

NEWS and VIEWS

New President of the British Association:

Sir Robert Robinson, O.M., F.R.S.

GENERAL satisfaction will be felt at the announcement that Sir Robert Robinson is to be next year's president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Since 1930 Sir Robert has been Waynflete professor of organic chemistry in the University of Oxford, having previously served as professor of either chemistry or organic chemistry in the Universities of Sydney, St. Andrews, Manchester and London. He was awarded the Order of Merit in 1949 and holds the Longstaff Medal of the Chemical Society, and the Davy, Royal, and Copley Medals of the Royal Society, besides many foreign honours. He has already had a very notable experience of presiding over learned bodies, having been for two years president of the Chemical Society and for five years president of the Royal Society. Sir Robert's extensive scientific work lies in the field of organic chemistry. His investigation of the constitution, by degradation and by synthesis, of the anthocyanin group of plant pigments is already classical, as is that on the constitution of several groups of alkaloids. He has made notable contributions to the synthesis of steroids. He was one of the first to apply the electronic theory of valency to problems of organic chemical reactions, and has offered an attractive picture of the biogenetic relations of naturally occurring plant substances.

Research on Humane Vivisection:

Dr. W. M. S. Russell

UFAW (The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare), in association with the Animal Welfare Institute of New York, has appointed Dr. W. M. S. Russell as research fellow to study the history and progress of the introduction of humane techniques into experimentation on animals, with the view of assisting further progress. Examples of progress already achieved are the use of anaesthetics in experiments involving operations, the reduction in the requisite number of animals by means of modern small-sample statistical theory, and in the assay of drugs the substitution of painless (for example, chemical) criteria for various criteria entailing discomfort. Dr. Russell, who will have the assistance of a consultative committee, has had a brilliant career at Oxford and is the son of Dr. F. S. Russell, director of the Marine Biological Laboratory at Plymouth. At present he holds a fellowship from the Agricultural Research Council. As an undergraduate he abandoned a Greek scholarship in order to study zoology, and he has written a number of papers on the behaviour of vertebrates, together with a forthcoming book on comparative physiology.

British Standards Institution, Chemical Divisional Council:

Dr. G. H. Beeby

DR. G. H. BEEBY has been appointed chairman of the Chemical Divisional Council of the British Standards Institution and has, therefore, at the same time become a member of the General Council and the Executive Committee. Dr. Beeby, who is the well-known chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries Salt Division at Winsford in Cheshire, has spent all his working life in that organization. Born in Leicestershire, and educated at Loughborough College and the University of London, he joined the Billingham

Division of I.C.I. as a chemist in 1928. Afterwards he spent thirteen years in I.C.I. sales offices before taking up his present duties in 1952. He first joined the Heavy Chemicals Industry Committee of the British Standards Institution in 1945, and has been its chairman, as well as chairman of the Institution's Sub-Committee for International Work on Chemistry, since 1948.

John Gould, F.R.S. (1804-81)

JOHN GOULD, who has an honoured place in the ranks of ornithology, was born at Lyme Regis in Dorsetshire a hundred and fifty years ago on September 14, 1804. At the age of fourteen he began working under his father, who had been appointed foreman gardener at Windsor Castle, and acquired an intimate knowledge of birds in their wild state and considerable skill in the art of taxidermy. In 1827 he became taxidermist to the newly founded Zoological Society of London. His first attempt at authorship was his description of bird skins received in 1830 from the Himalayas, "A Century of Birds from the Himalayan Mountains" (1832), and his own sketches, artistically transferred to stone by his wife, made this the most accurately illustrated book on foreign ornithology up to that time. A two-year expedition to Australasia (1838-40) was responsible for "The Birds of Australia", which took seven years to complete. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1843. Gould published forty-one folios on birds, illustrated with 2,999 plates, his best-known works being "A Monograph of the Trochilidae, or Family of Humming-Birds" (this collection was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851), "The Birds of Europe", "The Birds of Asia" and "The Birds of Great Britain". Gould also contributed some three hundred memoirs and papers to the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* and to other scientific journals. He died on February 3, 1881, aged seventy-seven, at Charlotte Street, near the British Museum.

Calendar Reform and the Seven-day Week

A PAMPHLET entitled "Calendar Reform and the Seven-Day Week: a Clarification", by Elizabeth Achelis, James Avery Joyce and Daniel Sher, is No. 5 of the World Calendar Pamphlets series, and is published by the Calendar Reform Association (pp. 30; 1954; 1s.). It is unfortunate that there is opposition to calendar reform from a few religious sects—Christian and non-Christian—the foremost critics being the Jews, chiefly because the Sabbath is fixed for the seventh day of the week and the proposed alterations would disturb this. The main disturbing factor is the use of a 'Worldsday' which, in the suggested scheme, is the 365th day, now dated December 31, and which would be a world holiday, dedicated to the brotherhood of man and a non-working day. Every year would thus begin on a Sunday, January 1. The objections are fully and fairly dealt with by Mr. Joyce, a British Methodist; and Mr. Sher, an Israeli Jew, shows the error of the points raised by the late Chief Rabbi Hertz on the spiritual and human rights of the minority, which were largely responsible for the somewhat hasty and erroneous action taken by Jewish organizations. A few examples show the faulty conceptions of such terms as 'day' and 'week'. Thus a person crossing the International Date Line may experience two successive Sabbaths or may miss one, passing directly from Friday to Sunday. Again, according to Jewish Law, the Sabbath lasts from sunset until sunset on