

GENERAL SCIENCE

Foundation Director

First head of National Science Foundation is pioneer in governmental support of fundamental scientific research. From ONR, was in OSRD during war.

➤ A PIONEER in governmental support of fundamental scientific research has been selected by President Truman to be first director of the National Science Foundation. He is Dr. Alan T. Waterman, 58, now deputy chief and chief scientist of the Office of Naval Research.

Dr. Waterman is a firm believer in the thesis that we cannot have progress without seeking out the fundamental secrets of nature. As chief civilian in the Navy's scientific effort, he has put that belief to work. He instituted for the first time in the government the practice of letting contracts to colleges and universities for projects in fundamental research.

Up until that time much fundamental research had been done by scientists working directly for civilian agencies of the government—the Bureau of Standards and the Department of Agriculture, to name only two. And, during the war, the Office of Scientific Research and Development had begun the practice of letting contracts in developmental research to universities. In this way much valuable work on new weapons and new materials was done.

When he joined the ONR in 1946, Dr. Waterman, who held an important post with the OSRD during the war, applied to fundamental research that experience of letting contracts for developmental research to colleges.

The National Science Foundation was designed to further the search for basic knowledge. It is expected that it will have funds for research projects, funds to set up fellowships for producing new scientists. Under Dr. Waterman's guidance, the ONR came closest of any governmental research project to resembling what scientists hope the new Foundation will be.

An exciting example of the fundamental research being done by the Office of Naval Research under Dr. Waterman's leadership is the work in cosmic rays. These rays which enter our atmosphere from outer space are being studied to find out where they come from, what they are made of. The ONR is interested for a number of eminently practical reasons because the rays are particles of matter with great energy.

Though ONR comes closest to the scientists' conception of how government should operate in research, it has its limitations, even though they are broad. The projects for which contracts were let had to be justified by their potential usefulness to the government and its defenses. Some of

those interesting side streets which appear in scientific research and which sometimes lead to vital discoveries, could not always be pursued with Navy money.

As director of the National Science Foundation, Dr. Waterman will not be bound by such considerations.

Dr. Waterman was educated at Princeton, receiving his Ph.D. in 1916. He is a physicist, having taught at Yale for almost 30 years. In 1942 he came into government service and shortly held an important position in the Office of Scientific Research and Development, the agency which directed the scientific end of the war effort. In 1946 he went to work for the Navy. He is married and has five children.

The National Science Foundation, of which Dr. Waterman is to be chief executive officer, has a board of 24 prominent scientists and other public figures. Its chairman is Harvard President James Conant. Last fall Congress appropriated \$225,000 to get the Foundation going, but after July 1 Dr. Waterman and his board may have up to \$15,000,000 to administer.

Science News Letter, March 24, 1951

On This Week's Cover

➤ RISING from the cold earth of early spring is the charming flower of the bloodroot, perennial reminder of renewed life and hope.

The photograph on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER shows the pure white blossoms and heavily veined leaves of this low-growing wild flower. The buds shown will burst into full bloom overnight.

Science News Letter, March 24, 1951

INVENTION

Seesaw for One Given Patent

➤ THE LONELY, introspective child need no longer suffer the agonies of seeking out a partner for the teeter-totter. A one-person seesaw has been invented.

Harry S. Ray, Hollywood, Calif., received patent number 2,544,106, for a seesaw which one child can work by himself. The seesaw has a seat at only one end. On the horizontal bar on which the seesaw rests, there also are two vertical bars. A footrest and two handles are provided and, with these, the child can swing himself up and down, up and down, all alone.

Science News Letter, March 24, 1951



FIRST DIRECTOR—Dr. Alan T. Waterman, of the Office of Naval Research, has been appointed as the first director of the National Science Foundation.