

ity of London; Sir Ernest Pooley, chairman, Arts Council of Great Britain; Mr. J. B. Priestley; Sir Robert Robinson, president, Royal Society; Mr. B. B. Thomas, secretary of Welsh Department, Ministry of Education; Mr. W. E. F. Ward, Colonial Office, with Mr. F. R. Cowell, assistant secretary, Ministry of Education, as secretary.

Besides this committee, nine national co-operating bodies have already been established to cover the various specialized fields of the activities of the Organisation. Their main functions are to advise the United Kingdom delegates to the conferences of the Organisation and to assist in making known and carrying out projects adopted by it. Six of these are committees covering education, arts, mass communications, libraries, museums, and social sciences. The remaining three are organisations which have undertaken the functions of co-operating bodies; they are the Royal Society, for natural sciences; the British Academy, for letters and philosophy; and the Royal Institute of British Architects, for architecture and planning.

Atomic Survey

THE Atomic Scientists' Association has issued a pamphlet entitled "Atomic Survey", which is a short guide to the scientific and political problems of atomic energy. The authors are Prof. P. B. Moon, secretary of the Association (Physics Dept., The University, Birmingham), and Dr. E. H. S. Burhop, both of whom are well-known nuclear physicists, and have been engaged on the atomic bomb project. In the preface, which is contributed by Prof. R. E. Peierls, it is pointed out that the subject of atomic energy is of great topical interest and importance and that many people, quite rightly, hold strong views on the proper use of this source of power. Strong views should be based on accurate information, and although it requires an expert to understand all the technical details, it is possible to present the essential facts of atomic energy in simple language so that even the non-expert may grasp them. This the pamphlet does admirably. In its thirty-two pages, divided into fourteen brief sections, there is little, if any, information which has not already appeared elsewhere; but this is probably the first time that it has been collected together into a connected and concise form. The section headings—the elements; radioactivity and nuclear reactions; the chain reaction pile; pile problems and prospects; separation of uranium 235 from mixed uranium; the physical effects and defence against the atomic bomb; the constructive application of, and military strategic significance of, atomic energy; the British atomic energy programme; the scientist and atomic energy; the control of atomic energy; and the immediate steps to ease the tension caused by the atomic bomb—are an excellent guide to the matters discussed.

"There is not and is unlikely to be any specific defence against the atomic bomb" makes it abundantly clear, the pamphlet emphasizes, that our first major task is to solve the political problem of ensuring that atomic energy shall not be used for the obliteration of mankind. Then, and only then, can scientific men devote their energy to the intense study of nuclear behaviour; to the extension of our knowledge of a subject, which the authors state with some authority is still incomplete in spite of the spectacular advances of the last decade; and to the development of constructive applications of atomic energy.

Atomic Energy Utilization in Britain

THE Atomic Energy Production headquarters of the Ministry of Supply at Risley, near Warrington, is increasing its team of design and planning engineers, to speed up the development of atomic research in Britain. Already a large technical department at Risley is planning the factories, such as the one being erected at Springfields, Lancashire, which are required for the production of fissile material. This factory, one of the war-time chemical defence plants, is being converted by the Ministry of Supply into an atomic energy centre for the manufacture of uranium metal. The processes to be carried out will consist of the refining of pitchblende concentrates, reduction to metal and the machining and finishing of uranium metal rods for atomic piles. It is hoped that building work and plant erection will be sufficiently advanced for production to begin in the late autumn. When production reaches its peak, a labour force of more than a thousand will be required, of which a number will work on continuous shifts. Most of these will be recruited locally, but it will also be necessary to bring in supervisory staff with specialized knowledge.

Gordon's Astrolabe at the Royal Scottish Museum

THE executors of the late Mrs. Florence Cumming, 18, Ainslie Place, Edinburgh, have handed over to the Royal Scottish Museum an astrolabe which at one time belonged to Robert Gordon of Straloch, the famous Scottish geographer. Robert Gordon of Straloch was born in Aberdeenshire in 1580 and died in 1661. He studied at Aberdeen and Paris, to which latter city he went at the age of eighteen. When he first became interested in cartography is not known, but his later work brought him fame as one of the great map-makers of Scotland. At the request of Charles I, he prepared an atlas of Scotland, which was published at Amsterdam in 1648; and it is recorded that two years later he published in the same city a second atlas of Scotland, called "Theatrum Scotiae", which he dedicated to Oliver Cromwell—possibly the same atlas with revised title to suit the changed circumstances. Gordon is particularly noted for his revision of Timothy Pont's maps of Scotland and Blaeu's Great Atlas of the World, published in Amsterdam in 1654, a wonderful atlas in eleven large folio volumes, of which volume six contains the maps of Scotland.

Gordon's astrolabe is an interesting and most decorative relic, typical of the European version of this ancient eastern instrument. On its edge is inscribed, "Robertus Gordonius"; the instrument was probably acquired by him before proceeding to Paris, or in Paris itself. His pride of possession can well be understood, and it would be natural that the date, 1597, should be inscribed on the newly acquired treasure. The early form of the numerals on the scales, however, would suggest that the instrument was made at least a hundred years earlier than the inscribed date. The astrolabe was the universal instrument and calculator of astronomers, astrologers, travellers, and navigators from the seventh to the eighteenth century. For over a thousand years it maintained a remarkable consistency in design, and the art of its use and construction became known in almost every civilized country. Gordon's astrolabe may be seen in the main hall of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, where it is being temporarily shown before being incorporated in the Science Gallery collection.