

## GENERAL SCIENCE

# Fellowship Controversy

► **CONTROVERSY** over FBI clearance has caused the virtual abandonment of any new fellowship program of the Atomic Energy Commission so far as it applies to non-secret research and study by those who have not obtained graduate degrees.

The National Academy of Sciences and its National Research Council refused to administer the non-secret fellowship program since Congress voted last summer to require that applicants be investigated by the FBI and pronounced loyal to the AEC.

A predoctoral program will be carried out only for non-secret work by present fellows who want their fellowships renewed, but in these cases the FBI clearance will be obtained before renewal. The National Research Council will pass only on the scientific attainments of the students and leave the loyalty matters to the AEC.

One of the hottest controversies in the history of the National Academy resulted from the proposed FBI clearances, which

were discussed at the Rochester, N. Y., meeting in October.

There was no difference of opinion as to desirability of FBI and security clearance for those whose advanced training will take them into secret fields. The National Research Council will administer a program of such fellowships for those who have the Ph.D. and full loyalty procedures have been agreed upon.

Next year's program will include about 250 awards, 175 of them renewals, while there are now 421 AEC fellows.

The Academy, top science body of the United States, urged the AEC to attempt to get Congress to eliminate the FBI checks from future legislation. The AEC was advised to see that prospective fellows are told the nature of FBI investigations and the criteria by which decisions are made by the AEC.

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## MEDICINE

# A-Bomb Causes Blindness

► **IF** another atom bomb ever drops, some of the survivors will go blind a year or two afterwards. The number likely to be blinded by the bomb may be one out of every 40 or 50 of those within a thousand yards of the bomb burst.

This may be predicted from a report by Drs. David G. Cogan, S. Forrest Martin and Samuel J. Kimura of Harvard Medical School, Boston, and the University of California Medical School, San Francisco, to the journal, *SCIENCE* (Dec. 16), in Washington, D. C.

These scientists are surveying atom bomb eye damage in Japan for the U. S. Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. The survey was prompted in part by the discovery a year ago of cataracts in cyclotron workers in the United States.

The atom bomb blindness seen so far in 10 Japanese survivors is due to cataracts. Whether these were caused by neutrons or by gamma rays from the bomb is not known.

Among the 11 atom-smashing cyclotron workers whose eyes were damaged, neutrons seem the most likely cause of the damage, though this is not yet proved. Of 10 of the 11 cyclotron workers with eye damage, studied at the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, three men have a severe handicap. Four are afflicted to a degree which does not at present interfere markedly with daily life. The other three have a minimal affliction which does not cause appreciable handicap.

The outlook is good for successful removal of the cataracts, with restoration of eyesight, in the severe cases. In two, this has already been accomplished, Drs. P. H. Abelson and P. G. Kruger of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the University of Illinois state in their report in the same issue of *SCIENCE* on the cyclotron cataracts.

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## AGRICULTURE

# Silent Pop Sorghum May Soon Rival Popcorn

► **POPCORN** may soon have a rival: pop sorghum which can be chewed noiselessly, without getting caught in the teeth, is vying to become the number one movie confection.

Although sorghum grains make a smaller puff than popcorn, their thinner hull leaves no husk to lodge between the teeth. Pop sorghum is more tender in consequence and when chewed produces no crackling sounds to detract from the sound track.

Such at least are the claims made for pop sorghum by plant breeders of the Texas Agriculture Experiment Station who have developed what they think may some day rival popcorn for the public's favor.

The idea of popping sorghum is not new. At least 50 years ago farm boys were taking the grains of sorghum, raised extensively for cattle fodder, and roasting them over open fires. The Chinese make a confection

of sorghum by puffing it with steam, something like puffed rice.

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## AERONAUTICS

# 1949 Airlines Death Rate Is Lowest in History

► **AMERICA** has had the lowest fatality rate in history of domestic and international flying by the scheduled carriers, the New Orleans Association of Commerce was told by D. W. Rentzel, U. S. Administrator of Civil Aeronautics, in New Orleans, La.

The trend in aviation during the year has been upward in every respect for air carriers, he said, but spotty for personal flying. Light-plane output is not keeping up with the number of old planes being scrapped. Private aircraft ownership is highest in sparsely populated states, which have a high proportion of airports to population and a high percentage of good flying weather.

A new undertaking of the CAA, he reported, is assistance in the development of fast roads to airports from the cities they serve. It is advisory assistance to local officials. Too often, he stated, the time-saving of air travel is cancelled by the delays in getting to and from airports.

Science News Letter, December 24, 1949

## GENERAL SCIENCE

# Prescription for Stable World Is Given

► **FOUR** things are needed to make a "stable scientific society," in other words, a world free from war, famine and other disasters, Bertrand Russell, English philosopher, declared at the meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine in London.

But in his view the prospects are gloomy for a world governed by science being stable.

The four requirements, he said, are: 1. One single world government with arms monopoly for enforcing peace. 2. General diffusion of prosperity. 3. Low birth rate everywhere to stop the present disastrous population increase. 4. Provisions for individual initiative and expression.

The unlikelihood of achieving these four requirements in the near future means we face the prospect of war, famine and pestilence, he declared. But he believes that ultimately world government may achieve these aims.

Russia, China and India are today, he said, the great reservoirs of procreation and poverty.

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Considerable damage has been done to turf within a radius of 20 miles of New York City during the past two years by the *Japanese beetle* and the *Oriental beetle*, with the latter the chief offender.