

News and views

National Science Foundation

Next Year's Budget

As this issue goes to press, National Science Foundation prospects for the next fiscal year remain as uncertain as they have since August 20th when the House of Representatives acted to slash the \$14,000,000 NSF budget requested by the President to \$300,000, a cut of 98 percent. Settlement of the issue, at this writing, depends upon the results of a hearing before the Appropriations Committee of the Senate, followed by Senate and finally joint Senate and House action. Scientific, educational, and industrial groups, according to NSF director Alan T. Waterman, have rallied to the cause. There has been organized action on the part of a number of such groups, and both individuals and organizations have reaffirmed their confidence in the importance of the Foundation's mission and have called upon Congress to supply adequate funds for its work in 1952.

Early in September, for example, during the American Chemical Society's diamond jubilee in New York City, the ACS council adopted a resolution strongly urging that Congress appropriate the full amount of the originally recommended budget for Foundation operations in 1952. A similar resolution was adopted by the Society's board of directors on September 7th. Charles A. Thomas, chairman of the ACS board and president of the Monsanto Chemical Company, issued a statement accompanying the resolution in which he emphasized the board's firm belief in the importance of fundamental research to the national welfare. "If the National Science Foundation should be denied the money necessary to carry out an adequate program of fundamental research, and is to receive only enough funds to support an administrative staff," he said, "this effectively removes any reason for the existence of the Foundation."

Dr. Waterman summed up the reaction of the Foundation's administrative staff while addressing a meeting of biologists sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences in Minneapolis on September 10th. "It is unfortunate," he remarked, "that scientists, who understand so well the relation between basic research and the training and development of creative young minds, have been able to convey to the laymen only imperfectly the importance and urgency of this matter. After having marshaled, for the benefit of the legislative hearings which preceded the establishment of the Foundation, a massive array of evidence from scholars,

educators, scientists, industrial experts, military leaders, and others, we find ourselves in the position of arguing the case all over again."

The National Science Board, meanwhile, issued on September 9th the following statement defining its view of the matter:

"The National Science Board, at its regular meeting on September 7, gave serious attention to the urgent need for the appropriation by the Congress of funds to put into operation the program of the National Science Foundation. In the considered judgment of the Board, failure to provide such funds at this time will have disastrous consequences for the sound future development of our nation which depends so heavily upon science and technology.

"Under the mandate of Congress, as expressed in the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, the National Science Board has for the past nine months been formulating plans for developing the nation's critically deficient scientific resources. The time has now arrived when these programs should be activated.

"It has been repeatedly emphasized that the nation now faces a critical shortage of men and women adequately trained in science, engineering, public health, medicine and other technical fields. Industry, education, and the government, including the military services, are finding it impossible to fill positions of critical importance to the national defense and the national welfare. To meet this urgent need the National Science Foundation has proposed the establishment of a program of fellowships in pure and applied science. This program would help increase the supply of these critically needed scientists and engineers. Unless funds are provided, this program must be abandoned and the manpower deficit will become increasingly greater.

"The wholesome development of our nation depends upon the furtherance of research on a broad geographical basis. Accordingly, a second objective of the Foundation is to strengthen basic research and to develop new scientific centers in all parts of the country.

"While vast funds have been allocated for the creation of specific weapons and products, fundamental research—which increases our pool of new scientific information—has been sadly neglected. The National Science Foundation proposes a modest program for the support of important areas of fundamental research which are now inadequately financed. Failure to support such research will handicap development of our industrial and military strength and greatly threaten our future national security and welfare.

"Unless we do so, our country will be unable to maintain its leadership in the struggle to preserve freedom and democracy."

AEC-Sponsored Research

Fellowship Program to be Reduced

A total of \$10,500,000 allotted to two hundred AEC research and development projects was reached at the end of the 1950 fiscal year (June 30, 1951), according