

by the press office and using the special knowledge of departmental officials who are equipped to speak on these subjects. These background briefings appear to be appreciated by the press and a good deal more could be done without debasing the currency. So far the journalists invited to these briefings appear generally to have respected the terms of confidence under which they are held. However, it would appear that a system of regular briefings which would fill in the press on contemporary developments and provide some, usually non-attributed, material for stories would fill a real need. A weekly briefing by the press office, using existing departmental resources, would cover a good many individual enquiries, would provide an outlet for information considered desirable by the Department and would make work easier for the press. (The diligent reporter will normally be able to track down the information he seeks but it needs to be kept in mind that stories by the less diligent or more careless reporter also reach the light of day.) The briefing would also give a chance to the press officer to correct mistaken reports or misinterpretation and to give the shadings of significance of news which are particularly important for reporting on foreign policy questions. The very fact of the holding of such frequent and regular meetings with the press would be an earnest of the seriousness attached by the Department to press relations and should go some way to correct any