

NEWS AND VIEWS

Ministry of Information

QUESTION time in the House of Commons during the past few days has produced a crop of inquiries about the Ministry of Information. As is well known, the staff of the Ministry has suffered drastic reduction as the result of the criticism levelled against it. On October 18, Sir John Graham Kerr asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Information, "in view of the important part played in modern warfare by science and in view of the importance of accuracy in public information regarding such matters, how many of the 190 members of the staff of the Ministry, of which particulars have recently made public, are university graduates in science?" Sir Edward Grigg said in reply that the "information is not available and could only be obtained at an expense of time of which I should not feel justified in giving to the inquiry". He added that "scientific advice can be obtained whenever necessary from a large range of experts in Government service and outside it, and that it is therefore unnecessary to add on that account to the establishment costs of the Ministry". While it will not be denied that such advice is available, it is difficult to see how the Ministry, without scientific guidance from within, can hope to utilize to the full the scientific knowledge of the country.

Camouflage (Advisory Committee)

ON August 2 last, an advisory committee on camouflage by the use of paint, was appointed by the Government, which agreed that it should include a scientific member. Sir John Graham Kerr asked the Home Secretary on October 19 how many meetings this committee had held since its formation. Sir John Anderson, in reply, stated that the first meeting of the committee was held on October 18. In reply to a supplementary question, Sir John Anderson said that "the committee has been so constituted as to bring to bear on this important question of camouflage the opinions of many people who hold differing views on the theoretical and practical aspects of the question. The reference to the committee is very wide, and I have no doubt that the committee will be in a position to address itself to the question". No explanation was offered of the lengthy delay between the setting up of this committee and its first meeting.

Advisory Research Council of the Chemical Society

THE Council of the Chemical Society has formed an Advisory Research Council, under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Robinson, the main function of which will be, when approached, to bring to the notice of fellows and others engaged in chemical research, subjects for investigation likely to be of potential value to the nation at the present time. In the first instance such advice will be made avail-

able to unremunerated research workers (that is, unremunerated as research workers for some specific purpose) in universities, colleges and other research institutions, and to research students in receipt of grants not definitely related to any particular topic or in regard to which the topic can be changed. It is hoped to effect liaison with Government departments and industrial organizations so that the Advisory Research Council may be cognizant of pressing problems needing investigation and thus be able to suggest lines of research of national value. It will not be a function of the Council to exercise control over any research that may be undertaken. The field to be covered will embrace every branch of pure chemistry and include biochemistry and metallurgy. Chemists and various organizations (industrial and otherwise) will be invited to send in suggestions for research, and a list of topics for research considered of national importance will be drawn up and will normally be available to those wishing to make use of it for the purpose of initiating an investigation. Inquiries and suggestions may be sent to the General Secretary, Chemical Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

New Anthropological Periodical in India

INDIA is so poorly supplied with anthropological literature that the appearance of a new periodical to be devoted entirely to the scientific study of anthropology must be regarded as something of an event. The work of the Indian Anthropological Institute, to which reference is made elsewhere in this issue of NATURE (see p. 721), has been hampered seriously ever since its inception in 1936 through lack of an official organ for recording the deliberations and discussions of its members. Financial conditions proved an insuperable obstacle until the University of Calcutta, thanks to the good offices of the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, generously came to its assistance with an offer to assume responsibility for printing the *Journal* of the Institute free of charge. The first issue, which has appeared recently, includes communications received from members up to the close of 1938, among them the presidential address by Dr. J. H. Hutton, the first president, in which he puts forward the suggestion that the Institute should formulate a five years' plan of research, to be entrusted to sub-committees, and Colonel Gordon offers some pregnant, as well as pungently critical, comments on the methods and organization of archaeological studies in India. Reference to both these communications will be found on another page. A cognate question is raised by Colonel Germano da Silva Correia, who after a critical examination of the various theories of the racial origins of the peoples of India, put forward by anthropologists from the days of H. H. Risley onward, suggests that the methods of inquiry hitherto