

News and Views

The Medical Profession and Chemical Warfare

WE are glad that the British Medical Association, during the session held at Oxford on July 17-25, gave consideration, at the annual representative assembly on July 17, to the subject of chemical warfare. The Council of the Association reported that the question of the protection of the community against the effects of poison gas is being examined in connexion with the Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office before any definite proposals are made. After discussion of a resolution submitted by the North Glamorgan and Brecon Division of the Association, the following amendment was adopted: "That this meeting condemns unreservedly the use of poison gas in warfare as inhuman in its results and degrading to civilization, and relies upon the council to do everything in its power with a view to securing the co-operation of the medical profession in all countries in order to prohibit the use of poison gas." In the course of the discussion, an appeal was made to men of science generally, as well as to members of the medical profession, to protest collectively against the destruction of civilian populations through the use of poison gas, and to try to secure international co-operation with this end in view. Even though politicians may consider it impracticable to do anything to prohibit the destruction of human life by indiscriminate chemical warfare, yet scientific workers should let the community know that they dissociate themselves from the use of such methods. We hope therefore, that at the forthcoming meeting of the British Association at Blackpool the lead given by the British Medical Association will be followed; so that science may not be understood by silence as acquiescing in the application of its discoveries to the degradation of civilized life.

Native Territories and the Union of South Africa

QUESTIONS in the House of Commons on July 16 indicated that no little consternation had been aroused in certain quarters by Mr. Pirow's statements on his return to South Africa as to the trend of opinion in Great Britain on the question of the future of African mandated territories. To some extent, this was allayed by the Prime Minister's assurance that Mr. Pirow's opinions are personal and that in any event, the question falling outside the scope of his mission, his view has no basis in official discussion. The House further elicited from the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies an explanation of a somewhat cryptic statement by General Hertzog in the Union Parliament in making provision for an expenditure of £35,000 for "development and improvement in native territories", which has been taken, not unjustifiably, as pointing to the transfer of the native territories of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland to the Union Government at no distant date, although the precedent condition of native consent, to which the British Government is

pledged, is not yet fulfilled. Mr. MacDonald's reply clarified the situation. General Hertzog, it would appear, was defending an offer of the Union Government to contribute towards certain development schemes as a step towards the co-operation with the native authorities which has been agreed upon as a desirable policy. On July 15, Mr. MacDonald stated in a written reply that the offer of the Union Government is directed to three objects: (1) anti-soil erosion work in Basutoland, (2) provision of water supplies in Bechuanaland, and (3) conservation of water in Swaziland. Notwithstanding assurances that acceptance of the offer would not impair the pledges of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the uneasiness of the native authorities in the Protectorates is such that this offer is now in abeyance; but Mr. MacDonald stated that the question of assistance out of United Kingdom funds is under consideration by the Colonial Funds Development Committee.

World Fellowship

A GENERAL meeting at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on July 18, concluded the proceedings of the World Congress of Faiths, which had been in session in London since July 3. On a broad view of the numerous contributions to discussion of world fellowship made by the delegates from the various faiths, it is evident that there is in each a body of opinion which is prepared to build upon the foundation of a common ethical element in an effort to co-operate in the solution of problems of a wider general application in present-day conditions. A spirit of good will and general agreement was perhaps more marked than any movement towards specific application at the moment; but it is, in any event, a distinct gain that an opportunity has been afforded a mixed assemblage to appreciate at first hand the distinctive outlook on, and approach to, the problems of the organization of life under different creeds and in various environments. Neither pious enthusiasm, however, nor even profound conviction, such as usually finds expression on these occasions, necessarily leads to tangible results; and to keep alive and give effect to the spirit of which the Congress has been a manifestation demands some channel through which it may be directed in order to avoid waste of energy. This aspect, happily, has not been overlooked in the present instance; and, at the last general meeting, the delegates decided to institute machinery to continue the work of spreading world fellowship through religion. It was agreed that all who presented papers, acted as chairmen, or led discussion, should form a council, and that a continuation committee should be appointed. The members then elected included Sir Francis Younghusband, Sir Herbert Samuel, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Mr. H. N. Spalding and Sir Abdul Qadir, with Mr. A. Jackman as secretary.