News and views

Geneva Conference

THE AEC has announced that the United States will build a research reactor of the swimming pool type for demonstration at the United Nations international conference in Geneva, Switzerland, August 8–20. The Commission has named George L. Weil, former assistant director of its reactor development division, as technical director for U. S. participation in the conference.

NBS, 1953-54: A Progress Report

WHILE the National Bureau of Standards' *Biennial Report* for the years 1953 and 1954, released in March, is primarily a review of that agency's activities during the past two years, it also serves as a record of the steps that have been taken to carry out the specific recommendations submitted on October 15, 1953, by the Ad Hoc Committee formed under the leadership of M. J. Kelly to evaluate the functions and operations of the Bureau in relation to the national need. The major recommendations contained in the report of the Kelly Committee were listed in the following manner:

1. Higher level of activity in the basic programs.
2. Modernization of facilities and increased space for basic programs.
3. Improvement of organization at the Associate Director level.
4. Transfer of weaponry projects to the Department of Defense.
5. Continued use of the Bureau by Department of Defense and Atomic Energy Commission for nonweaponry science and technical aid.
6. Continued and increased use of the Bureau by other agencies of Government in indicated areas of science and technology.
7. Decrease in repetitive test operations at the Bureau.
8. Division of primary responsibility for policy and procedure on commercial product tests between the Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the Bureau.
9. Increased support of standard samples program.
10. Advisory groups to the Director selected from membership in eight scientific and technical societies.

Apart from items 1, 2, and 9, the recommendations of the Kelly Committee seem to have been followed. Action suggested in item 3, for example, was taken early in 1954 when the Bureau announced organizational changes providing for four associate directors (for physics, chemistry, testing, and administration). A plan for the transfer of the Bureau's weaponry development work to the Department of Defense (item 4) was announced even before the release of the Kelly Committee report. The transfer, including about 40 percent of the NBS personnel and four major divisions, resulted in the creation by the Army Ordnance Corps of the Diamond Ordnance Fuze Laboratories, which continue to operate adjacent to the Bureau in Washington, and the creation of a new Naval Ordnance Laboratory by absorption of former NBS guided missile activities at Corona, California. A short while later the Institute for Numerical Analysis was transferred from the Bureau's Applied Mathematics Division to the University of California at Los Angeles.

That items 5 and 6 have been carried out is amply demonstrated throughout the *Biennial Report*, and particularly in that section dealing with the Bureau's cooperative activities. In one area alone, that of an information and testing service established to answer questions on the characteristics, performance, instructions, and availability of electron tubes, the Bureau received some 800 requests for advice from agencies of the Department of Defense, the Federal Trade Commission, the War Munitions Board, and the Office of International Trade. Mutual interests of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Bureau as indicated by AEC sponsored projects at NBS range from the preparation of some 40 sugars and related compounds, labeled with carbon-14 in specific positions in the molecule, to the large-scale AEC-NBS program of research and development in cryogenic engineering. In addition, the Bureau seems able and willing to perform every conceivable technical service for government agencies from developing fully automatic high-speed coin-weighing machines for the Department of the Treasury to advising the International Administration of the State Department as to likely sites for radio transmitters.

In keeping with items 7 and 8, the Bureau instituted a policy of restricting calibration services, as far as possible, to the calibration of basic standards. As usual, tests of products were made only at the request of other government agencies, except where the Bureau possessed facilities not available elsewhere, or in the rare instances where referee tests were required. Many requests for qualification and acceptance testing services were referred to commercial and college testing laboratories. In addition the Bureau entered into a "memorandum of understanding" with the General Services Administration, an agency having broad responsibilities for purchasing supplies and services required by the government and also having such related functions as specifications, inspection, and testing. The memorandum deals particularly with the assignment to the Bureau of responsibility for specifications for general test methods and with the conduct of qualification and acceptance testing.

As for the 10th recommendation of the Kelly Committee, the advisory group organization now includes twelve technical area advisory committees that provide