

GENERAL SCIENCE

Bureau Director Retained

At the Secretary of Commerce's request and in line with a recommendation of the evaluating committee, Dr. Allen V. Astin remains as head of the National Bureau of Standards.

► DR. ALLEN V. ASTIN has been asked by Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks to continue as director of the National Bureau of Standards upon recommendation of the evaluation committee headed by Dr. M. J. Kelly, president of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, concurred in by the regular visiting committee.

Resolving in part the controversy that arose over Dr. Astin's dismissal on March 30 as a part of the new administration's rearrangements, the retention of the Bureau's director follows three major actions that affect this scientific organization's work:

1. Cuts were made by Congress in the basic appropriations for non-defense work, amounting to 25% of previous funds, or \$1,613,000. Research and testing funds were cut from \$4,000,000 to \$3,000,000, radio propagation research from \$2,613,000 to \$2,000,000, and administration and operation funds maintained at \$1,000,000. Between 400 and 500 employees as a consequence will be "rif" victims (reduction in force).

2. Ordnance research for the Department of Defense concerned with such developments as proximity fuses, new weapons, etc. are being transferred out of Standards to direct Defense Department operation, although the same staff and laboratories will be used. This cuts \$30,000,000 in transferred funds out of the Standards expenditures. Close to 2,000 Standards employees, mostly scientists, will be shifted.

3. "Non-technical policy and procedural matters on commercial product evaluation" at Standards is being made the responsibility of the Secretary of Commerce and Dr. Astin's responsibility limited to the technical area. Standards is also being transferred to the supervision of Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration James C. Worthy instead of Assistant Secretary Craig R. Sheaffer who was responsible in the first instance for the dismissal of Dr. Astin. Thus the time-honored work of Standards in protecting the government, industry and the public from substandard materials, over-enthusiastic claims, or downright frauds is shifted largely to the politically-dominated department.

The battery additives controversy touched off the Standards trouble, arousing the apprehension and protests of many scientific and technical societies. The latest act in this situation is the canceling by the Post Office of the fraud order against battery additive AD-X2. Suspended since March 2, the order was nevertheless under fire by the incompleting hearings of the Senate Small

Business Committee. The canceling of the order came only a day before Secretary Weeks told Dr. Astin to stay on the job.

There is some apprehension that the handling of the AD-X2 case might open the way to giving immunity from investigation and appraisal to other commercial products about which questions have been raised.

The Bureau of Standards will have about 2,500 employees July 1, 1954, compared with about 5,000 on the same date this year, as a result of the cuts in appropriations and transfers of functions.

Science News Letter, September 5, 1953

PHARMACOLOGY

New Drug Discovery Rate Is Two a Year

► NEW DRUGS are being discovered at the rate of about two a year, or one every six months, Harry J. Loynd, president of Parke, Davis and Company, Detroit, declared at the meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association in Salt Lake City.

Only a few years back, he recalled, the drug industry and medical profession felt much was being accomplished if one new drug was discovered every 25 years.

Science News Letter, August 29, 1953

GENETICS

Small Pink Flower Shows Mechanism of Evolution

► A CALIFORNIA plant that produces small pink or lavender blooms in the spring has revealed the process of an important evolution mechanism by which living things can change from one species to another.

Dr. Harlan Lewis, University of California at Los Angeles geneticist, has found that the flowering plant, *Clarkia*, occasionally adds a chromosome, setting the stage for a species change, by an irregular division of chromosomes in the production of sex cells.

"For example, a *Clarkia* plant which normally has nine chromosomes may divide so that in one of the two cells there occurs ten chromosomes and in the other eight," says Dr. Lewis. "The eight chromosome cells die off but those with ten chromosomes may survive and give rise to functional sex cells."

"There may be no immediate outward change in the appearance of the plant. However, with the addition of the chromosome the plant has a greater capacity for mutations, so that in time it may become a

completely different plant from its nine-chromosome parent species. Thus a new species is born."

Such a change from one species to another has now been demonstrated to have occurred in *Clarkia* in Dr. Lewis' research.

The production of new species by the addition of a chromosome has been suggested in the past but this is the first demonstration that it actually occurs.

Science News Letter, September 5, 1953

Christopher Columbus discovered the *pineapple* on the Isle of Guadalupe in the West Indies.

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