

NEWS and VIEWS

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research:

Sir Ben Lockspeiser, K.C.B., F.R.S.

IN March of this year Sir Ben Lockspeiser ceases to be secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. He was appointed in 1949, and has, therefore, had the responsibility of guiding the largest of the Government's Research Councils through a most important phase of its development. When he took over, D.S.I.R.'s recurrent expenditure was little more than £3 million, and its capital grant about £100,000. To-day the first runs at £6.5 million, while the second stands at £1.3 million. In parallel, D.S.I.R.'s scientific staff has increased from 1,700 to 2,400. Sir Ben was ideally suited to bring about this expansion. He brought to his task considerable administrative capacity and experience, and a life-long knowledge of Government scientific establishments. From 1920 until 1939, when he became assistant director of scientific research at the Air Ministry, he was a member of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, and before moving to D.S.I.R., he was successively director-general of scientific research, Ministry of Aircraft Production, and chief scientist to the Ministry of Supply. During the period of his forceful reign, Sir Ben has constantly kept to the fore the conception of D.S.I.R. as an agency which is concerned not only in the cultivation of new scientific knowledge, but also in seeing that this knowledge finds its fruitful application. Under his influence the research associations have prospered, and at the same time D.S.I.R. has strengthened its connexions with industry by establishing a central Intelligence Division.

Sir Ben's influence has also been both valuable and extensive outside the domestic affairs of D.S.I.R. As an official member of the Defence Research Policy Committee (see p. 251 of this issue) he has shared the responsibility of defining the general scientific needs of the Armed Services, and, where necessary and possible, has seen that the facilities of D.S.I.R. have been available for work in this field. He has also been an official member of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy, through which he has been directly concerned with a wide variety of topics that fall within the field of civilian science, and most particularly with the problem of scientific man-power. Since 1953 Sir Ben has, in addition, been president of the European Organization for Nuclear Research. Sir Ben's voice will be much missed in the Council rooms to whose work he has always contributed with wisdom, and with force tempered by good humour. Although he has now come to the end of his official term of service at D.S.I.R., it is to be hoped that the country will still be able to learn his opinions about the broader affairs of science, and that he will find the opportunity to make his views on science and industry, as well as on scientific education, known to increasingly wider audiences.

Prof. H. W. Melville, F.R.S.

PROF. H. W. MELVILLE, Mason professor of chemistry in the University of Birmingham since 1948, succeeds Sir Ben Lockspeiser as secretary of D.S.I.R. Prof. Melville was educated at George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, and at the Universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge. During 1933-44 he was a

Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and between 1940 and 1948, before taking up his appointment in Birmingham, professor of chemistry in the University of Aberdeen. He was elected to the fellowship of the Royal Society in 1941, and was awarded the Davy Medal last year for his distinguished contributions to the chemistry of macro-molecular substances. His researches before 1939 were concerned with the mechanism of gas-phase reactions, especially in slow and explosive combustions, and with the photo-chemistry of polyatomic molecules and photosensitized reactions. Inquiries into gas-phase polymerization reactions, which Prof. Melville took up during this period, laid the foundation for much of his post-war researches. These were mainly directed to the study of liquid phase polymerization; and the development and combination of a series of completely new physical methods, including highly sensitive methods of following liquid phase reactions, led to the complete elucidation of the kinetics and chemistry of this process. Considerable advances were also made in the study of the breakdown of large molecules, while the use of radioactive tracers allowed Prof. Melville to extend his investigations on the chemical side. All these developments have shown how to synthesize completely new types of macro-molecules. Much of this will no doubt be reviewed by Prof. Melville in the Bakerian Lecture of the Royal Society which he is due to deliver in the near future.

Prof. Melville brings to his new responsibilities not only great achievements as an investigator, but also considerable experience of advisory work on behalf of the Government. He was a member of the Advisory Council of D.S.I.R. between 1946 and 1951, and has also served on the Advisory Council of the Ministry of Supply; on the Research Council of the British Electricity Authority; on the Fuel Research Board; and on the Advisory Council of the Ministry of Fuel and Power. He was also a member of the Royal Commission on University Education in Dundee. Many new responsibilities will now fall to his lot, including not only the direction of D.S.I.R. but also the representation of its interests on the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy and on the Defence Research Policy Committee. Prof. Melville's great record of achievement and service provides every confidence that the further development of D.S.I.R. has been entrusted to a man who has all the imagination and drive necessary to fulfil his task.

Directorship of the National Physical Laboratory:

Prof. G. B. B. M. Sutherland, F.R.S.

PROF. G. B. B. M. SUTHERLAND, professor of physics and director of the Biophysics Research Centre in the University of Michigan, has been appointed director of the National Physical Laboratory. It is expected that Prof. Sutherland will take up the appointment in September next; Dr. R. L. Smith-Rose will continue as acting director until Prof. Sutherland takes up duty. Prof. Sutherland is a leading authority on infra-red spectrum analysis but of recent years has developed especial interests in the field of biophysics. He was educated at the Morgan Academy, Dundee, and the University of St. Andrews. From 1935 until 1949 he was a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. During the early part of the Second World War, Prof. Sutherland was assistant to the Director of Scientific Research at the Ministry of Supply. In 1941 he was made head of a group carrying out research in Cambridge for that Ministry, the Ministry of Aircraft Production