

### Audibility of Members of Parliament

EXPERIMENTS are being conducted in the House of Lords, in which the House of Commons sits while the Lower Chamber is being rebuilt after destruction during the War, to improve the audibility of members. Comprehension of a speaker's words is low because the first major reflexion, on which reliance is placed by auditors, especially in the rear of a speaker, is scattered by the extensive wooden carving; moreover, the roof is too high to afford any useful reflexions. The acoustic problem is complicated by the premise that any speaker may jump up and address remarks, theoretically to the chair, but often elsewhere. Permission from the authorities has been obtained to install, as an experiment, three hollow tubes acting as hand-rails, one on each side of the House behind the Treasury and Opposition benches, the third in front of the Hansard and some Press reporters just over the Speaker's chair. Each tube is driven by a horn loudspeaker electro-dynamic driving-unit at one end, the other end having an acoustic termination to obviate reflexions. Along the pipe are small holes, so that reproduced sound from the existing system of microphones is emitted just below a member's ear, or in front of a reporter. It is unlikely that a considerable increase in general audibility can be obtained by any means; but the pipe scheme for low-level individual sound augmentation certainly helps the audition of poor speakers, and is of considerable help when the noise-level increases. In particular, the Press are much more certain of getting the remarks of the Speaker. Present trials will indicate whether the pipe system can be extended with advantage, and possibly incorporated in the new Lower Chamber.

### Advisers to the Minister of Civil Aviation

LORD NATHAN, the Minister of Civil Aviation, has appointed the following to be his advisers in science, business and industrial relations: chief scientific adviser, Prof. George Temple; chief business adviser, Mr. Leslie Gamage; chief adviser on industrial relations, Lord Dukeston. Prof. Temple is professor of mathematics in King's College, London. He is also a member of the Aeronautical Research Council. He was seconded for specialist duties to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, during the Second World War. Mr. Leslie Gamage is vice-chairman and joint managing director of the General Electric Co., Ltd. For the past four years he has been president of the Institute of Export. He is a member of the National Civil Aviation Consultative Council, representing the Joint Air Transport Committee of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of British Industries and the London Chamber of Commerce. Lord Dukeston was the general secretary of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers. He represents the Trade Union Congress on the National Civil Aviation Consultative Council. He was president of this year's Trade Union Congress, and is the British Government member on the United Nations Organisation Commission to set up a Bill of Human Rights.

### Royal Society Empire Scientific Conference

THE preliminary report of the Royal Society Empire Scientific Conference, June-July 1946, which has now been published by the Royal Society, includes the speeches at the opening ceremony with lists

of the morning discussions, of the papers prepared for the Conference, of the delegates, etc. The summaries of the discussions given in this report detail the recommendations (see *Nature*, July 27, 1946, p. 136), many of which were afterwards endorsed by the Official Conference. The morning discussions surveyed first some outstanding problems in agricultural science in the Empire, including scientific needs concerned with the soil, the plant and the farm animal. Next some outstanding problems in medical science were discussed, including the physiological and psychological factors affecting human life under tropical conditions and in industry, and the etiology and control of infectious and transmissible diseases, particularly those which are insect-borne. The present state of the science of nutrition was discussed with particular reference to the special problems of the Empire, including the nutritional status of the indigenous peoples of the Colonies. Improvement of that status was recognized by the Conference as a part of general social and economic policy in the territories concerned, and the Conference strongly urged the need for integrating the efforts of producer, consumer, technical and administrative personnel in effecting improvements in nutrition.

Other discussions covered a variety of topics: modern methods of mapping and exploration by air, including the use of radio technique in ordnance survey with special reference to particular parts of the Empire; scientific information services and methods of improving the interchange of scientific workers throughout the Empire, including the future of the scientific liaison Offices that were established during the War; Empire co-operation in the scientific field with existing and projected international organisations; physical standards of measurement, the collection of scientific records and material and risks involved in the distribution of plants, seeds and animals, and so on. A general statement on land utilization and soil conservation emphasizes the importance of erosion surveys, soil surveys, and investigations relating to the maintenance and improvement of soil fertility, and urges the importance of surveys to determine the present pattern of and trends in land use, as a basis for the maintenance of soil fertility, bearing in mind the conflict between agricultural and other interests. A discussion on the need for a co-ordinated survey of the mineral resources of the Empire led to a general statement urging the compilation of reliable data on mineral resources. Discussions on the natural products of the Empire and the chemical industries that are, or might be, based on them and on the post-war needs of fundamental research, the latter of which revealed a particular shortage in the Commonwealth of scientific workers in such fields as taxonomy, genetics and microbiology, completed the proceedings.

### Textile Industry and the University of Leeds

THE report to the Clothworkers' Company of the Advisory Committee on the Departments of Textile Industries and Colour Chemistry and Dyeing, University of Leeds, 1945-46, pays a high tribute to the work of the late Prof. F. M. Rowe. No appointment has yet been made to the research fellowships in dyeing or in physical chemistry; but research workers of the Sisal Growers' Association have continued to be accommodated in the Dyeing Department. Dr. E. Race, in collaboration with Prof. Rowe and Prof. J. B. Speakman, established a new