

GENERAL SCIENCE

International Science

Despite much secret scientific work, many promising international scientific activities are now being conducted under aegis of the United Nations.

► SCIENCE HAS almost from its beginnings been international. Even during early and primitive wars, scientists often exchanged information and acted as though they were truly citizens of the world. For instance, Franklin gave Capt. Cook safe conduct during the American Revolution.

The coming of atomic energy during the second World War materially changed this. Much of science became "Top Secret."

Yet strangely enough, out of the past war and allied to the United Nations there have come international scientific activities of some promise.

Perhaps these activities like UNESCO, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Meteorological Organization will become even more respectable now that President Eisenhower has proposed to the United Nations a peaceful pooling of fissionable materials on a limited scale.

The holdout on international scientific cooperation has been Soviet Russia. Her scientists have been to only a limited number of international conferences. The World Meteorological Organization is one of the few international bodies outside the main United Nations to which Soviet Russia adheres with some enthusiasm.

If talks are begun with Soviet Russia on the Eisenhower atomic energy proposals, some of the other attempts at scientific cooperation may be encouraged. There is the nuclear laboratory that a number of European nations are establishing under UNESCO encouragement. This effort will be located in Switzerland. (See SNL, Aug. 1, 1953, p. 67.)

There have been in the past a number of so-called international laboratories, notably the Zoological Laboratory at Naples and the Jungfrauoch High Altitude Station. These have always been very small operations, in no sense comparable with the immense atomic energy activities of the United States and even meager compared with the cooperative efforts of some universities within an individual country.

About the time that UNESCO was being created, a French delegation submitted to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations a report on the United Nations Research Laboratories.

"Where man is fighting the unknown," said this report, "intellectual comradeship acquires extraordinary strength and value. If every scientific victory is made a joint triumph, scientific research will have acquired its true meaning."

Research would be more effective "if conducted with all the requisite resources of perfectly equipped international laboratories

for which the United Nations would be financially and intellectually responsible," it was also argued.

"An imperative need of democracy in the international field," the French declared with a world-wide flourish worthy of the later U.S.A. Point Four, "is that small countries with limited budgets should not suffer in their moral and intellectual development from purely material inferiority."

UNESCO took up the task of getting international research underway after the United Nations committee had listed a computation center, a brain institute, an institute of social sciences, an arid zone research laboratory, an international astronomical laboratory, an institute for the chemistry of living matter and an international meteorological laboratory in that priority order.

Of these, the arid zone research and the work in the center for nuclear research have made some progress. Because so many of the UN nations of the Middle East have deserts to cope with, investigation of what can be done about arid conditions is naturally very attractive.

The nuclear research institute to be established at Geneva will give a number of non-atomic nations a chance to keep up with the nuclear procession in a mild sort of way. The idea came from America originally but the venture is participated in by only European nations and not all of them.

Operating laboratories with real international cooperation and support are somewhat different from the international unions in various fields which have been operating for a good many years. There is an International Council of Scientific Unions. There are many international conferences in a large number of scientific fields. These meet every few years to bring some of the scientists of various nations together to exchange information and to work out the rules and customs without which science in one nation or area would not be uniform with that in another.

In these international unions Russian scientists have sometimes participated, but most frequently they have been absent. There are sometimes tentative acceptances, hope that they would participate, but usually the Russian "no show."

If Russia accepts the Eisenhower proposal for participation in the development of peaceful uses for atomic energy, perhaps this effort could be entrusted to one of the United Nations organizations such as UNESCO that has developed experience in the handling of these international matters in science and technology.

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• RADIO

Saturday, Feb. 13, 1954, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EST
"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. E. Cowles Andrus, associate professor of medicine, Johns Hopkins University, and president-elect, American Heart Association, will discuss "How to Help Your Heart."

The magnetostrictive property of *nickel*—its ability to vibrate when excited with electricity—has led to the development of a new electronic machine tool capable of cutting intricate shapes in the hardest of materials.

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