.