

GENERAL SCIENCE

For a Science Foundation

Intersociety committee organizes to help Congress provide for exploration of great unknowns; Cornell's President Day heads new group. House hearings start.

➤ BOTH Congress and scientists are getting set to create a national science foundation for the exploration of the world's great unknowns.

Just as science was mobilized during the war to give the military new weapons, such as the atomic bomb, it is planned to support and encourage research in universities and other laboratories to dig out the new basic knowledge for future use in peace and war.

Six bills for various kinds of science foundations are before Senate and House committees. The first hearings were scheduled for March 6 and 7 when the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce planned to devote eight hours to hearing witnesses. This is the same committee that in the last Congress failed to report on science bills in the closing days of the session and thus blocked passage of the bill that had been passed by the Senate.

Recently 120 representatives of scientific societies met in Washington and formed an intersociety committee on a

national science foundation. This is the largest and most representative meeting of the sort that has been held in the history of American science.

President Edmund E. Day of Cornell was elected chairman and Dr. Harlow Shapley of Harvard was chosen vice-chairman, with Dr. Dael Wolfle of American Psychological Association as secretary-treasurer. Six executive committee members from various parts of the country, representative of various fields of science and points of view regarding foundation proposals were also chosen.

Executive committee members include the officers and President Isaiah Bowman, Johns Hopkins; Dr. Ralph W. Gerard, University of Chicago; Chancellor R. G. Gustavson, University of Nebraska; Dr. Henry Allen Moe, Guggenheim Foundation; Dr. W. Albert Noyes, Jr., University of Rochester; Dr. Douglas M. Whitaker, Stanford University.

The principal differences among sci-

entists are concerned with how the proposed foundation should be administered. The bill that in the last Congress passed the Senate provided an administrator presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed, with an independent part-time advisory committee of scientists. Senator Elbert D. Thomas, D., Utah, has introduced this bill as S. 525.

A new bill introduced by Senator H. Alexander Smith, R., N. J., provided a part-time foundation membership of 48, which would appoint an executive committee of nine, which in turn would select a director and heads of the working divisions.

To provide a united front, scientists through their new committee may favor some compromise between the single administrator and the large committee. This may be a full-time commission of five along the lines of the atomic energy commission. Polls among the new intersociety committee show that a combination of those favoring a single administrator or a commission outnumber better than two to one those favoring control vested in a large committee.

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VOLCANOLOGY

Mount Etna Eruption Threatens Sicilians

➤ MOUNT ETNA, Europe's largest volcano, has again erupted, sending rivers of molten lava down its slopes to threaten the inhabitants of Sicily.

History's original volcano, from which the name "volcano" is believed to have come, has sent lava down on the island in the Mediterranean since the days of Plato and Aristotle. With the flows, have come death, destruction and perhaps the richest soil in the world.

Sicily, at the tip of the toe of Italy's boot, boasts as many as five crops a year and some of the most famous vineyards in the world as a result of Mount Etna's sometimes dangerous flows. Other European grape areas in northern France and southern Germany are also on lava soil left by long-since-vanished volcanoes.

Because Mount Etna does not usually explode when it erupts, few lives have been lost in modern eruptions, but history records several thousand deaths for Mount Etna's flows in the years 1169 and 1669. Most recent major eruption of the volcano was in 1928.

The name "volcano" comes from Vulcan, blacksmith god of fire and metals in the belief of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

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COMMITTEE HEADS—Dr. Harlow Shapley was elected vice-chairman of the committee; Dr. Edmund E. Day, chairman; and Dr. Dael Wolfle, secretary-treasurer.