GENERAL SCIENCE

Public Works Funds Go To Brawn, Not Brains

Most of the Four Millions Allotted to Scientific Bureaus Will Be Spent on Buildings, Not Research

OF THE $64,561,542 of public works funds just allotted to 35 governmental agencies, $4,255,592 is distributed to scientific bureaus.

But this first assignment of public works funds will do little to compensate for the severe reductions of federal scientific research funds that have been made in the name of "economy." Most of the funds will be spent on labor and building material to repair and recondition the buildings and laboratories that are used by Uncle Sam's scientists. In some cases, the public works funds will place laboring men at work upon buildings whose laboratories are reduced in scientific staff because of furloughs, dismissals or separation from the federal service.

The avowed intention of these public works grants is to put unemployed labor to work, not to restore to fruitful research activities the hundreds of Uncle Sam's faithful scientists who have felt the economy axe.

Those administering scientific work are hopeful that future distributions by the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works will make some provision for the continuance of useful researches that have been stopped by economy measures in many bureaus. It is known that estimates have been submitted and it is realized that preference was given in the first list of approvals to projects that will employ as many hours of labor as possible.

The sum of $2,060,154 was allocated the Department of Agriculture and ten of its bureaus. Of this amount, $345,800 is for repairs to buildings in Washington.

In the Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Standards received $100,000 for repairs to its Washington plant. The Aeronautics Branch received $443,000 for relocating and improving air beacons and airway radio facilities throughout the country, but none of this grant can be used for research, jeopardized by economy, that promises to save many times that amount in the future through the development of better methods of utilizing radio on the airways. Bureau of Fisheries was allocated $150,000 for reconditioning and repairing hatcheries, buildings and vessels.

The U. S. Geological Survey was given $1,200,000 to be used largely for the repair of existing stream gauging stations. No funds were made available for topographic mapping, geological work or the Alaskan resources work, although estimates for these had been submitted.

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics received $200,000 which will be used to make needed repairs on its laboratory buildings at its Langley Field, Va., experimental plant.

The U. S. Public Health Service received $102,438 to be used largely for reconditioning vessels used for quarantine purposes.

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MEDICINE

Foot and Mouth Disease May Invade Through Nose

CATTLE may get foot-and-mouth disease by inhaling the virus of the disease through their noses. Experiments suggesting that this is a possibility have just been reported to Science by Drs. Peter K. Olitsky, Herald R. Cox and Jerome T. Syverton of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.

The Rockefeller scientists were investigating a very similar disease of horses, vesicular stomatitis. They found that mice could be infected with this latter disease when the causative virus was dropped into the animals' nostrils, and that very minute amounts of the virus can produce disease.

Since the disease can be produced by nasal infection in the laboratory, the scientists are wondering whether both vesicular stomatitis and the closely related foot-and-mouth disease cannot be spread by the same route in the field.

Science News Letter, July 22, 1933

NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone

BOTANY

Honey Mushroom

MOST of us are distrustful of mushrooms, calling every fungus that we do not know a "toadstool." As a matter of fact, most of our mistrust is wasted, for there are only a few species of mushroom that are dangerously poisonous, a few more that are "tummy-achers," and a good many are inedible because of toughness or ill flavor. And "toadstool" is not a poison-name, but merely a shape-name. An edible mushroom is an edible toadstool; an inedible or poisonous toadstool is an inedible or poisonous mushroom. Anything with a stalk and cap may properly be called either toadstool or mushroom.

One of the best of these little-known and hence often suspected "toadstools" is the honey mushroom. You will find it growing freely in the moist woods, either springing from the ground or, more frequently, from the roots or trunks of a tree. It has an attractively glistening cap, yellow as new honey. It is not sweet like honey, but most attractively and piquantly "mushroomy." Its flesh is firm, perhaps a trifle firmer than that of the field agaric commonly cultivated and sold in the market, so that it will stand the handling it gets in cooking and still not break up too much.

Although it is very good eating, the honey mushroom is an expensive luxury. It is expensive even if you take a basket and gather it "free for nothing" in the woods. For it is often, perhaps usually, a parasite on living trees, and is one of the most destructive of the fungi that prey on our standing timber.

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Neither of the two places vying for fame as the "hottest place in the world"—Death Valley, California, and Azizia, Africa—is in the tropics.