

stadt, Germany, is known for his many contributions in the broad field of geophysics and related fields. He studied at the Technische Hochschule of Darmstadt and the University of Göttingen, where he obtained the degree of doctor of philosophy in 1911. He went to the United States in 1930, and became an American citizen in 1936. He has been professor of geophysics at the California Institute of Technology since 1930, and director of the Seismological Laboratory since 1947. He is author or co-author of many outstanding work in geophysics, including "Grundlagen der Erdbebenkunde", "Seismicity of the Earth", and extensive contributions in "Internal Constitution of the Earth", of which he was also the editor. He is president of the International Association of Seismology and the Physics of the Earth's Interior, of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics.

### The Greenwich Meridian

WHEN the Octagon Room of the Royal Greenwich Observatory was taken over by the National Maritime Museum, it was felt that the old meridian marked on the pavement was too inconspicuous; the Ministry of Works has accordingly installed a new line consisting of a brass strip let into a band of white stonework laid across the pathway outside the Observatory. The Greenwich Meridian was adopted as the Prime Meridian by the world in 1884 at the suggestion of the United States Government, which had called an international conference to consider the matter. It was defined as the north-south line running through the Airy transit circle in the Observatory. In the past, many prime meridians have been used. Eratosthenes naturally used the meridian of Alexandria, of whose great library he had been appointed librarian in 240 B.C.; Ptolemy, to avoid the difficulty of having both east and west longitude, used that of the Fortunate (Canary) Islands, the most westerly land known, so that all longitude should be measured eastwards. At one time there was an attempt to mate the prime meridian with the line of no magnetic variation; but the impossibility of unifying two lines which were inclined to each other at an angle and the impracticability of tying down hypothetical meridians running through the Canary Islands or the Azores had by the nineteenth century led many countries to adopt the meridians of their principal observatories. At one time England commonly used the meridian of St. Paul's.

### Expedition to Mt. Wrangell, Alaska

A JOINT expedition is being made this summer by members of New York University and the University of Alaska with the purpose of establishing a scientific observing station, principally for cosmic rays, on Mt. Wrangell in Alaska. The expedition will be led by Prof. Serge A. Korff, professor of physics in the College of Engineering, New York University, who will be the scientific director and principal scientist, and by Dr. Terris Moore, president of the University of Alaska, who will act as administrative director and be responsible for establishing the station. Although Mt. Wrangell (14,006 ft.) is not the highest mountain in Alaska, being topped by a number of peaks, of which the highest is Mt. McKinley (20,269 ft.), it has been chosen because its unusually flat top makes it an excellent landing-place for aeroplanes fitted with skis. Incidentally, it is the only 'live' volcano in Alaska, and it may be possible to utilize the steam that issues at the north-west end of its

summit. A preliminary party is at present climbing the mountain, and experimental landings will be made by Dr. Moore in his special Piper Super-Cub aeroplane at convenient spots as they are discovered by the climbing party. By this means it is hoped to build up a series of landing places at various heights, and eventually to establish a safe landing field on the summit by which the station can be supplied with huts and other stores and permanent equipment. The proposed station, which will be the most northernmost cosmic-ray station in the world, will be operated on an inter-university basis, whereby interested organizations, by contributing *pro rata* to its maintenance, may send observing personnel and equipment there.

### Royal Society's Depository of Unpublished Mathematical Tables

SINCE the publication of the first list (see *Nature*, 169, 526; 1952) the following tables have been accepted into the Royal Society's depository of unpublished mathematical tables: Table de factorisation des nombres  $N^4 + 1$  dans l'intervalle  $3000 < N \leq 6000$  (A. Gloden); solution of the equation  $(y'')^2 = yy'$  and two other equations (Admiralty Research Laboratory); dictionary of Laplace transforms (J. Cossar and A. Erdélyi); tables of Fresnel's integrals (D. H. Shinn); tables of the error integral of a complex variable (J. K. Skwirzynski); table des solutions de la congruence  $x^4 + 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$ ,  $600000 < p < 800000$  (A. Gloden); tables of the complex Jacobian zeta function (National Physical Laboratory); tables of binomial coefficients (National Physical Laboratory); tables of Multhopp's influence functions (National Physical Laboratory); integrals of Bessel functions ( $J_0$  and  $Y_0$ ) (National Physical Laboratory); table of  $\int_0^{2\pi} J_1^2 \left( 2k \sin \frac{\theta}{2} \right) \cos^2 \frac{\theta}{2} d\theta$  (National Physical Laboratory); tables of two functions occurring in the theory of the reflexion of electromagnetic waves from infinite cylinders (National Physical Laboratory); table of an integral used in calculating profiles of water waves (National Physical Laboratory); tables of the Langevin function and its inverse (A. Young and T. Murphy). Further information about these tables can be obtained on application to the Assistant Secretary, Royal Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.

### Political Activities of Civil Servants

FOLLOWING the announcement on November 1, 1949, that the Government would give immediate effect to those recommendations of the Masterman Committee in its report on the political activities of Civil servants which would free some 450,000 Civil servants from existing regulations, the Government indicated that, before taking final decisions on the general principles of the report, joint discussions through the machinery of the National Whitley Council were desirable. The report of the joint committee afterwards appointed has now been published as an appendix to a White Paper in which the Government's proposals are detailed ("Political Activities of Civil Servants" (Cmd. 8783). Pp. 16; London: H.M.S.O., 1953; 6d. net). The statement points out that the extent to which Civil servants should be free to take part in political activities must be considered in the light of two conflicting principles. The desirability, in a democratic society, of all citizens having a voice in the affairs of the State and of as many as possible of them playing an active