

GENERAL SCIENCE

New Government Office For Defense Scientific Work

Office of Scientific Research and Development Will Coordinate Work of Defense Agencies and Departments

COORDINATION of all scientific activities concerned with national defense is the objective of the new Office of Scientific Research and Development which has been created within the Office of Emergency Management by Executive order of President Roosevelt. Under the directorship of Dr. Vannevar Bush, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and until now chairman of the National Defense Research Committee, the new organization will serve as liaison agency for a number of scientific groups which have hitherto worked independently of each other, reporting directly to the President.

Funds for the promotion of scientific research programs for the production of new weapons and defense materials and methods, and for medical research programs having defense value, are provided by Congressional appropriation. The new Office of Scientific Research and Development is authorized to "initiate and support" such programs. This is a long step forward, for similar bodies set up during previous national emergencies have had only advisory capacity, and could not undertake research programs or other activities on their own initiative. Dr. Bush indicated his intention to "lean heavily" upon these older advisory bodies, particularly the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council.

In carrying on the activities authorized by the new executive order, one of the principal disbursing and action agencies will be the already existing National Defense Research Committee, of which President James B. Conant, of Harvard University, has been appointed chairman, succeeding Dr. Bush. It is understood that Dr. Conant's duties will be such that he can carry them out without neglecting his work as a university president.

Other agencies already functioning that will report to the President through Dr. Bush include the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics and the Health and Medical Committee established by order of the Council of Nation-

al Defense. Distinctly defense activities of established bureaus in government departments, such as the Bureau of Mines and the National Bureau of Standards, will also come within the purview of the new Office of Scientific Research and Development.

Somewhat similar action was taken in Britain some time ago, when a single coordinating body was appointed to act as liaison agency between the government and about half-a-hundred research groups in various British defense organizations both military and civil.

Close cooperation is provided for, between British and American research bodies. Britain already has an office in this country, and when Dr. Conant was in England recently he set up a similar office there, which is now taken over by the new Office of Scientific Research and Development. British scientists have requested their American colleagues to take over certain basic scientific research,

especially in the field of medicine, in order that they may devote their attention more intensively to immediately pressing practical problems.

The new Office of Scientific Research and Development will also mesh closely with the Office of Production Management under William S. Knudsen and the Office of Civilian Defense under Fiorello LaGuardia. The function of Dr. Bush's organization for them, as for the Army and Navy, will be to find useful scientific methods, devices and materials, which these agencies of application can take over, produce and put into use.

Science News Letter, July 12, 1941

PHYSIOLOGY

Hormone Production By Thyroid Gland Clocked

HOLDING a clock on the thyroid gland to time its production rate as a chemical factory, scientists at the University of California find it takes this U-shaped gland in the neck just two hours to manufacture its highly complex hormone.

This is the first time the formation of a hormone of any of the body's endocrine glands has been measured. The measurements were made by Dr. I. L. Chaikoff, Dr. I. Perlman and M. E. Morton, using tagged atoms of radioactive iodine from the atom-smashing cyclotron. (*Turn to next page.*)



TRANSPARENT

The first rowboat ever made entirely of du Pont's clear methyl methacrylate plastic "Lucite," being launched for a trial in Long Island Sound. Actually it was not designed for deep sea service but for store display.