

Welfare of Aliens

AN Advisory Council of Aliens has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This Council, which is under the chairmanship of Lord Lytton, and will work in close association with the Foreign Office and other departments concerned, will advise the Home Office on the general welfare of interned aliens, make recommendations on finding employment for internees, and suggest measures for maintaining their morale and binding them more closely to the cause for which Great Britain is fighting.

A Home Office White Paper (Cmd. 6217. London: H.M. Stationery Office. 1d.) has been issued showing the conditions under which German and Austrian refugees at present interned may be released. The regulations now issued apply only to "C Class" internees, but it is stated that they are not to be regarded as final. Among those who may now apply for release are those who occupied key positions in industries engaged in work of national importance, skilled workers in agriculture, commercial food-growing and forestry, and scientific and other research workers and persons generally with academic qualifications for whom national work in their own fields is available. With regard to the latter groups, special committees are being set up by the vice-chancellors of the universities, the Royal Society and the British Academy to consider applications and to submit recommendations to the Home Secretary. These new regulations seem to provide the necessary safeguards of national security required in any relaxation of the order for general internment of aliens, and should meet with general approval.

An International Labour Force

SPEAKING in the House of Commons on August 1, Mr. Bevin, Minister of Labour, announced that he has set up an International Labour Branch as part of the employment department of his Ministry. The purpose of this branch is to organize the man-power of allied nations and of other well-disposed persons of foreign nationality in Great Britain. It is hoped to obtain full knowledge of those available for employment and to seek suitable openings for them in industrial and other work. Co-operation is to be maintained with the Allied Governments and other national authorities in Great Britain, and Mr. Bevin also hopes to have the advice of representatives of trade unions of foreign countries. He was very emphatic that the new branch would have nothing to do with internees; release of aliens and their supervision generally is a matter for the Home Office. Once an individual has been passed by the Security Department, then he becomes available for consideration by the Ministry of Labour. At this stage, Mr. Bevin said he proposed to dispense with the terms 'aliens' and 'refugee', and to refer to such individuals as an 'International Labour Force'. This development, coming at the same time as the announcement of limited release of German and Austrian refugees, shows that the problem of dealing with the unfortunate people who have been driven from their homes by Nazi and Fascist persecution is being given

careful consideration. They have come to Great Britain for freedom, and while they will recognize that the special needs of the times make restrictions of various kinds necessary, they will appreciate the opportunity which is now to be given them of taking an active part in the struggle against totalitarian domination.

Sales Tax on Books and Periodicals

THE case for withholding the imposition of the proposed purchase tax from printed books and periodicals was put before a private meeting of Members of Parliament held on August 6. As a result of the meeting, Mr. Kenneth Lindsay obtained support for an amendment which he is to submit proposing to omit printed books, music, pamphlets and leaflets from the schedule of taxable articles, and P. J. Loftus put forward another amendment which would exempt weekly, monthly and quarterly technical, scientific and trade journals retailed at not less than 6d. An amendment to exempt newspapers and periodicals is to be moved by Mr. Mander. NATURE has already discussed the probable effects of the imposition of a sales tax on books and other publications (May 11, p. 719, and August 3, p. 160). On general as well as scientific grounds, the imposition of a tax on books is a bad thing, which even at the present time cannot be justified on grounds of financial expediency.

African Studies and the War

LORD LUGARD, as chairman of the Executive Council of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, announces in the current issue of *Africa* (13, 3; July 1940) that the work of the Bureau and the publication of its periodical *Africa* must now cease for the duration of the War. In October last it was stated that it was hoped to carry on the Institute's work without serious interruption. Recent developments, however, have made international co-operation impossible, and it has been deemed advisable in the circumstances to cease work until after the War. Certain of the special publications of the Institute, which have proved so valuable to students of African peoples, are in an advanced stage of preparation and will be published as soon as possible—a book on African political systems, recently published by the Institute, is discussed on p. 188 of this issue of NATURE. Further, several research fellows are engaged in writing up their field-notes. Dr. Nadel's notes on the Nupe of Northern Nigeria, and those of Mr. and Mrs. Krige on the Lovedu of the Northern Transvaal have been completed; but Dr. Margaret Read is still engaged on the results of her research in Nyasaland, and more especially on the part she took in the recent nutrition survey of that territory.

While those who have followed the work of the Institute, more especially since the receipt of the generous grant for field-work from the Rockefeller Trustees, will deeply regret this interruption, temporary though it may be, in its activities, they must, of course, accept the facts of the situation and realize that the international co-operation which has given

its deliberations breadth and understanding is now an impossibility. At the same time, it would seem desirable that the intermission of activity should not be complete. It is generally conceded that the time for planning for peace is now, and not at the close of hostilities. This applies no less to Africa than to Europe. A planning that begins with the peace will be too late to cope with the changes in African societies, which if the aftermath of the War of 1914-18 is a criterion, will ensue all too rapidly.

Storage of Electric Power in the Ruhr

THERE has been a rapid increase in recent years in the use of electricity in steel manufacture in Germany. This 'electric steel' has a very uniform structure, but, if the cost is to be comparable with that produced by other means, the factor of safety has to be reduced. With so many high-frequency furnaces going intermittently, the power supply systems must be subjected to considerable peak demands. This is especially the case in the Ruhr, where, although there is a plentiful supply of coal, considerable reliance is placed upon the water-generated supplies from Austria to meet the heavy peak demands. The largest and one of the most interesting of the storage stations is situated at Herdecke on the banks of the Rhine about six miles south of Dortmund and nearly twenty miles east of Essen. It is connected with the control point at Brauweiler, which is on the Rhine between Cologne and Dusseldorf. By accumulating water in an elevated reservoir by means of pumps and the erection of the Herdecke power storage station and others in the district, the peak-load problem has been solved satisfactorily. Interesting details of this station are given in the *Electrician* of July 26.

The upper reservoir of the Herdecke plant, covering an area of 18 acres, is designed to permit the full development of the available power. The maximum variation in water-level from empty to full is 65 ft. The maximum pressure head between the lower reservoir, Lake Hengstey, and a full upper reservoir is 540 ft., and the minimum head available is thus 475 ft. The power house is 500 ft. in length and each machine has an axial length of 85 ft. The station can be automatically switched from pumping to turbine operation in two minutes, and during pumping the turbine discharges are closed by means of flaps. The upper reservoir is oval in shape and is about 800 ft. above sea-level; this necessitated the excavation of 1,300,000 cubic yards of rock. The entire concrete surfaces coming into contact with water have been rendered impervious by means of a bitumen spray treatment. The work was commenced at the beginning of September 1927, and the station was brought into partial operation in December 1929, full operation following about a year later. The characteristic feature of this type of station is that at times of low power consumption the waste current of the water stations, or the increased night output of the steam stations, is employed to pump water back into the storage reservoir.

This Season's English Herbs

MORE than usual interest will be shown this season in the English harvests of vegetable drugs, and it is now possible to judge from reports by herb farmers on the prospects of their crops what the harvests are likely to be, provided weather conditions for collection are favourable. Fair supplies are promised of those old-fashioned medicines such as hyssop, rue, wormwood, comfrey, balm and dill, but the same cannot be said of chamomile, the prospects of which are disappointing, an outlook that is all the more unfortunate since it is impossible to obtain supplies from Belgium. Indeed, it would seem that those who have pinned their faith, in the past, to chamomile tea will have to try one of the more modern remedies which are not so scarce. What is still more unfortunate is that on some herb farms the severe frost last winter destroyed the main belladonna plantations so that very little leaf—which is so badly wanted because of the absence of imports of the Continental plant—could be collected this season. It is satisfactory to know that the young belladonna plants of this year's sowing are looking well.

Growers of henbane report that there was a good crop of second-year biennial plants, and leaf and flower of good alkaloidal content have been harvested; after a time of drought, rain came to save the first-year seedlings, which will provide leaves for autumn drying. Prospects of a crop of high-testing digitalis leaf are favourable. Aconite is said to be looking well and there is a full crop of valerian. Having regard to the stoppage of supplies of lavender oil distilled in the Grasse district of the Alpes Maritimes, it is well to learn that English lavender plants stood up well to the hard winter and the flowers have bloomed earlier and, in some cases, better than usual; a fair yield of English lavender oil may be expected for this season; more of the flowers will go to the still and less to Covent Garden in bunches for street vendors, and thus at least part of the shortage due to the lack of French oil will be made good.

Notation for Tapping Systems of the Rubber Tree

THE scientific groups dealing with rubber production in Ceylon, Malaya and Netherlands East Indies have recently adopted a common notation for expressing the varied tapping systems by which the crop from Hevea is obtained. Attention was directed by Evan Guest, of the Rubber Research Institute of Malaya, to the confusion and ambiguity which existed because different centres had developed their own nomenclature without plan, and his suggested scheme, modified by the co-operation of others, has now been accepted (*J. Rubber Research Inst. Malaya*, 9, 142-170; 1939: 10, 16-33; 1940). This will mark a great advance in co-ordination of scientific records of yields from Hevea, for the fundamental factor, namely, intensity of tapping, is simply and accurately brought into the required prominence.

First the type of cut is identified by an initial letter, followed by the figure expressing the fraction of the tree circumference which is covered. Then the