GENERAL SCIENCE

Shift Standards Research

Splitting National Bureau of Standards will raise cost of research about $1,000,000, it is estimated. Shift of fuse and guided missile work to Defense Department was precipitate.

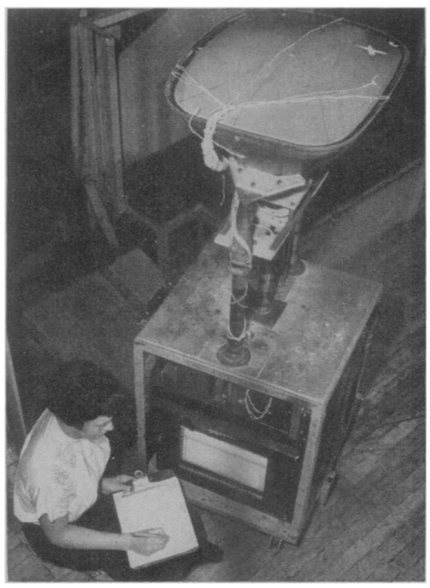
➤ AT LEAST $1,000,000 additional cost to the government for research will be caused by the splitting of the National Bureau of Standards into two organizations.

A shift in the near future of over one-third of the Bureau's personnel, approximately 1,600 employes engaged in fuse and guided missile work, to Defense Department jurisdiction was announced jointly by the Secretaries of Defense and Commerce.

Not including the reduced efficiency due to morale and rearrangements, two administrative staffs will be needed. Facilities now used by both the basic and testing non-military, and the military applied research will be duplicated.

Scientists are puzzled by the preciptate rush of the two secretaries. This very fundamental change has been made without awaiting the report of the evaluating committee, consisting of eminent scientists and engineers nominated at the request of Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks, and headed by Dr. M. J. Kelly of Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Dr. A. V. Astin was originally fired March 31 in a similarly precipitate manner without discussion with Secretary Weeks.



ROBOT MONITOR — New television picture tubes that provide sharper pictures and last longer are being produced with the aid of this electronic "guinea pig," which has an unusually sensitive instrument to monitor baking oven temperature.

The announced removal of the defense research, largely ordnance, puts Dr. Astin on the spot again.

The idea of separating the defense and the non-military research of the Bureau of Standards has been discussed in the past months. The plan was to have Dr. Astin head the defense research, in which he is expert, under the new setup. Dr. Astin on April 17 agreed to serve as director of the Bureau of Standards until the Kelley evaluating committee reported, which will be in the fall.

Secretary Weeks assured Dr. Astin that when relieved of the directorship he would be given a government post equivalent to the Standards directorship. Head of the military research would be such a job. The announced split, promptly accomplished, might stymie this. It might even endanger the civilian direction of war research, which is considered essential if we are to keep up with our enemies in guided missiles, electronics, etc.

Some see in the removal of defense research from the Bureau of Standards an opening wedge to turning some of it over to private industry, despite the extraordinary success of scientists working directly for the government. Evidently this would not displease those in the Eisenhower administration who make "free enterprise" a slogan.

Science News Letter, August 1, 1953

INVENTION

Tractor Landing Gear Smooths Plane Landings

➤ A TRACTOR landing gear for rough ground has been invented in Italy. It is a multiwheel landing gear supporting a pneumatic Caterpillar track which consists of a stretched, tubular, continuous tire, flexible but inextensible. A supporting frame consists of rocker arms pivoted to the supporting legs of the plane.

The inventor, Giovanni Bonmartini, Rome, says that this gear will afford good stability to the plane, it automatically takes the best position so as to pass over obstacles and the shock of obstacles is apportioned over the maximum amount of area on the tire.

Patent number is 2,645,437, and it was assigned to "EST"—Etablissement Sciences Techniques, Vaduz, Liechtenstein.

Science News Letter, August 1, 1953

Firebugs deliberately set 1,580 forest *fires* in 1952.

Questions

GENETICS—How could growth abnormalities be traced? p. 75.

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GENERAL SCIENCE—Where do most of the funds spent for federal research go? p. 68.

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PSYCHOLOGY—What are main goals of life in the comic strip world? p. 71.

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TECHNOLOGY—Why is there an intermission during Natural Vision movies? p. 74.

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VETERINARY MEDICINE—How has Canada virtually eliminated hog cholera? p. 72.

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VITAL STATISTICS—What years now show the highest death rate from polio? p. 69.

• • •

Photographs: Cover, Clifford Matteson; p. 67, UNESCO; p. 69, Sylvania Electric Products Inc; p. 70, Corning Glass Works; p. 71, Westinghouse Electric Corporation; p. 74, 20th Century-Fox; p. 79, Radio Corporation of America; p. 80, Eastman Chemical Products, Inc.

ZOOLOGY

Hawaiian Duck Facing Sudden Extinction

➤ SUDDEN EXTINCTION faces the mottled brown Laysan teal, *Anas wyvilliana,* found only on a single island of the Hawaiian group.

Director Paul L. Breese of the Honolulu zoo reports only about three dozen of the once plentiful ducks are left on Laysan island, which lies about 1,000 miles northwest of Oahu. The flocks were decimated by plumage hunters about the turn of the century, and they have waned in numbers since.

Although the birds are protected by law, their island home is so remote that effective policing is not possible. "The entire population of Laysan teal could easily be wiped out by the crew of a fishing vessel in need of food," Dr. Breese said.

Dr. Breese hopes to bring some of the ducks to the Honolulu zoo in an effort to raise them in captivity.

Science News Letter, August 1, 1953

ENGINEERING

Vibrations From Trucks Won't Shake House Down

➤ BIG CITY buses, heavy trucks, and moving vans rumbling past your house probably will do little damage—if any at all—by setting up vibrations in the house.

Generally speaking, structural vibrations would have to become severe before damage would occur. At these vibration levels, occupants would flee the building because the vibrations would be "unbearable," the Building Research Station in London reports.

Science News Letter, August 1, 1953