

GENERAL SCIENCE

# Great Roster of Scientists And Experts Now in Making

**Expected to Include as Many as Half Million Names;  
Will List Useful Hobbies as Well as Regular Vocations**

**A** GIANT card directory of all of America's experts—scientists and professional people—is in the making in order that Uncle Sam may locate for defense, or whenever need arises, those with special skills.

"The National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel," as this index is called, may include eventually as many as half a million names, or about one out of every 250 Americans.

Without any fanfare of publicity the project has been materialized through the joint efforts of the National Resources Planning Board and the Civil Service Commission.

Dr. Leonard Carmichael, psychologist and president of Tufts College, is director of the project, and James C. O'Brien of the Civil Service Commission is executive officer.

The new federal index of experts will be somewhat similar to the register compiled last year in England under the sponsorship of the Royal Society. The British experience is being drawn upon in formulating the methods of procedure and operation.

## Existing Lists Used

Membership lists of specialized and technical societies will be used to reach the specialists of the nation with extensive questionnaires. These will not deal with their regular lines of work alone but with their hobbies as well. A biologist who designs special radio circuits as a hobby may prove to be more valuable to the nation as a communications engineer than in his own primary professional field.

The information gathered will be recorded on punch cards which can be sorted speedily by machines. In a few minutes it will then be possible to compile an accurate list of all experts in any field.

"The fundamental idea behind the new roster is conservation," Dr. Carmichael explained. "It is recognized by all that the services of experts may be crucial in preserving the welfare of the nation. A chemist whose work has been done in some highly specialized and rela-

tively obscure field may suddenly become the one man in the country able to devise a means of protection against some new chemical weapon. A specialist in an obscure dialect of a foreign language may possess a skill which will have far-reaching significance in an emergency. The conservation of specialized work now in progress is also important to the nation. It is most desirable not to disturb an important cooperating group of scientists in a certain laboratory if similarly trained experts not so engaged can be found elsewhere."

## Other Bodies Cooperate

National non-governmental organizations cooperating in the early stages of the roster project include: National Research Council, American Council on Education, American Council of Learned Societies, and the Social Science Research Council. Engineers will also be included, but only the more specialized medical men will be included because of the extensive lists of physicians compiled by the American Medical Association.

To supplement and make effective the great files of index cards, it is planned to have committees of specialists widely acquainted with various fields to evaluate the names of individuals whose names are obtained by the automatic card sorting processes. These special committees will also be charged with protecting the present educational and research endeavors which are performing important public services.

"The aim of the National Roster is the development of a means for the efficient and rapid but appropriate use of the specialized brains of America in the service of the nation," Dr. Carmichael explained. "Once started and organized, the value of the Roster to many constructive activities of peace time, especially in connection with modern personnel and employment services, will become obvious.

"With the passing of the present emergency, this Roster should not be abandoned, but rather, maintained as a continuing and always up to date census of the specialized brains of America.

Even in a complete and continuing form, the development and maintenance of such a register will not be expensive in comparison with some of the other projects already undertaken for the preservation and effective use of our national resources. The procedures which will be based upon the use of the Roster are at once effective and truly democratic. The time has come when our nation must be efficient. The National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel is certainly a necessary tool of an effective democracy."

*Science News Letter, August 17, 1940*

PUBLIC HEALTH

## Chronic Disease Now Most Probable Cause of Death

**A**BOUT three out of every four children born now will die from chronic disease, while acute disease will take about one in six, according to the statistical department of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. This represents a considerable change from conditions at the beginning of the century. Every third child born then would have been killed by acute disease, while chronic disease would have been responsible for the deaths of about half the group.

Childhood ages have chiefly benefited by the cut in death rate from acute and infectious diseases, says the Company's *Statistical Bulletin* (July). "On the other hand," it continues, "most of the chronic diseases, which have their greatest incidence in midlife and in old age, have shown little or no improvement, and in some cases there have been actual increases in their mortality rates. Of the chronic diseases, tuberculosis is the only one of importance that has shown any marked improvement."

The data also bring out the fact that "external causes," which include deaths by suicide, homicide and accident, have greatly increased in importance since 1920, especially for males. In 1901 77 in a thousand males would have died in this way, in 1920 this had increased to 79, but in 1937 it stood at 101. The corresponding figures for females were 33, 38 and 56 in a thousand.

Other figures collected, comparing deaths during the first half of 1939 and of 1940, show that the depression years did not adversely affect the health of the nation. The death rate per thousand, for those insured in the Company's Industrial Department, was 8.98 in the first six months of 1939 and 8.14 in 1940.

*Science News Letter, August 17, 1940*