

sion system, coupled with a conventional diesel, is used for added bursts of speed.

At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, scientists, sponsored by the U. S. Navy, have found peroxide to be potentially useful as a propellant for submarines, torpedoes, rockets, and assisted take-offs for aircraft.

Submarines, now thought to hold great potential as a peaceful means of communication and transportation, have most often been associated with the world's navies and warfare. Historically, credit for building the first submarine goes to a Dutch inventor, Cornelius van Drebel, who in 1620, built a vessel which is said to have navigated the Thames River in England at a depth of from 12 to 15 feet. Propulsion of van Drebel's undersea vessel was provided by 12 rowers, a far cry from nuclear and peroxide power of today.

Van Drebel's sub, as well as many of the others built before the American Revolution, were designed and used experimentally for peaceful uses. Not until 1776 was a submarine used for war purposes and it was an American undersea raider called the "Turtle." Designed by David Bushnell, the "Turtle" unsuccessfully tried to blow up an English ship anchored off New York.

But man's earlier submarine dreams were for a new means of travel and transport, and now it appears that the dream may become a reality.

At the rate undersea travel is being speeded up and refined by scientists the world over, it may not be too far in the future when the average citizen boards a submarine at dockside, hears the familiar "all ashore that's going ashore," takes his von boyage basket and goes down a conning tower to begin his trip across the ocean. Atomic-powered passenger submarines are just below the horizon.

Science News Letter, January 19, 1957

ASTRONOMY

**Report Recovery of Returning Comet**

➤ A COMET that returns to the sun's vicinity about every five years has been spotted by the Japanese astronomer Tomita of Tokyo Observatory, Harvard College Observatory reports. Known as Grigg-Skjellerup Comet, its magnitude is 14, too faint to be seen without a large telescope.

Science News Letter, January 19, 1957

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**● RADIO**

Saturday, Jan. 26, 1957, 1:45-2:00 p.m., EST "Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, Director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Max A. Woodbury, research professor of mathematics, New York University College of Engineering, New York, N. Y., will discuss "Engineering Use of Mathematics."

BIOPHYSICS

**Government Looking for Old and Full Tin Cans**

➤ WANTED: unopened tin cans of food 11 or more years old. Needed by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration. The can you saved may save your life.

This could be the advertisement for a survey now being conducted by the Food and Drug Administration to determine how much radioactivity gets into the staple foods we eat.

A nationwide search for authentic samples of canned foods packed prior to 1945 is the first step in the survey, FDA Commissioner George P. Larrick has announced.

The year 1945, Commissioner Larrick explained, is regarded as the "year one" of the atomic age and such foods will be of particular value in determining the base for future radiation measurements.

In addition to collecting pre-1945 samples, the FDA is also collecting samples of recently packed products for comparison. The objective of the program is to determine the naturally occurring "background radioactivity" in foods from different areas of the country, Commissioner Larrick said.

These foods will then be monitored for any changes in radioactivity which might be caused by weapons testing or other applications of atomic energy.

The FDA Commissioner stated emphatically that there is no evidence to date of any significant radioactivity in the nation's food supply.

Science News Letter, January 19, 1957

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