

GENERAL SCIENCE

Threaten Research Work

Secretary of Defense issues instructions forbidding fund transfers for research by other government agencies unless private contractors are impossible to find.

➤ A PREFERENCE for private enterprise instead of public government service seems likely to bring ruin to some of the most effective research work in the nation.

Instructions have been issued from the office of Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson that transfer of some armed forces funds for research and development shall not be made to other government agencies until it can be shown that it is impossible to have such investigations done by a private contractor.

This means that some of the most fruitful research projects in various non-military bureaus will have to fight for continuance, even though they are in operation, fully and competently staffed, and of acknowledged usefulness.

Many of these endangered projects are in the National Bureau of Standards which has been doing work costing \$42,000,000, work requested and paid for by other agencies of the federal government out of funds appropriated to them by Congress. This is 85% of the Bureau of Standards' expenditures. Included are such vital defense projects as proximity fuzes, radio transmission, materials and other confidential and secret research.

With the coming of the new administration, some commercial concerns have contended that they should be given the chance to do such research. Attracted by the opportunity to charge relatively high percentages for overhead and administration, the private companies also look with favor upon building up research laboratories at public expense. They would acquire background, know-how, and an experienced staff, as well as certain patent rights on developments accomplished.

This seems to have brought about the intended reversal of the past practice of government research within the government.

With the virtual invitation to private companies, there is a lack of emphasis upon the basic research that has been so fruitful in giving the armed forces new knowledge and principles upon which to base the weapons and devices for the future.

Secretary Wilson has contended that "boondoggling" is disguised as research. He has been bitterly critical of "pure research" that he does not believe contributes directly to defense.

Two other developments have caused apprehension:

1. Dropping of civil service protection from many thousands of government jobs may endanger some of the nation's leading scientists in government, even though they are admittedly completely nonpolitical.

2. Attacks upon the testing functions of the Bureau of Standards and other agencies, such as launched during the Senate Small Business committee hearing on battery additives, weaken the protection of the public and the government from worthless commercial products.

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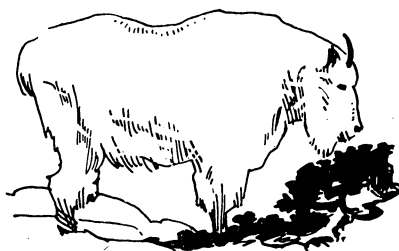
BIOCHEMISTRY

Cortisone Prevents Crippling of Tendons

➤ CRIPPLING AS a result of hard-to-repair tendon injuries may in some cases be prevented by cortisone, famous anti-arthritis hormone, Drs. Richard N. Wrenn, J. Leonard Goldner and Joseph E. Markee of Duke University, Durham, N. C., reported to the American Orthopedic Association meeting in Hot Springs, Va.

The cortisone is used during and after tendon operations. It provides more flexibility and better muscle movement by keeping tendons from sticking to surrounding tissue during healing. It also makes sewing the cut tendons much easier.

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Goats Play the Devil

➤ SATAN, IN modern comic and semiserious art, is drawn as a man with several decidedly goatish features. He has cloven hooves, and goat's horns top a long capricious countenance that usually has a "goatee" at its lower extremity. Sometimes, too, his ears stick out like a billy-goat's.

Sometimes it is contended that these symbolisms are simply transfers from the ancient Greek goat-god, Pan. That may or may not be true historically. If it is, however, it would assign to Pan a role much deeper and more malicious than the mere untamable, irresponsible freedom that Pan was supposed to symbolize. For real, flesh-and-blood goats, pastured by people for their wool and milk and meat, quite literally play the devil with the land over which

they trample and nibble. They represent the last, hungriest, most destructive stage of over-grazing.

Cattle and horses may crop the grass down to the last inch if too many of them are run on the range. Sheep will take that last inch, leaving only the roots in the ground. Goats will take even the roots, and thereafter browse on the woody shrubs that invade the pastures when grasses and other good herbs have been all eaten up.

In the meantime, their restlessly trampling, sharp-edged hooves keep the soil surface cut up, ready to blow with the wind or wash with the rain.

This is not an imaginary cycle. It has happened over and over again, especially in the Mediterranean lands. Pan, the goat-god, was not only a denizen of the rocky wilderness. He was to a considerable extent the creator of the wilderness.

The ultimate devil in the destruction of the land, however, is neither Pan nor his four-footed prototypes. Man, not Pan, must take the final responsibility. For goats, however wild they may run, are brought into new places by human herdsmen. If their numbers become such as to loose the damnation of erosion on the land, it is due either to the need or the greed of the men who control the size of the herds.

Thus far, in our own West, we are in the cattle-and-sheep stage of over-grazing. Goats have not yet entered the picture as an important element. If we keep on at the present clip, another generation or two may see little horns and sharp hooves where bison and antelope were in balance with nature a couple of generations ago.

Then we shall know that America has been added to the list of hungry lands.

Science News Letter, July 11, 1953

YOUR HAIR

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