

News and views

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

WATERMAN NAMED FIRST DIRECTOR

Alan T. Waterman, technical director of the Office of Naval Research, was named by President Truman on March 9th to direct the National Science Foundation—an appointment which represents the final step in putting the Foundation into full operation as the coordinating agency for basic scientific research in the United States. Dr. Waterman was selected from a slate of candidates submitted to the President by the National Science Foundation Board following its third meeting, held last February, and he comes to the post equipped with a convincing background of experience as a research administrator. During World War II, while on leave from the faculty of Yale University, he served the National Defense Research Committee as vice chairman of its Division D and as a deputy member of the NDRC Board of Review. He was also with the Office of Scientific Research and Development, both during and following the war, and for a brief period was chief scientist with the planning division of the Office of Research and Inventions before joining the ONR in 1947.

Shortly before Dr. Waterman's nomination, Detlev W. Bronk, chairman of the National Science Foundation Board's executive committee, announced that considerable progress had already been made in laying out the general principles of the Board's operation and in formulating its organizational structure. It has been agreed, according to Dr. Bronk, that the promotion of basic research and education in the sciences throughout the country is a prime objective, since the Board feels that the Foundation's best contribution to the defense effort will be through the general strengthening of the scientific fabric of the nation. It was pointed out in particular that the Board has voted not to establish at this time a division devoted wholly to defense research in the belief that the Foundation's programs in basic science would inevitably contribute in the long run to the nation's military and technological strength.

Because the funds appropriated by Congress to the Foundation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1951 are sufficient only to cover organizational and administrative expenses, the Board considered at some length the proposals to be made to Congress for its budget for the 1952 fiscal year. The actual initiation of the Foundation's fellowship and research programs must await these appropriations. The officers of the Foundation were authorized to prepare final budget estimates.

The Board appointed temporary committees to initiate the work of the four divisions of the Foundation authorized by the Science Foundation Account. These divisions are Medical Research; Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences; Biological Sciences; and Scientific Personnel and Education. The committees are to survey the needs of the country in these four fields.

EUROPEAN PHYSICS LABORATORY

FRANCE AND ITALY OFFER FINANCIAL AID

The U. S. National Commission for Unesco has been notified by Unesco's Paris headquarters that the proposal for

establishment of a European physics laboratory, made last year in Florence by I. I. Rabi, member of the U. S. delegation to the Fifth General Conference of Unesco, has received offers of financial support from France and Italy. An offer of 2,000,000 lire (about \$3,125) from the National Research Council of Italy was accepted by Unesco's Executive Board, and it was indicated that the French Government was considering a donation of 2,000,000 francs (about \$5,555). A preliminary study of possibilities for setting up the laboratory is to be made under the direction of Unesco's Natural Science Department, which is headed by Professor Pierre Auger. When a preliminary report on the study of the possibility of establishing the West European center is completed, it will be presented to a meeting of experts to be convened by Unesco. A number of Western European nations have already expressed interest in the project, and it is expected that additional financial help will be forthcoming.

FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

FOREIGN SCHOLARS WISH TO TEACH HERE

A number of scholars from foreign countries participating in the Fulbright Program wish to teach in American universities or colleges during the academic year 1951-52, according to word received recently from the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils. Each individual listed has been recommended for consideration by the United States Educational Foundation in his own country and would be eligible to apply for a Fulbright grant covering costs of round trip transportation to the final destination in the United States if satisfactory arrangements for lecturing are completed. The Committee is prepared to provide information regarding the professional qualifications of these scholars upon request to any interested university or college official, and would appreciate being informed when an invitation is extended to any of the scholars involved so that his name may be removed from the list of available persons. Invitations from American institutions are a vital factor in the welfare of the Fulbright Program, the Committee points out, since only through the participation of foreign scholars can the Program become truly reciprocal and mutually beneficial to the countries taking part in the plan.

Physicists listed by the Committee are: S. R. De Groot, 34-year-old professor of theoretical physics at Utrecht University, the Netherlands (thermodynamics of irreversible processes, beta-radio activity), who will be available for one academic year or for three or four months after May 1951; K. M. Matta, 33-year-old lecturer in physics at Farouk I University, Egypt (ultrasonics, hydrodynamics), who will be available for one year commencing October or January to the same date the year after; and Afaf Ahmad Sabry, 28-year-old lecturer in applied mathematics at Abbassia, Cairo, Egypt (quantum mechanics, thermodynamics and statistical mechanics, hydrodynamics and elasticity, electrodynamics, relativity), who will be available from May 1951 to November 1951.

Mathematicians listed are: Shafik Doss, 37-year-old assistant professor at Farouk I University, Egypt (advanced probability, any course on pure mathematics), who will be available for the year 1951-52 or any subsequent year; and Thirukkannapuram Vijayaraghavan, 48-year-old director of Ramanujan Institute of Mathematics, Madras, India (real variables, complex variables, theory of numbers, algebra), who will be available for about eight months.

In addition to the above, a number of chemists, engineers,

and specialists in geology, geography, and meteorology are listed by the Committee. Further details may be obtained by writing to the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils, Committee on International Exchange of Persons, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington 25, D. C. [For a more detailed description of the Fulbright Program, see Dwight Grays's Report from Washington, page 12, this issue.]

UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS MEET

EMERGENCY ISSUES DISCUSSED

The American Association of University Professors, during its thirty-seventh annual meeting at Cleveland in March, endorsed compulsory military service during the emergency, but at the same time called for a definite time limit on such a program and for provisions insuring "the education, prior to military service, of an adequate number of the best qualified students in all areas of higher education"—not only in scientific and technical fields, but in the humanities and the social sciences as well.

A resolution was also adopted by the Association urging that necessary emergency economies in colleges and universities should not result in the reductions of faculty personnel except in clearly unavoidable instances, and then should be confined to faculty members who have not acquired tenure status. Teachers called into the armed forces or defense work during the emergency, the Association added, should receive leaves of absence.

Another resolution reaffirmed the Association's opposition last year to special loyalty oaths and investigations for teachers or students, adding, "we join in the meeting's opposition to any doctrine whereby membership of a college or university in any lawful political party or other organization could become in itself a proper ground of dismissal". The Association also put itself on record as opposing "the adoption at this time of special accelerated programs of instruction for purposes of the national emergency, as distinguished from the normal year-round program which permits students to finish their studies in less than four years if they wish".

AEC GROUP REPORTS

INDUSTRIAL DATA NOT BEING WITHHELD

About a year and a half ago, an advisory committee made up of representatives of technical and engineering societies and the business press was formed to discover how much secret technical information still in the files of the Atomic Energy Commission might be of value to American industry. The first formal report of this committee's working group has now been submitted to the AEC and states categorically that a search of classified patent files and a study of the technology of electromagnetic separation have revealed in both instances a satisfactory declassification of information. "In no case," the report says, "have we uncovered any 'huge amount' of secret information of value to industry, although some specific cases of valuable information are noted in our reports."

The working group's survey turned up little classified technological information that seemed of prime interest to the fields of mechanical and electrical engineering, according to the report, but "much that may be noteworthy" in the chemical and engineering and metallurgy fields. In concluding its report the group suggested that an engineer might profitably be added to the AEC's present list of senior responsible reviewers.

E. E. Thum, editor of *Metal Progress* and representative of the American Society of Metals, acted as chairman of the group. Other members were: Keith Henney, consulting editor, *Nucleonics* and *Electronics*, and representative of the Institute of Radio Engineers; S. A. Tucker, editorial director, American Society of Mechanical Engineers; and F. J. Van Antwerpen, editor, *Chemical Engineering Progress*, and representative of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers.

NEW LABORATORIES

YALE'S GEOCHRONOMETRIC RESEARCH CENTER

According to information from Yale, the basement of one of the University's buildings in New Haven is in the process of being converted into a well shielded laboratory where radiocarbon dating techniques will be studied by a group of Yale scientists and historians. Pioneered by physicist W. F. Libby of the University of Chicago's Institute for Nuclear Studies, the carbon-14 time identification method has been employed in dating organic materials of historical interest which may be as much as fifteen thousand years old, and the Yale project will be concerned primarily with verifying and refining the technique. A major part of the program will involve experiments designed to check results against well-established archaeological data. The method itself depends upon the fact that carbon-14, which is normally absorbed by living plants and animals, has a half-life of over fifty-five hundred years. In order to date organic matter (such as bone, wood, textiles, paper, or plant remains buried in geological deposits), samples are converted chemically into pure carbon, which is then shielded from outside radioactive sources so that the carbon-14 disintegration rate may be measured with the aid of a geiger counter. Calculation of the amount of radiocarbon which has decayed gives a reasonably accurate estimate of the age of the sample.

The new research center is to be known as the "Geochronometric" Laboratory and is to be administered by a seven-man advisory board headed by Richard F. Flint, professor of geology at Yale. The laboratory director is Edward S. Deevey, Jr., assistant professor of biology, and the other board members are W. C. Bennet of the anthropology department, G. Evelyn Hutchinson of the zoology department, H. L. Kraybill of the physics department, G. A. Kubler of the art history department, and H. C. Thomas of the chemistry department.

THE JAMES FORRESTAL RESEARCH CENTER

A new center for advanced research and training in the fields of aeronautical engineering, chemical kinetics, jet propulsion, and related sciences has been established at Princeton University as a memorial to James Forrestal, first secretary of defense and an alumnus and charter trustee of the University. Known as the James Forrestal Research Center, it will adjoin the University on property formerly occupied by the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. Daniel C. Sayre, chairman of the department of aeronautical engineering at Princeton, will be director and executive secretary of an administrative committee consisting of Kenneth H. Condit, dean of the school of engineering, who will act as chairman; George A. Brakeley, vice-president and treasurer of the University; Hugh S. Taylor, dean of the graduate school and former chairman of the department of chemistry, and Raymond J. Woodrow, executive officer and secretary of the University's committee on project research