

NEWS AND VIEWS

Educational Facilities for the Armed Forces

IN a leading article in NATURE of April 6, p. 526, attention was directed to the importance of providing adequate educational facilities for men and women in the armed forces. Evidence was available to show that, in the then period of comparative calm, there had been a regular and insistent demand for educational services from members of the Army and Air Force, and, in a different degree, the Navy. Suggestions are made to indicate how these demands might be reasonably met. An important announcement was that the Board of Education had agreed to nominate a senior officer to a liaison post between its own department and corresponding establishments in the Services. Since that time the development of the War has caused a temporary, although only partial, postponement of this and other schemes for expanding educational programmes for the fighting forces. The recent statement announcing the appointment of Mr. F. W. D. Bendall of the Board of Education to act as adviser in educational matters to Service men and women must therefore be greeted with considerable enthusiasm. It is to be hoped that with any lull in the air battles over Great Britain during the coming winter, opportunity for making use of the existing schemes that have been carefully prepared, and any others that might arise, should be freely utilized.

It is encouraging to record that, despite the bewildering changes of the last few months, steady progress has been made in catering for those periods when members of the forces are not taking part in more rigorous military duties. Single lectures on topics of current interest have been given to appreciative audiences in many areas, while instructional courses in various subjects have been highly acclaimed. Among these, particular reference must be made to certain classes in arts and crafts of varying types that have been successful with soldiers, sailors and airmen who were convalescing after injury. For these results, much credit is due to the Central Advisory Council for Adult Education in H.M. Forces. In the Army it is heartening to learn that the Army Educational Corps, which has been largely instrumental in arranging the details of the programmes which are already in operation, has been actively seizing every opportunity for increasing the range of its work. The value of the Army Educational Corps and the corresponding organization in the Royal Air Force, when viewed in the light of Mr. Bendall's appointment, seems to have been given well-earned, if belated, recognition. An increase in the establishment and range of these organizations seems to be the next logical step. An announcement to this effect could not be greeted with anything but acclamation by educationists.

Racial Freedom and the Colour Bar

THE open letter dealing with racial freedom and the abolition of the colour bar, which bears the signatures of the leaders of the organized religious

bodies of Great Britain, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and issued with the support of Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, carries to its logical conclusion the full implication of the repudiation by members of the Christian faith of the doctrine of racial dominance held by Nazi Germany, with its train of misery and injustice (*The Times*, Sept. 12). It takes the British Government's "Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare" as the most authoritative of numerous recent reassertions of the British tradition, and points out not only that it proves the serious purpose of His Majesty's Government, but also that the full value of that generous gesture of a promised expenditure of £55,000,000 on improving health, education and economic conditions among colonial peoples can be realized only "if the worth of the individual members of the Empire comes to be measured by personal character and ability rather than by the colour of their skins or the accidental circumstances of birth". It is well that it should be impressed upon the British people how largely the British Empire is a coloured Empire—a fact, as we are here reminded, upon which the general public is insufficiently informed—and that the unity necessary to its survival can be secured only if the principle of equality as between people of different race and colour "is applied in methods of government and in human relationships alike in Europe and in Asia or Africa". The letter concludes by calling upon all who value the principles upon which the British Empire has been built up to join in an effort to secure the removal of certain disabilities, in the forefront of which stands as fundamental "the barriers of race and colour which exist to-day in British colonies", while at the same time it enjoins the creation of an informed public opinion in Great Britain which will no longer acquiesce passively in applications of the colour bar, now to be observed in certain circumstances.

The Archbishop of Canterbury and his co-signatories affirm the identity of the tradition to which expression is given in their declaration with the Christian tradition, of which, they say, the prejudice which erects a colour bar or prompts racial exclusiveness is a denial. This tradition, however, as has been stated again and again with the strongest emphasis, is one with which science is in full accord in both theory and practice in advancing knowledge and promoting the well-being of mankind. In the attainment of its aim of enlarging the spirit of man through the increase of knowledge of the universe, it recognizes no distinction of race or creed in its servants, no bar among those to whom its benefits are laid open. At the same time, however, while science maintains the validity of its faith in its own field, it recognizes that in practical everyday affairs a like disregard of such racial and other differences as those which lie at the root of the colour bar is not to be attained merely by pious aspiration or