GENERAL SCIENCE

Gov't Bureaus Attack Bill

The Department of Justice and FBI hit the provisions written into the Science Foundation Bill as perilous to not only the Bureau but the entire country.

➤ THE Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, have attacked the unprecedented loyalty provisions written into the National Science Foundation bill as "fraught with peril, not only to the Bureau itself, but also to the country at large."

The letter was written to Sen. Elbert Thomas (D.-Utah) and Rep. Robert L. Crosser (D.-Ohio), chairmen of the Senate and House Committees handling the bill, by Peyton Ford, Assistant to the Attorney General.

Mr. Ford, speaking for the Justice Department, the FBI and the Secretary of Defense, referred particularly to two amendments introduced by Reps. Howard W. Smith (D.-Va.) and Daniel J. Flood (D.-Pa.). The Smith amendment would require the FBI not only to investigate all prospective employees and scholarship-holders but also to make a judgment as to whether they were loyal and to certify that they were not or never had been members of subversive organizations. The Flood amendment would have required the FBI to make investigations and judgments as to any aliens receiving money from the Science Foundation.

Mr. Ford's letter pointed out that the FBI is "solely an investigative and fact-finding agency; it does not evaluate or make recommendations with reference to the information it collects."

"The fine reputation which I believe the Bureau enjoys," Mr. Ford went on, "results in large part because it has carefully restricted its activities to the making of investigations.

"In the opinion of the Director of the FBI, with which I agree, such legislation would constitute a clear departure from accepted fundamental theories of American government and lay a foundation for criticism of the Bureau as a state police organization."

Mr. Ford pointed out that membership "at any time" in subversive organizations was only a part of the evidence considered in a loyalty investigation. He said such a provision "seeks to deny to the Foundation the services of many Americans of unquestionable loyalty to the United States and its form of government who innocently joined a so-called 'front' organization with the highest motives and who withdrew their membership from such organization upon their first suspicion of its subversive character."

"It is characteristic," Mr. Ford continued, "of many 'front' organizations that their purported purposes and program are designed to appeal to loyal Americans."

The present loyalty program, Mr. Ford said, enables an employee who is a member of a listed organization to respond to charges against him and to show that his membership is innocent and does not reflect upon his loyalty. This opportunity, he said, "to defend himself in a manner consistent with American concepts of justice and fairness is lacking from the amendments."

In regard to the amendment having to do with aliens, Mr. Ford pointed out that the FBI has no facilities for conducting investigations abroad.

Mr. Ford concluded by asking that every effort be made to strike out the two amendments before its final enactment, "thus leaving investigations of the personnel of the National Science Foundation to be conducted on the same basis as investigations of personnel of other non-sensitive agencies."

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

ZOOLOGY

Insect Vision Clue

➤ THE lowly, spiny-tailed horseshoe crab has a delicate compass in his bulbous eyes. It is affected by polarized light.

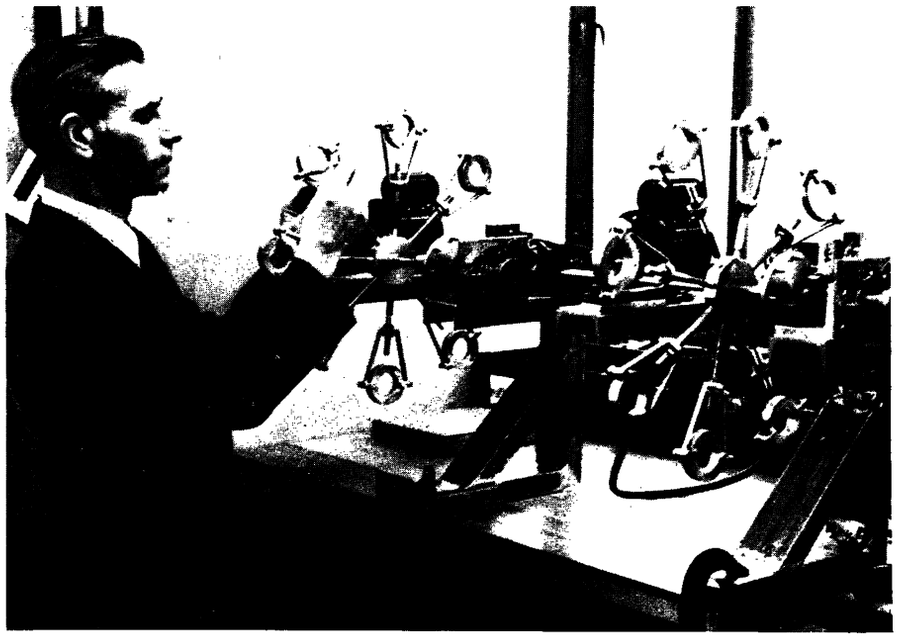
This discovery was reported recently by a Yale University zoologist, Dr. Talbot H. Waterman. It could give scientists a clue to the ability of high-flying insects to "see" their way to distant points by invisible polarization of light.

Dr. Waterman found that the compound eye of the horseshoe crab, which is similar to that of many insects, is affected by even a slight change in light polarization.

The zoologist hooked a loudspeaker to nerves leading from the crab's eye, among other instruments used in the intricate experiments. Then he listened to electrical impulses produced when a pinpoint of polarized light was shone into the eye.

How the crab uses his light compass is still not known, Dr. Waterman says in SCIENCE (March 10).

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950



FOR NUCLEAR RESEARCH—Michael Karelitz, engineer, studies automatic sample devices used for neutron experiments at the new Columbia University nuclear physics research center at Irvington-on-Hudson. Three years and one month after construction began, the world's most powerful synchro-cyclotron, generating 385,000,000 electron volts, is now in operation.