

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1916.

## AT LAST!

THE war has brought many changes of custom and condition, but none is so likely to influence national history as the method adopted in the choice of members of the new Government. For the first time the heads of departments of State have been selected because of their particular knowledge and experience, and not on account of political needs and exigencies. It has been assumed hitherto that a member of the party in power may become in turn the President of the Board of Trade, Board of Agriculture, Board of Education, and of as many other departments as political circumstances may require, without possessing any special qualifications to deal with the affairs of a single one of them. A new principle has, however, now been introduced; and the Government formed by Mr. Lloyd George consists mostly of men who know instead of men who had to be given appointments because of their political claims. The whole nation welcomes this first endeavour to reconstruct on a scientific basis its politics, its statesmanship, its commerce, its education, and its civil and industrial administration. It has been fashionable in political circles to distrust the man who has made it his business to know, and to assume that he must be kept under control by official administrators; but we hope the appointments to offices in the new Government signify that this view has now gone for ever, and has been superseded by the one in which national use is made of the most capable men.

The constitution of the Government evolved under war conditions by Mr. Lloyd George has, in Wordsworthian phrase, so far as the future of education is concerned, "brought hope with it and forward-looking thoughts," and, in any event, has set an example which it is to be hoped may be followed in later appointments. For the first time in the history of the Board of Education a man has been selected for its leader and inspirer entirely apart from political prejudices or ambitions, and without the idea that the position is to be regarded as simply a convenient resting-place for a time in view of some other political office of greater importance, if there be such. Like most of the other offices in the new Ministry, a choice has been made on purely business principles with the sole view of securing for the office the most capable administrator, who will bring not only undivided energies to its effective discharge, but formative and stimulating ideas, high

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intelligence, learning, and rare gifts of exposition in the written word and in speech.

The appointment of Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield, to the Presidency of the Board of Education will receive the heartiest welcome from friends of education of every grade. It is particularly welcome at the present crisis, when the feeling is rife in all spheres of educational thought that there is need for a complete reform in our methods of education and in the importance assigned to certain subjects. Dr. Fisher comes to the responsible post to which he is assigned from the centre of the industrial life of England, where he has been in close touch with men of affairs with whom the application of science to industrial needs is of paramount importance. He brings, too, a breadth of mind and a keen interest in all democratic movements, especially those concerned with social and economic questions. As a teacher of high repute he will not fail of sympathy with those who are charged with the due training of the youth of the nation in all branches of education. He has already been engaged in important public inquiries, for he was a member of important Commissions, as, for example, that which visited India four years ago to inquire into Indian administration and the conditions of the Public Services. Dr. Fisher has great problems to face and solve, since to be really effective he must break with old traditions which have held the nation hide-bound for many generations. There is, however, reason to believe that he appreciates fully the gravity of the task, and that he has not lightly entered upon it. He brings to its solution a free and liberal mind and an undivided and abiding interest, and it is to be hoped that all parties will unite in giving him the most loyal support.

The lessons of the war have brought home to the English people as never before the need for drastic changes in our educational policy, and we therefore look forward with a confident hope that the new appointment will be abundantly justified in its results and form a precedent for future guidance.

The new Government includes a number of other men who know the "business" with which they have been entrusted. The national needs of the moment are a complete organisation of production, a stringent regulation of, and economy in, consumption, a thorough efficiency of transport, all focussed with the fierce concentration of purpose of an entirely roused people upon one aim, the winning of the war. All these needs have led the Government of the country away from the somewhat arid academic debatableness

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of the rostrum into the arena of business life, where things are done, and done with efficiency and dispatch. Hence the nation welcomes the application of the sound principle that men with the "business sense," the intangible ability or intuition which results from a lifetime passed in a successful business environment, should control the national effort. Mr. Lloyd George, as a practical man, has disposed of the superstition that a man of first-class ability in one department of human affairs is equally capable in other realms of activity.

The appointments made to the Board of Agriculture will give the greatest satisfaction to agriculturists. Mr. R. E. Prothero, who becomes President of the Board, has a unique knowledge of his subject, both on the scientific and the practical sides. His historical studies have thrown much light on the development of the subject, and shown how the present agricultural position arose, and his experience in connection with the Bedford estates has given him admirable opportunities for learning what is possible under present conditions. Capt. Bathurst, who will probably be Parliamentary Secretary to the Board, is well known as a landowner who has made improvements on his own estate and encouraged others to do the same. He has himself worked a small holding so as to acquire that first-hand knowledge which cannot be won in any other way but by direct contact with the things themselves. If matters have not gone too far, Mr. Prothero and Capt. Bathurst ought, between them, to be able to put the food problem on a sound foundation. They start with the good wishes and the confidence of the agricultural community.

The appointment of business men like Sir Albert Stanley to the Board of Trade, and Lord Rhondda to the Local Government Board, carries on the same admirable principle of selection. The supreme example lies not only in the new offices, the Controllerships of Food and Shipping and the Ministry of Labour, but in the choice of the men to fill these posts. Lord Devonport, who becomes Food Controller, is familiar, as the chairman of the Port of London Authority, not only with the magnitude of the traffic of the greatest port in the world, but also with the intricacy of the details of the greatest food-importing agency of all time; roughly, half our total food supplies are imported, and the major portion of these imports pass through the London Docks. Sir Joseph Maclay, Shipping Controller, started business as a clerk, and is now one of the largest private shipowners in the country; he has that "sense of the sea" which is the despair of the landmen

and the most notable human result of our insular situation. Sir Alfred Mond, First Commissioner of Works, is another excellent appointment; and Dr. Addison, to whom belongs the chief credit for the successful establishment of the Ministry of Munitions, rightly carries on the work of Minister of that department. Even in the case of what have been called the "strictly political appointments," the same principle has been at work; Mr. Hodge, the Minister of Labour, and Mr. Barnes, the Pensions Minister, bring to their labours the *flair* which comes from a lifelong association with the material, *i.e.* the working-man, with which they have to deal. In such fashion the Prime Minister has chosen his colleagues, and with the small War Council and his own abundant energy he promises that relentless, thorough, and efficient concentration on the winning of the war for which we, as a people, have been pining for many months. In the long run, democratic government is by consent of the governed, and the new rulers of Britain will embark upon their mighty effort with the willing consent of the people of this country and of the Empire.

#### METEOROLOGY FOR GENERAL READERS.

*The Weather-Map: an Introduction to Modern Meteorology.* By Sir Napier Shaw. Pp. 94. (London: Meteorological Office, Exhibition Road, S.W., 1916.) Price 4d.

NEVER has the demand for natural knowledge of all kinds been so insistent as during the present war, and scientific information of the most various kinds has been placed at the disposal of many who have had no previous training in such subjects. They and the students of science have usually no common language, and the ideas which even the simpler technical terms connote are unfamiliar to them. In these circumstances it is no easy matter to place the resources of science effectively at the disposal of all who may wish to utilise them.

Meteorological science has contributed its share, not only in the form of weather forecasts and climatic information, but also in placing its knowledge of the upper air at the service of aviation, gunnery, etc., to aid in the solution of the new problems which are continually being formulated. Here, too, some acquaintance with the general ideas of modern meteorology is necessary if the full meaning of a forecast or the climatological description of a region is to be understood and adequately appreciated. Everyone is interested in the weather, which is indeed a consideration in nearly all human operations and affects our ordinary avocations of peace as well as the operations of war; and though in both these cases it may be necessary at times to disregard the favourable or unfavourable