

NEWS AND VIEWS

Element 85

It is announced that Dr. W. Minder, of the University of Berne, has succeeded in isolating element 85. This, it is claimed, has been produced in small quantities from the decomposition of actinium, which is radioactive. Dr. Minder has named the new element 'helvetium' in honour of his country. It is hoped that further details of this claim will be available shortly. Commenting on this announcement in the *Evening News* (London) of August 13 is of such encouraging significance as to be worth placing on record. This newspaper says: "It is odd to learn to-day, in the midst of war, that a patient Swiss scientist has succeeded at last in isolating the elusive chemical element '85'. It is still odder to reflect that in the long view of history a discovery of that sort may rank above all the perils and victories of these days."

The Purchase Tax and Literature

It was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons on August 13 that newspapers, books and periodicals are to be exempt from the proposed purchase tax. He stated that he feels it would not be in the public interest at this time of war that there should be any decrease in the circulation of newspapers or any diminution of the services they provide for the public. This announcement will undoubtedly give satisfaction to all scientific workers. There is no doubt, however, as pointed out in the leading article entitled "Books in Wartime" in *NATURE* of May 11, p. 719, that this welcome decision is of much greater significance than would seem superficially. Sir Kingsley Wood added that books are to be exempt from the tax "at least for the present". It is to be hoped that, for the important reasons set out in the above-mentioned article, the future will not bring any significant change in this new policy.

The New World Order

In his Cawthron lecture, 1939, "Some Problems of the New World Order" (Nelson, New Zealand: Cawthron Institute, 1939), Dr. G. H. Scholefield, pointing out that the raw material of political science is man in his organization for life, the family, the community and the nation, where the reactions of mankind are not so well known and precise as in biology or chemistry, gives a brief review of the sources of our liberty, the post-War revolutions and the rise of the dictatorships. Tracing the growth of German aggression, he emphasizes that with the destruction of dictatorship, the problem of settling Germany in a peaceful and prosperous state will remain and will involve some sacrifice. The great danger in such a war as this is that it may end before our leaders have fully studied how best to make peace and how to arrange inter-

national relations in future. This will involve attention to economic matters and the solution of problems of social organization.

Science and invention should alleviate man's labour, enable him to maintain himself by working shorter hours and to devote a greater proportion of his time to rest, to pleasure and to cultivating the arts. Failure of the social sciences to keep pace with the applied sciences has led to the position that the human race can produce all that is required for its material well-being with quite a light amount of personal labour while we have not devised means for all potential consumers to obtain possession legally of what they require. Neither Germany nor the democracies have solved the problem of absorbing unemployment and bringing mechanization under social control. Finally, Dr. Scholefield briefly touches on the possibilities of an international federation of States.

India's Future and the Constitution

ONCE again the British Government, notwithstanding the preoccupations of war, has turned aside to direct its attention to furthering the interests and promoting the welfare of a people for whom it accepts imperial responsibility. The statement of policy made by Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, on August 9 and by Mr. L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, on the same day in the House of Commons was framed with the object of enabling the people of India to fulfil their anxious desire to contribute fully to the common cause in the present world struggle, and to ensure the triumph of our common ideals. In brief, the British Government proposes in the interests of Indian national unity, and notwithstanding the differences between parties which previous discussion has shown to be still unbridged, that the Viceroy's Council should now be expanded to include representatives of the political parties, and further that a consultative committee should be established which, as a war advisory council, will meet at regular intervals and will include representatives of the Indian States and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole. The statement of policy goes on to say that while it is clear that the present moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved, yet the British Government is prepared to undertake to set up at the close of the war a body representative of the principal elements of India's national life in order to devise the framework of a new constitution.

The state of tension between the various elements of the political situation in India at the present time is too well known to need stress. It has led to a deadlock, and lays it open to doubt whether the democratic idea has obtained a more than superficial acceptance in the minds of powerful sections of the