

and ampere. Agreement between different laboratories is not perfect and every three years each laboratory sends its standard cells and resistors to the BIPM so that they can be evaluated in terms of the "BIPM volt" and "BIPM ohm". For the sake of continuity the stated values of the standards are not adjusted each time these comparisons are made.

As measuring techniques improve and the standards themselves become more stable and reproducible, however, the differences between the units maintained in various countries become more significant. The most recent and precise determinations indicate that the BIPM ohm is within 1 part per million of the correct value while the BIPM volt is probably 11 parts per million larger than the correct value. At an international meeting in October, metrologists agreed that the BIPM volt should be adjusted accordingly. Other countries are making this the occasion to make their own units agree more closely with the BIPM units.

The standard resistance is measured by comparison with the reactance of a mutual inductor used on alternating current at a known frequency. The inductance is calculated from the physical dimensions of the coil. The Metrology Division at the National Physical Laboratory hopes that, by using a capacitor instead of the inductor, it will be able to measure resistance ten times more precisely. The voltage of a standard cell is compared with the potential difference across a known resistor carrying a current from the coils of a current balance. The absolute value of the current is determined in terms of the mechanical force between two conductors carrying the same current.

METRICATION

One Swallow for Summer

ALMOST five months to the day after Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn, the Minister of Technology, announced in Parliament that the Government would be setting up a Metrication Board as soon as possible, Lord Ritchie-Calder was named on December 19 as its chairman. The appointment of the other board members will not be announced until Parliament has reassembled later this month, which has disappointed officials as well as many industrialists, who feel that the sooner the board is appointed and starts work the better. It seems, however, that Mr H. Cruickshank, the chairman of the construction industry's metrication working party, will belong to the board, while Mr A. H. A. Wynn, the Ministry of Technology's senior official working on metrication, and Mr H. A. R. Binney, director-general of the British Standards Institution, are almost certain to be asked as well.

Lord Ritchie-Calder seems to be everyone's idea of the ideal man for the job, which during the next seven to ten years will entail giving advice to all and sundry on the problems that will arise from adopting a fully metric system of weights and measures. Lord Ritchie-Calder, who said last week that he will start work in March, sees the job as a huge public relations exercise with ramifications in every sphere of life. The problem is simply to persuade people to adopt the metric system voluntarily. Persuading industry should be easy, but persuading consumers and retailers, who are not organized among themselves, is where the difficulties begin. Lord Ritchie-Calder says that he expects the



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board will encourage the setting up of consumer and retailer groups and councils and exploit all the communications media in its attempt to win over the public.

Lord Ritchie-Calder is best known as the former journalist Ritchie Calder, with a flair for explaining science to the layman, who contributed regularly to two now defunct newspapers—the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald*. His political leaning has always been to the left—before the war he led marching strikers. In 1966, when he became a life peer, he accepted the Labour Party Whip in the House of Lords. This accords with what is believed to be the Prime Minister's view that metrication is potentially too political to be left to the technicians.

HONOURS

Scientists Honoured

PROFESSOR P. M. S. BLACKETT, President of the Royal Society since 1965, has at last accepted one of the four life peerages announced this week in the New Year Honours; his wife will no longer be able to make her favourite joke, "Not even the Labour Party can make a Lady of me". Bernard Katz, professor of biophysics at the University of London, and Michael Francis Addison Woodruff, professor of surgery at Edinburgh University, have both been knighted. Also knighted are James William Howie, medical director of the Public Health Laboratory Service; Stephen John Watson, lately professor of agriculture and rural economy at the University of Edinburgh; Derman Guy Christopherson, vice-chancellor at the University of Durham, and Christopher Sydney Cockerell, consultant at Hovercraft Development Ltd.

SELENOLOGY

Album of the Moon

from our Astronomy Correspondent

THE magnificent photographs of the Moon taken by Borman, Lovell and Anders which have captured the front pages of the newspapers are unlikely to add as much to scientific knowledge as proponents of manned