

GENERAL SCIENCE

# Activity of "Radicals" Marks British Scientific Circles

## Many Younger Scientists Outspoken in War Opposition, And Determined to Make Influence Felt in Government

By WATSON DAVIS

AMONG the most surprising phenomena of British science today (to an American) is the prevalence of constructive liberal sentiment and organization.

Articulate and aggressive are the protests against the use of science in war preparations, against "the frustration of science" which enriches industry while people are undernourished, and against infringement of intellectual liberty.

### Well Advertised

During the recent British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting, there was such a wealth of what in America would be called "radical" meetings, that interested scientists had their evenings filled, often being forced to choose between sessions with similar objectives. These were not hidden, underground gatherings of borderline scientists. Handbills and posters plentifully distributed throughout Cambridge's historic buildings and streets gave notice of these sessions. The combinations (club rooms) and other rooms of famous Trinity and St. John's Colleges were used as meeting places. And the organizers and speakers included those who write F. R. S. (Fellow of the Royal Society) after their names, officers of the B. A. A. S., world authorities in their scientific fields.

Ominously concerned are these scientists over the possible imminence of war—war that will bring high explosive bombs and poison gas raining upon London, Cambridge, Oxford and other British centers of world culture. They also see the possibility of making the world a better place in which to live, if the holocaust of war can be avoided.

Among them now live brothers in science exiled from Nazi Germany for intellectual heresy. They are determined that it shall not happen in England.

The Cambridge Scientists Anti-War Group packed the Trinity College Combination for an evening meeting. They are not merely "agin" war. On the out-

skirts of Cambridge they have built test structures according to the government's instructions for A. R. P. (Aerial Raid Precautions)—and they have shown in what ways these are defective. They have pointed out that whereas most of the widely advertised A. R. P. are against gas, it is high explosives dropped from the air that do the damage in Spain and China.

The sentiment of Cambridge scientists, including economists, toward war was probed by questionnaires, which one out of five answered. Of these, 20 per cent. proved to be P-Ps, positive pacifists, who would eschew war at any cost, and about the same number were for strong armaments as a war prevention measure. The others believed in the League of Nations, Popular Front Socialism or economic measures.

Both those who had seen the World War and those who had not, spoke at this peace meeting. Prof. F. J. M. Stratton, of Cambridge University, for instance, describing war as "bloody, futile, stupid and ghastly," said that he would again take up arms for defense of Britain if necessity demanded.

### "Like Old Tin Cans"

Minorities in dictator nations are being thrown over frontiers "like old tin cans" and since the bully nations are not deterred by protests, the only way to stop them is to be strong enough to take a stand against them.

Youthful Prof. J. D. Bernal, F. R. S. for his crystallography, told of England's great expenditures for war research in comparison with meager ones for health and other peaceful pursuits. The government must give consideration to the opinion of scientists. Prof. Gordon Childe, of the University of Edinburgh and president of the anthropological section of the B. A. A. S., warned that once war came liberty would be lost, the next time perhaps forever.

The Manchester Guardian's scientific journalist, J. D. Crowther, supplied historical perspective, a young architect told how for \$55 a person Londoners could

be protected in subterranean tunnels against high explosive aerial bombardment, a non-conformist minister emoted over the refugee problem and an economist filled the blackboard with equations involving threats, cooperation, armament costs, time, in hope of predicting when the next war will come.

In a little alley, named Falcon Yard, in a hall above the Cambridge headquarters of the British Legion of war veterans, there was an exhibition illustrating the frustration of science, protesting that food is dumped into the sea when people do not have enough to eat, that medical research is ill supported, that war preparation is the objective of too many research brains today. Sponsored by the Scientists' Group of the Left Book Club, this was an attempt to bring to public attention the social aspects of science as seen by the "left" movement in scientific circles.

### Coordinating Body

The Research Coordination Committee attempting to coordinate, by informational means, the work of many unrelated professional, governmental and other bodies held a conference with Sir Richard Paget in the chair and Sir F. Gowland Hopkins participating. For Intellectual Liberty, a group active in defense of tolerance and freedom, organized an evening meeting, as did the Civil Liberties Association, upholding the rights of trammled freemen of the British democracy.

During the week of intellectual entertainment provided by the B. A., there was much antidote for the presidential pessimism of Lord Rayleigh's "I doubt whether we can do much."

*Science News Letter, September 17, 1938*

AERODYNAMICS

## Spinning Air Jet Aids Plane Study

GERMAN aeronautical engineers have taken a step toward solution of an old wind tunnel problem—measurement of the behavior of a spinning airplane—by neatly reversing standard procedure.

Instead of making the model spin in a vertical blast of air, M. Kramer and K. B. Krueger have found that spinning the air jet around a fixed model gives better results. More accurate measurement of the forces playing on the plane model and consequently on the full-sized plane under similar conditions can be made in this fashion, they report.

*Science News Letter, September 17, 1938*