

astrophysics in the University of Oslo (Norway); Prof. A. Rucker, rector of the Munich Technical High School (Germany); Prof. S. J. Sizoo, professor of chemistry in the University of Amsterdam (Holland); Sir Solly Zuckerman, Sands Cox professor of anatomy in the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom); Dr. E. W. R. Steacie, president of the National Research Council of Canada (Canada).

Astronomy at Cambridge :

Sir Harold Jeffreys, F.R.S.

SIR HAROLD JEFFREYS, who is to retire from the Plumian professorship of astronomy and experimental philosophy in the University of Cambridge in October, is best known for his work on physics of the Earth and in particular for his discussion of seismological observations and the deduction of the times of travel for earthquake waves. While this work on earthquakes was for many years the centre of his interest, there is scarcely any branch of science connected with the physics of the Earth to which he has not contributed, his work on its thermal history, on stresses in the crust and on tidal friction being particularly well known. The three editions of his book, "The Earth", have for thirty years been the best-known exposition of the application of physics and mathematics to our planet. In the course of his work on earthquake waves, Jeffreys met severe statistical difficulties arising from the failure of the observations to conform to the Gaussian law of errors. This led him to make an extensive study of the basis of the theory of probability and to write a stimulating and entertaining book on the subject. As was to be expected, this led to a vigorous controversy with the guardians of statistical orthodoxy. Jeffreys has also written several books on mathematical topics, including the widely known "Mathematical Methods", which is a joint work with Lady Jeffreys. Since he was appointed to the Plumian professorship in 1946, Jeffreys has devoted his attention mainly to the relation between the Earth's internal structure and astronomical quantities; in particular, he has studied the effect of the Earth's fluid core on nutation.

Prof. F. Hoyle, F.R.S.

MR. FRED HOYLE, who has been elected to succeed Sir Harold Jeffreys as Plumian professor of astronomy and experimental philosophy, is well known through his many substantial contributions to modern theoretical astrophysics. After an early start in quantum theory, Mr. Hoyle, in collaboration with Dr. R. A. Lyttleton, began to turn his attention to theoretical astrophysics shortly before the Second World War. His outstanding gift of physical intuition has enabled him to appreciate the vital factors in astrophysical situations that are far from terrestrial experience. In this way he has been able to make far-reaching contributions to the theories of stellar structure and evolution, of galactic evolution, of star formation, and of cosmology. Mr. Hoyle has kept in close contact with the outstanding observational astronomers who are associated with the Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories, and has spent a good deal of his time with them in Pasadena. In this way his theoretical work is backed by an up-to-the-minute knowledge of the latest observational results. The great depth of his understanding has made Mr. Hoyle an outstanding popular writer and broadcaster on astronomical and other topics. He has in the past added great distinction to astronomy in Cambridge as Fellow of St. John's College and lecturer

in mathematics, and will continue to do so now in his professorial position.

U.S. National Astronomical Observatory :

Dr. A. B. Meinel

DR. ADEN B. MEINEL has been appointed director of the proposed new U.S. National Astronomical Observatory by the National Science Foundation in conjunction with the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, Inc., which is under contract to the Foundation for the establishment and operation of the observatory at a site to be selected in Arizona (see *Nature* of January 25, p. 236). Dr. Meinel received his Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of California in 1949. He joined the Department of Astrophysics of the University of Chicago in 1950, where he was appointed associate professor. In 1953 he was made associate director of the Yerkes and McDonald Observatories. Dr. Meinel's published work, in addition to optical design, spectroscopy of night airglow and aurora borealis, has included the identification of new band systems in the spectra of OH and N₂, detection of extraterrestrial protons in the aurora, and reproduction of the auroral spectrum in the laboratory by the use of accelerated particles. He has received the Lomb Prize of the Optical Society of America and the Helen Warner award of the American Astronomical Society in 1954.

Dr. Meinel has been associated with the project for the new observatory almost since its inception. He has served as full-time executive secretary to the *ad hoc* advisory panel of astronomers set up to make recommendations on a suitable site. Early in the spring of 1955 he began field work for the selection of possible sites in the south-western area. Assisted by H. A. Abt, Dr. Meinel made a comprehensive examination of the entire region bounded by the Rio Grande on the east, by latitude 36° on the north, and the geographical limits of the United States on the south and west. All available high-altitude rocket photographs were carefully examined. The two scientists flew thousands of miles in a small plane and travelled great distances by car in the course of examining every possible site. Dr. Meinel will continue to direct work on the new observatory from his present field office in Phoenix, Arizona, until a site has been selected.

Social Medicine at Aberdeen : Prof. E. M. Backett

DR. E. MAURICE BACKETT, who has recently been appointed professor of social medicine in the University of Aberdeen, is forty-two. He graduated in medicine at the Westminster Hospital (University of London) and holds an honours degree in psychology, a diploma in public health, and is a member of the Royal College of Physicians. During the Second World War he served in the R.A.F. (Science Branch). After qualification, he became a Nuffield Fellow in Social Medicine and carried out some work for the Medical Research Council. He was appointed a lecturer in The Queen's University, Belfast, and a senior lecturer at Guy's Hospital Medical School and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, jointly. In this post he has been able to develop his interests in undergraduate teaching and also to carry out various investigations, especially in the organization of medical services; quality of medical care; morbidity studies in general practice; social factors in the distribution of polio virus; medical care of deaf mutes; epidemiology of road accidents; and coronary disease in doctors.