

## NEWS and VIEWS

## The Royal Society: Vice-Presidents

THE president of the Royal Society, Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, has appointed the following vice-presidents for the year ending November 30, 1966 (in addition to those already announced in *Nature*, 209, 134; 1966): Dr. S. G. Hooker, technical director (aero), Bristol Siddeley Engines, Ltd.; Dr. R. D. Keynes, director of the Institute of Animal Physiology, Babraham, Cambridge; Sir Hans Krebs, Whitley professor of biochemistry at the University of Oxford; Dr. N. Kurti, reader in physics, University of Oxford, and Senior Research Fellow, Brasenose College.

## Director of the Radio and Space Research Station:

Mr. J. A. Ratcliffe, C.B., C.B.E., F.R.S.

MR. J. A. RATCLIFFE retires on February 28 from the directorship of the Radio and Space Research Station of the Science Research Council. He went to this post from the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, in 1960. Educated at Giggleswick School, Mr. Ratcliffe proceeded to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, where he graduated in physics in 1924. He began research under E. V. Appleton at the time when he was making the important experiments which established the existence of the ionosphere, and it was Mr. Ratcliffe's collaboration in this work which first stimulated his enthusiasm for the subject which has since been his main scientific interest. He was appointed a demonstrator at the Cavendish Laboratory in 1927, and it was also during this pre-war period that he acquired his high reputation as a teacher of physics. After service in radar research and development during the Second World War, for which he was appointed an O.B.E. in 1947, he returned to Cambridge and resumed work at the Cavendish Laboratory, where he became a reader in physics in 1947. The reputation he had acquired as a teacher and research worker attracted many young graduates to his radio research group and it quickly acquired a high international reputation. A firm believer in the importance of international co-operation in science, Mr. Ratcliffe has played a prominent part in the work of the International Union for Scientific Radio, of which he is, at present, chairman of Commission III (Ionospheric Research). He served as an overseas vice-president of the Institute of Radio Engineers of America in 1960. He was president of the Physical Society during 1958-60 and is at present senior vice-president of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. The Institution has just announced the award to him of the Faraday Medal for 1966, in recognition of his "extensive researches on the ionosphere, and for his studies on the propagation of low frequency radio waves". Mr. Ratcliffe was appointed C.B.E. in 1959 and C.B. in 1965. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1951. His College, Sidney Sussex, made him a Fellow in 1927 and an honorary Fellow in 1965.

## Dr. J. Saxton

DR. JOHN SAXTON has been appointed director of the Radio and Space Research Station, Ditton Park, Slough, Bucks, in succession to Mr. J. A. Ratcliffe. Dr. Saxton is director of the United Kingdom Scientific Mission in Washington, D.C., and Counsellor (Scientific) at the British Embassy there. Before taking up this appointment he was deputy director of the Radio Research Station. Educated at Loughborough Grammar School and the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, Dr. Saxton joined the staff of the College after graduation and carried out research on artificial radioactivity before joining the Radio Division of the National Physical Laboratory in

1938. (This developed into the Radio Research Station in the early 1950's.) Dr. Saxton's work on the dielectric properties of the atmosphere and on studies of the propagation of radio waves at very high frequencies have made him well known in Europe and North America. In 1961, at the invitation of the University of Texas, he spent a year there as visiting professor of electrical engineering.

## Master of Birkbeck College:

Prof. F. K. Hare

PROF. F. KENNETH HARE, professor of geography at King's College, London, has been appointed master of Birkbeck College, in succession to the late Sir John Lockwood. Prof. Hare was born on February 9, 1919, and graduated B.Sc. (special) in geography at King's College in 1939 at the early age of twenty. He had already started research on land use in Galloway and on geochronology in the Thames Valley, combined with graduate work in meteorology. During the Second World War he was one of the small band of scientists behind the plans for the Normandy landings, where such difficult but vital problems as the relation between weather, soil, mud and tank-performance had to be considered. Moving to Canada as assistant professor at McGill University, Hare soon succeeded to the headship of the Department of Geography, and became involved in such diverse activities as establishing research stations in Labrador and Barbados and the air survey of the Northlands. A doctorate from the French-speaking Université de Montréal, a deanship at McGill, an Hon. LL.D. from Queen's University and election as honorary president (being a non-American) of the Association of American Geographers mark stages in North American appreciation of his work. Tempted back to England in 1963 to succeed his old chief, the late Prof. S. W. Wooldridge, Hare has been playing an active part in both the Natural Resources Advisory Committee and the Natural Environment Research Council.

## United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority : Prototype Fast Reactor

IN a statement in the House of Commons on February 9, the Minister of Technology, Mr. F. Cousins, said that the Atomic Energy Authority had advised him that the design of a prototype fast reactor was sufficiently advanced to justify starting construction and this had been sanctioned by the Government. The prototype would generate 250 MW and, with the associated fuel production plant, would cost about £30 million. It was expected that the reactor would come into operation in 1971. The Atomic Energy Authority had advised him that only the reactor development establishments at Dounreay and Winfrith would be suitable sites from the technical point of view, and after considering all the relevant factors the Government had decided that it should be built at Dounreay. The fuel production plant would be sited at Windscale. A similar statement was made in the House of Lords, also on February 9, by Lord Snow, who in reply to questions added that while Chapel Cross and Windscale had also been considered, only Dounreay and Winfrith merited serious consideration from the point of view of research and development facilities, although social factors had also been taken into consideration.

## Channel Tunnel

IN a debate in the House of Commons on February 9, Mr. S. Swinger, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, stated that the preliminary geo-