pig. Prof. Medawar has a fertile imagination combined with an ability for putting his ideas for research into practice. We look forward with confidence to the development of his Birmingham school of zoology.

František Křižík (1847–1941)

ALTHOUGH he died in occupied Prague as recently as 1941, Křižík's centenary falls this year. Born of poor parents on July 8, 1847, he was as much a man of science as an engineer. His aim in life was neither riches nor fame, but he had a constant desire to invent, to improve and to lessen the drudgery of manual labour. Obviously he had to seek a career in electrical engineering, and as a youth he attracted attention by installing a satisfactory telegraph system on the various private Central European railways that were then being constructed. As a railway engineer Křižík had plenty of scope for his inventive talent, and in 1878 he introduced a block signal system designed to prevent accidents. In 1880 he produced an electric arc lamp that gave better and more constant illumination. In the following year, opportunity was taken to show the lamp at the Paris Exhibition, where it gained first prize. Gold medals were also awarded for it at the Munich and Vienna Exhibitions of 1883, and these lamps were soon being made in Britain and used for lighting the streets of London, Paris and elsewhere. Křižík now gave up his railway appointment at Pilsen and established an electro-technical works at Prague for making not only lamps, but also dynamos and other electrical apparatus and machines. He experimented with an electrically driven train as early as 1891, the year of the Prague Exhibition, for which he was both architect and engineer. His illuminated fountain and electric railway (the precursor of many European tramways) provoked wide comment and largely contributed to the success of the exhibition.

No less than a hundred and thirty electrical power stations were constructed by Křižík, who was all the time studying electro-technical theory and applying it to problems of transport, lighting and other needs. He was critical of academic instruction in physics; for in his student days at the Prague Technical University, the whole of electro-technics was dismissed in two lectures as part of the course in electricity. In his later years he was engrossed in the expansion of his works, but was certainly active and interested in the progress of science at the time of his ninetieth anniversary. He died in the midst of the Second World War on January 22, 1941, at a time when it was impossible to pay tribute to his achievements.

British Scientific Instrument Research Association: New Laboratories

THE formal opening of the new laboratories of the British Scientific Instrument Research Association will take place on Thursday, July 10 (not July 9 as previously announced). The Minister of Supply will be the principal guest. The address of the laboratories is "Sira", Southill, Elmstead Woods, Chislehurst, Kent (Imperial 2237). Recent issues of the monthly *Bulletin* of the Association have reported on the progress made in transferring the Association's laboratories from Russell Square, London, to "Sira". The Chemical Department occupies the first floor of the new buildings, with a large main laboratory, two research laboratories, a balance room, a preparation room and ample storage space. There is also a furnace room, equipped with glass-making crucibles, away from the main building. The transfer of the Physics Department was begun last December, and it will occupy two large laboratories, a dark room and an office, all situated on the ground floor. One laboratory is equipped as a high-vacuum laboratory, with three different types of evaporation plants (Hickman, Edwards and Metro-Vickers). This section has been largely concerned in the past with the problems of production of aluminium, rhodium and anti-reflexion evaporated films. Efforts are now being directed to the production of three types of interference films: uncoloured reflexion films for beam-splitting, coloured reflexion and transmission films for coloured filtering, and strongly selective transmission filters for narrow-wave-band filters (see *Nature*, **158**, 422; 1946). The second laboratory is being equipped as a General Physics Laboratory, where problems of instrument design and manufacture, such as the measurement and control of humidity, high-temperature thermocouple measurements, and the measurement of high resistance, are to be studied.

Benjamin Franklin House

ON June 27, Mrs. Lewis Douglas, wife of the American Ambassador in London, unveiled a commemorative tablet in Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven Street, London, W.C.2. This is the headquarters of the British Society for International Understanding, an educational organisation which was formed early in 1939 to promote among the British people a genuine understanding about other nations. It was in this house that Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of the American Constitution, lived between 1757 and 1775 as agent for Pennsylvania, and carried out his electrical experiments, notably on the lightning conductor, and wrote much of his work. During the Second World War, the house was severely damaged by incendiary and explosive bombs. It has, however, been restored so far as possible to its original condition, with the aid of the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia and Miss Caroline Bache, a great-great-great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin.

The British Society for International Understanding, as an independent, non-party organisation, relies entirely on subscriptions, donations, the sale of literature and payment for its services, the principal of which are the publications called "British Surveys". There are two types of "British Surveys". One is the main edition, intended for adult reading, and the other the popular series which are especially written for use in schools. Each survey gives accurate, unbiased background information on a particular country or an international topic. The main edition is published fortnightly and the popular series monthly. The Society also recommends lecturers and answers inquiries about foreign affairs and the British Empire. Mrs. Douglas said at the formal opening of Benjamin Franklin House that it was appropriate that his one-time home should be dedicated as the headquarters of a Society for International Understanding, for it would be hard to point to a more international figure than Benjamin Franklin. "It is Benjamin Franklin the world citizen we salute to-day. He lived in a period of collision and war, but he always stood for union and harmony and he became one of the great representatives of international culture."