

Sir John Reith, Minister of Information

SIR JOHN REITH, chairman of Imperial Airways, Ltd., has been appointed Minister of Information in succession to Lord Macmillan; the way is thus open to bring into the House of Commons the minister in charge of a department the working of which has been severely criticized ever since it began to function on the outbreak of war. Sir John is perhaps better known as the director-general during 1927-38 of the British Broadcasting Corporation, having been managing director of the British Broadcasting Company which preceded it. Hence he was largely responsible for the guidance and development of the broadcasting service of Great Britain in its early and critical days, when its functions were ill-defined and its merits as a vehicle of entertainment, of news and of education for the masses were much debated.

Before he became associated with broadcasting, Sir John was for a short period general manager of the well-known engineering firm, Wm. Beardmore and Co., Ltd. This followed Government posts in charge of munition contracts after and during the War of 1914-18, in which he served with the Royal Engineers. Sir John is an engineer by profession, having passed through the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, and served a five-years engineering apprenticeship in Glasgow. He is a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. While his professional knowledge was no doubt of service during his eleven years with the B.B.C., it was his forceful character and administrative ability which were outstanding; these, with his experience of public affairs and the Press, will be invaluable assets in the chief of a young department which is capable of making invaluable contributions to the influence and prestige of Great Britain and to the morale of the people at home.

The British Association

THE General Committee and the Council of the British Association held a joint meeting last week, at which Sir Albert Seward, the retiring president, handed over the chair of the Association to his successor, Sir Richard Gregory. It was reported that, by agreement between the authorities at Newcastle and the general officers of the Association, arrangements for the meeting of the Association which had been appointed to take place in that city next September were in abeyance, and that a meeting there was not contemplated, save in the event of an early peace.

The Committee of the Association therefore proceeded to a discussion of the desirability and possibilities of a meeting being held, in some modified form, and in some other place. As to desirability, there was general agreement; as to possibilities and places, various suggestions were put forward, and in the upshot the general officers were instructed to make the best arrangements they can for some sort of an abbreviated meeting. Whether as part of such a meeting, or independently, the potential activities of the Division for the Social and International Relations of Science will be taken into consideration. No action has been taken to appoint

new sectional officers for the year; but the general officers were instructed to consult those who held such offices last year, and any others whose advice and help would be appropriate.

Scientific Workers and the Armed Forces

THE Ministry of Labour and National Service announces that the operation of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations is being relaxed to enable men at or above the age of reservation in scientific occupations to volunteer in approved cases for service in the Forces. Such men have previously been able to join the Forces in their professional capacity, and the present relaxation of the schedule is designed to enable those whose services are not required in a professional capacity in the Forces or as civilians to volunteer for other forms of service. To secure that scientific workers shall not be withdrawn from civil work to the detriment of the national interest, and that an adequate reserve of scientific workers is maintained for essential services, the Scientific Research Committee of the Central Register Advisory Council will consider applications from volunteers with the view of ensuring that relaxation is granted only in suitable cases. Any reserved scientific worker who wishes to volunteer should apply to the Ministry of Labour and National Service (National Service Department), Montagu House, Whitehall, S.W.1.

Scientific Workers and the War

A SYMPOSIUM, organized by the Faculty of Science of Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1, was held during the week-end of December 30-31, the title of the meeting being "The Position of Science and Scientists in the War Situation". No adequate assessment of the effect of the war is possible without some knowledge of the economic background, and this was afforded by Maurice Dobb in a paper entitled "The Economics of War Capitalism". It was with this background that the meeting held a discussion on the effects of the war on university research and education, opened by Prof. H. Levy. It was argued that the cost of the social services would be cut, and in this respect, the maintenance of the universities on the present scale would be regarded as an unnecessary luxury, with adverse effects on staff, students, and standards of education. Mr. Roscoe Clarke, in discussing the scientific social services, showed that the incidence of the same problems has been felt in the medical services. The emergency medical schemes have cut right across the normal medical services, already dislocated by the evacuation of schoolchildren. Prof. J. D. Bernal, in the concluding paper, dealt with the status of the man of science. The historical role of science in the development of capitalism was analysed, and the effect of the functions of the scientific worker on his status discussed; at the present time, the existing system cannot use to the full the science it has itself brought into being.

The general tone of the discussion as a whole was that scientific workers are more and more