

effacing personality, it may be noted that many who knew him intimately were quite unaware of his distinguished military record. His death will be deeply felt by all who were in contact with him in personal, business and scientific relationships.

We regret to announce the following deaths :

Dr. Cecil C. Jones, president and chancellor of the University of New Brunswick, where he was professor of mathematics during 1906-31, on August 19, aged seventy-one.

Mr. G. W. Littlehales, hydrographic engineer to the U.S. Hydrographic Office during 1900-32, on August 12, aged eighty-two.

Mr. F. S. Marvin, formerly a staff inspector of the Board of Education, and author of works on the relation of science to civilization, on November 14, aged eighty.

Sir William Noble, a director of the General Electric Co., Ltd., and formerly engineer-in-chief of the General Post Office, on November 10, aged eighty-two.

## NEWS and VIEWS

### A Minister of Reconstruction in Great Britain

THE appointment of Lord Woolton as Minister of Reconstruction with a seat in the War Cabinet follows naturally on Mr. Churchill's declaration in his Mansion House speech on November 9 that it was "a definite part of the duty and responsibility of this National Government to have its plans perfected in a vast and practical scheme to make sure that in the years immediately following the War there will be food, work, and homes for all. . . . No party doctrines or party prejudices or vested interests shall stand in the way of the simple duty of providing before the end of the War for food, work, and homes. They must be prepared now during the War. These plans must be prepared and they must come into action, just like when war breaks out general mobilization is declared. They must come into action as soon as victory is won. On this far-reaching work His Majesty's Government are now concentrating all the energies that can be spared from the actual struggle with the enemy." It may, of course, be inferred that the removal of Lord Woolton from a post which he has filled with such conspicuous success is an indication that Mr. Churchill does not expect the food problem again to become acute. It is equally an indication of the Prime Minister's assent to the principle that preparation for post-war reconstruction has become an urgent necessity and of the importance which he attaches to the Ministry of Reconstruction.

Sir William Jowitt, who as Minister without Portfolio has hitherto been "charged with the duties of reconstruction", will assist Lord Woolton, and the introduction of new blood at the Ministry of Health, which has so much to do with housing, in the person of Mr. H. U. Willink, may be a further indication of the importance now officially attached to reconstruction. The Government's acceptance, in principle, of Lord Balfour's demand last week for early legislation to permit the prompt acquisition of reconstruction areas "at prices related to pre-war values" gave the impression that this obvious and essential measure will soon be made law. The further admission drawn from Lord Snell that "the Government accepts the principle of national planning without qualification", and the Barlow Commission's planning proposals with qualifications, is also reassuring; while in reply to a question from Mr. John Parker on November 10 the Prime Minister denied that the vesting in the State of the rights of development in all land outside built-up areas (proposed by the Uthwatt Committee) was barred as a possible subject of legislation in the present Parliament because of its controversial character.

The precise scope of Lord Woolton's work has not yet been explained. It may be presumed to be administrative rather than the originating of policy, and that Lord Woolton will be principally engaged in supervising and co-ordinating the Government's plans for food, work and homes. Lord Woolton may not have as wide a scope as Lord Addison in 1917 for his task in focusing all the departmental activities, but in sorting out priorities and in seeing that all the necessary legislation is prepared, including laying out the structure of the new social security scheme and forcing concrete decisions on physical planning and in housing, there is ample scope for Lord Woolton's active mind and administrative resource. Whether or not his responsibilities extend to demobilization and to all the policies that are comprised in full employment, it is a great asset to have in charge of reconstruction a man free from Party ties, and the path to agreement on a common programme should be easier.

### Centenary of Ferdinand R. Hassler, 1770-1843

ON November 20, 1843, the death occurred of the Swiss-American mathematician and geodesist, Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler, who was the first superintendent of the United States Coast Survey, now the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. To-day the Survey is responsible for hydrographic, geodetic, tidal, magnetic and seismological work throughout the whole of the United States dominions from Florida to the Aleutians, but when it was founded the United States only fronted the Atlantic seaboard. The suggestion for the Survey came from the American Philosophical Society, the recommendations of which were adopted by President Jefferson, and it was through the Society that Hassler became connected with it when Congress on February 10, 1807, passed the necessary law. Hassler had only been in America two years then, but he had taken with him a library of more than 3,000 volumes and a good collection of instruments, and it was his interest in science which had led to his contact with the members of the Philosophical Society.

Hassler was born in Aarau, Switzerland, on October 7, 1770, and was the son of a well-to-do watchmaker. At the University of Berne he gained a knowledge of mathematics and surveying and afterwards was engaged on a trigonometrical survey of Switzerland. He married in 1798, and in 1805, owing to the political unrest of the time, joined a party of emigrants who planned to settle in the southern States. On their arrival in Philadelphia the would-be colonists met with various difficulties, but Hassler's scientific attainments stood him in good stead. Hassler's