

MILITARY DEFENSE

Student Deferment Fight

Hershey says that local draft boards will have to handle student deferment although top scientists hope that a deferment policy board of experts will be set up.

► SELECTIVE Service and scientists are building up for a fight over whether local draft boards shall control deferment of students and trained scientists, technicians and engineers. Recently, in reporting to a meeting in Washington of the American Council on Education on the recommendations of six advisory groups as to how to handle such deferments, Selective Service Director Lewis B. Hershey emphasized that the local boards must do the selecting and the deferring.

Most scientists, including many of the members of the six advisory committees representing most fields of learning, hope that President Truman will take such deferments out of the hands of local boards and perhaps entirely out of Selective Service discretion.

Representatives of four top scientific societies (the National Research Council, the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Physics and the Engineers Joint Council) are preparing within two weeks to recommend to the National Security Resources Board that a separate body of experts in the fields to be deferred be set up to determine deferment policy. If this were done, Selective Service boards would be required to follow their recommendations.

This advice would make one of the main features of the report of General Hershey's advisers on how to handle college students' and scientists' deferment within the present

Selective Service law pretty much a dead letter. Now the four scientific societies, sometimes speaking through the same men, are preparing to advise NSRB to take this power away from Selective Service.

General agreement with three main points in the recommendations of the six special Selective Service committees was reached at a meeting of more than 550 distinguished educators and scientists at the American Council on Education sessions. They agreed that: 1. A nationwide aptitude test should be given to all high school seniors and that only those who passed this test should be deferred to go to college. 2. Certain percentages of sophomores, junior, senior and graduate classes in universities and colleges should also be deferred, and 3. No attempt should be made to pick out "essential" areas of study and defer students in those only, because no one knows now what will be essential to the national interest in five or ten years.

Scientists and educators are worried that the general public will feel they are seeking a sort of "draft-dodger status for college students and scientists. They may indicate, through a resolution at the meeting, that they feel that any man who is deferred to complete his studies has an obligation to use his training in the national interest. If he doesn't go into uniform, they feel, he certainly should work on something the government considers essential.

Science News Letter, October 14, 1950

ARCHAEOLOGY

Clue to Ancient Eskimos

See Front Cover

► TINY flakes of stone about the size of a paper clip which have lain frozen in the soil of the Canadian Arctic for thousands of years are the latest clues to the lives of the most remote ancestors of Eskimos.

These flakes were chipped off stone chunks and then delicately worked to an edge by the Dorset people whom archaeologists call the "ghosts of the Arctic," because so little is known about them. They were probably the first Eskimos to reach the New World, no one knows just how many centuries before the coming of Columbus. The flakes were probably used as tiny knives or scrapers.

They were found by Dr. Henry B. Collins, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institution and William E. Taylor, of the National Museum

of Canada, digging in the icy soil of Cornwallis Island, far up in the polar regions.

The flakes, known to scientists as "Lameller" flakes, link the earliest inhabitants of far northern Canada to men who lived in Asia in Middle Stone Age or New Stone Age days.

The mystery of how the antiquity of America's Stone Age man compares with that of his Old World relatives seems about to be solved. Dr. Collins found associated with the ancient stone flakes, some particles of wood which he has brought back and will submit for study of the carbon 14 content.

Since it is now known that organic matter gives off radiation from radioactive carbon 14 which disintegrates at a regular rate, the age of wood, bones, horns, skin and other once living matter can therefore

be determined by the proportion of carbon 14 remaining in the specimen.

"This method of dating," Dr. Collins commented, "is push-button archaeology. It is as simple as having a roll of film developed."

The new discoveries supplement those made by Dr. Collins in the same region last year in a joint expedition for the National Museum of Canada and the Smithsonian. Then it was found that the Thule Eskimos who preceded the modern Eskimos once lived on Cornwallis Island, built houses of wood and stone supported by whale bones, and hunted whales. Life there is too rugged for the Eskimos nowadays; there are no whales, neither is there driftwood.

The photo on this week's cover of SCIENCE NEWS LETTER shows remains of Thule living quarters. Notice the stone bed in right foreground. The "veiled ladies" are whale bone roof supports.

Science News Letter, October 14, 1950

ICHTHYOLOGY

"Red Tides" Do Suffocate, Do Not Poison, Fish

► "RED TIDES," mysterious waves of evil-smelling, blood-red death which periodically sweep U. S. coastal areas clean of all marine life, apparently kill fish by suffocation rather than poisoning, two University of Texas biologists report.

"Red tides" are known to be caused by sudden multiplication of red-colored, one-celled organisms called protozoa, which are near the bottom of the evolutionary scale. But why they multiply so suddenly, and how the organisms kill fish, are still puzzles to scientists.

Drs. Cecil H. Connell and Joy Barnes Cross have found that a Galveston "red tide" in 1949 occurred in a bayou that was slightly polluted by sewage. The multiplying organisms caused "extraordinarily wide and rapid" changes in the amount of oxygen in the water.

Fish did not die in the "red water," they say, but rather died after the redness had settled, leaving the water turbid and milky and nearly devoid of dissolved oxygen.

The Galveston "red tide" marked an eastward move by a villain known as Gonyaulax, belonging to the order dinoflagellates. Previously this tiny marine creature had caused wide-spread losses of fish along the Pacific Coast.

One type of Gonyaulax is known to be the cause also of disastrous human poisoning, carried by polluted mussels. This type manufactures a poison 10 times as deadly to mice as strychnine. But the poison has little effect on fish, and does not explain the mass destruction of the "red tides," scientists say.

Science News Letter, October 14, 1950

More than half the 8,500 homicide cases annually in the United States are killed by gunfire.