



SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1927.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Expert in the Civil Service	285
The Ascent of Man	287
Language and Culture	288
The Nitrogen Industry	290
An Atlas of Rainfall. By Lieut.-Colonel E. Gold, F.R.S.	291
Alpine Studies and Pictures. By Sir F. G. Ogilvie	292
Our Bookshelf	293
Letters to the Editor:	
The 'Forbidden' Line of Mercury at $\lambda 2270$ in Absorption.—The Right Hon. Lord Rayleigh, F.R.S.	295
Prof. Labbé's Copepod 'Allomorphs'.—Robert Gurney	295
Ectoplasmic Matter.—A. A. Campbell Swinton, F.R.S.; W. W. L.	296
Occurrence of Extensor Rigidity in Quadrupeds as a Result of Cortical Injury.—Dr. N. B. Laughton	297
Etiology of European Foul-brood of Bees.—Denis R. A. Wharton	297
Mediterranean Oligochaets.—Rev. Hilderic Friend	298
The Tetrad Difference Criterion.—John Mackie	298
The Spectrum of Gold Chloride.—W. F. C. Ferguson	298
'Oerthing' Balances.—Malcolm Dunbar	298
Petrified Forests.—Dr. F. A. Bather, F.R.S.	298
Canadian Hydro-Electric Power Development.—I. By Dr. Brysson Cunningham	299
Some Colouring Agents in Glasses and Glazes. By Sir Herbert Jackson, K.B.E., F.R.S.	301
Hæmolysis	304
The Leeds Meeting of the British Association	305
Obituary:	
Sir Bryan Donkin. By Macleod Yearsley	306
News and Views	307
Our Astronomical Column	311
Research Items	312
Pelagic Nemertean. By W. C. M.	315
Tribute to Prof. H. F. Osborn	315
The Conservation of Forests	316
University and Educational Intelligence	317
Calendar of Discovery and Invention	318
Societies and Academies	318
Official Publications Received	319
Diary of Societies and Congresses	320
Recent Scientific and Technical Books	Supp. v

Editorial and Publishing Offices:

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.,
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

Editorial communications should be addressed to the Editor.
Advertisements and business letters to the Publishers.

Telephone Number: GERRARD 8830.
Telegraphic Address: PHUSIS, WESTRAND, LONDON.

No. 3017, VOL. 120]

The Expert in the Civil Service.

CERTAIN important considerations in connexion with the position of the expert in the Civil Service are raised by the retirement of Sir Frank Baines from the position of Director of Works to His Majesty's Office of Works. Some months ago Sir Frank Baines was approached by a former First Commissioner of Works, Sir Alfred Mond, to undertake the construction of a headquarters on a site in Westminster for the Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd. Sir Frank Baines applied formally for permission to add to his responsibilities in this way, and, following precedent, this permission was granted. Later, certain members of parliament discovered that the new building involved an outlay approaching one million pounds, and asked if an architect carrying out such a contract could devote his proper attention to his duties as a civil servant. The official reply to the first question, put on May 26, was to the effect that the Government had no right to interfere with the spare time activities of a civil servant, and that this particular contract would not militate against the efficient performance of Sir Frank Baines' official duties. Within a month the Government came to the conclusion that its Director of Works should either cancel his contract with Imperial Chemical Industries or retire from the Civil Service, although, as it was stated by the Government spokesman, Capt. Hacking, there was no suggestion that the work in connexion with the undertaking had so far interfered with the director's official duties.

Now it has been stated on several occasions within recent years that the professional, technical, and scientific staffs in the permanent employment of the State should have their pay and other conditions of service related to those of their professional brethren in outside practice. It was on those grounds that the Anderson Committee reported to Parliament in 1923 that no modifications in the pay or other conditions of service of professional civil servants need be made. Obviously, however, if the case of Sir Frank Baines is to be taken as a criterion, the conditions of service are not the same inside the Civil Service as in outside practice. An outside architect would feel at liberty to increase his practice to any extent, and would be the last person to suggest that he was not capable of undertaking any and every commission offered to him. London is full of monuments eloquent of the efficiency and energy of Sir Christopher Wren. Had the conditions of

our time made it possible for Imperial Chemical Industries to invite the Office of Works to undertake the contract for their new building, it is safe to say that no question would have been raised as to the capacity of the Director of Works to do the work without interfering with his other duties.

Without doubt the knowledge gained from long experience in a technical department of State, places the State servant in a position of advantage as compared with the private practitioner. Presumably, it is this knowledge which Sir Alfred Mond wished to put at the disposal of his company, just as the directors of the Bank of England have sought the services of Sir Otto Niemeyer, and the fortunes of Nobel Industries, Ltd. and later of a railway board have in turn been brought under the direction of Sir Josiah Stamp. But a nearer parallel to the case of Sir Frank Baines is to be found in the universities. At one time university professors were rarely consulted by industry or by the Government. Nowadays, largely as the result of the unique services rendered by university staffs to the country during the War, university men of science are being actively encouraged to undertake consulting and research work, for private firms and for the Government. Again, in the Report of the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research for the year 1925-1926, special reference is made to the growing volume of work undertaken by Government scientific departments, particularly the National Physical Laboratory, on behalf of industry, and no suggestion is made that the quality of the work of the research staffs suffers in consequence of its increased responsibilities in this direction. Moreover, in the Report of the same committee for the year 1924-1925, reference is made to the increasing volume of consultative work for industrialists undertaken by the State-aided industrial research associations, work which would ordinarily have been done by private consultants.

Not only does the State encourage members of university staffs to undertake additional responsibilities, not only does it compete with the private consultant in industry, but it also appoints State servants to the boards of the State-subsidised industrial research associations in order that knowledge acquired in State departments should be made known and become available to our various industries. Within the past two or three years it has lent scientific workers to some of the great shipping companies to investigate the problems in connexion with the safe transport and

storage of foodstuffs, and wholly maintains State research institutions for the primary object of assisting vital industries.

On account of an organised agitation, however, against the unique knowledge possessed by one of its principal technical experts being made available to an industrial combine, a new attitude seems to be presented to such relationships. The real objection to Sir Frank Baines undertaking a building contract for the Imperial Chemical Industries is based upon the fact that he personally was to profit by the transaction—particularly as the profit was assumed to be large. Neither of the obvious ways of dealing with the situation appear to have been considered. The Government could have suggested that the contract should be undertaken officially by its servant on behalf of the Office of Works, and incidentally made it known at the same time that the Government was prepared to tender in the open market for any similar undertaking. Alternatively, it might have given its technical expert sufficient leave of absence to enable him to complete the contract into which he had entered with the full authority of his department. Furthermore, it might carefully have considered the desirability of putting the direction of one of its most important technical departments under a man who enjoys the confidence of one at least of the foremost industrial leaders of the time, instead of abolishing his post. Under the present system, however, technical experts in Government service are usually subject to administrative officers lacking technical qualifications and experience.

Parliament has been promised that the conditions of service of members of the professional staffs of the Office of Works shall be reviewed. Presumably a Treasury Committee will undertake this task, and an attempt be made to tighten up the existing regulations regarding the nature of any work with which professional civil servants may occupy their private time. H.M. Treasury is, of course, in a position to impose what regulations it likes, but it may be suggested that in doing so great care should be taken to avoid any semblance of unfair discrimination against a particular section of the Civil Service. What is really needed is the appointment of a Royal Commission to examine and report on the present position of the professional worker in the State service, and to determine what modifications of the Civil Service system, if any, are desirable to meet the changed conditions resulting from the growing impact of the State on industry as a whole.