

STANDARDS

Setting Commercial Standards Relinquished by Government

THE WITHDRAWAL of Government participation in the setting of commercial standards is indicated in the announcement just made by the Secretary of Commerce that part of the activities of the Commercial Standards Group of the National Bureau of Standards would be relinquished to a private organization, the American Standards Association. Commercial standards will not be issued by the Bureau, but by the American Standards Association, it is planned.

In a letter to Howard Coonley, president of the American Standards Association, Secretary Roper offered full cooperation of the Bureau of Standards "in carrying through the transfer with a minimum of disruption of the work, and also in providing through the Bureau's facilities at least a part of the research work necessary in connection with standardization projects." In explaining the correspondence to the press, however, he added that this did not mean that any of the personnel dismissed from the Bureau would be restored for this work.

In response to an inquiry by Science Service the American Standards Association stated that part of the personnel of the Commercial Standards Group of the Bureau may be taken over by the Association during the next few months. They do not, however, plan to continue the testing work which has been done at the Bureau of Standards in connection with the making of specifications and the laying down of standards.

"The American Standards Association will not itself carry on tests," it was asserted officially on behalf of the Association. "This may, however, be done by other groups. Present procedure provides for representation of the public in making specifications and this policy will be continued.

"The difficulty has been and probably will continue to be that of finding interested and technically competent consumer groups willing to work actively on specifications. This is the only bar to greater consumer representation."

The American Standards Association is an organization administered by a board of directors composed of indus-

trial executives. It is supported by 37 member-bodies, including representative engineering associations and industrial organizations, and some 200 companies.

Bureau of Standards officials point out that not all the activities formerly carried on by the Bureau will be undertaken by the Association. The making of specifications for use by the Government departments could hardly be handled by this organization, for example.

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ENGINEERING

Only Two Mine Rescue Cars Ready for Dangers

ALL BUT TWO of the eleven mine rescue cars of the U. S. Bureau of Mines must be put out of commission, because no funds are available to operate them. The funds for mine rescue work have been cut from \$317,000 appropriated by Congress to \$212,000.

During the coming year, the Bureau will have about a hundred calls for aid in connection with mine accidents and disasters. Many of these will have to go unresponded to because the Bureau simply does not have the money to lend its customary aid to this type of human distress.

Greater Need, Less Help

Last year the Bureau gave assistance in connection with about 20 mine explosions, about 25 fires, and around 50 miscellaneous accidents. This year, it is anticipated that the need for help may be greater, because last year was exceptionally low in disasters and because this year brings additional hazards with the starting up of mines long idle. The danger of explosion is especially great where gases have been accumulating during a period when the mine was not working.

The decommissioned cars are being kept at strategic points throughout the mining sections of the country, so that as soon as funds are again provided for their operation they will be where they are most needed. Three of the idle cars are in Pittsburgh, two at Norton, Va., and one at each of the following points: Denver, Salt Lake City, Madisonville,

Ky., and Junea, Alaska. Of the two that are being kept in operation, one is now on exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. The other is in West Virginia.

The trained men who were the crews of the decommissioned cars have also been laid off. The Bureau has no funds to pay them with. This means a great loss to the service, because of the fact that even the best of mining engineers requires at least two years of training in the service before he can be efficient in safety work. No amount of experience in ordinary mining will prepare a person to meet a disaster of a type with which he has not had experience.

The mine rescue cars, when not actually giving aid at the scene of disasters, have been kept busy giving training in first aid and mine rescue work and in accident prevention. In the fiscal year ending June, 1932, practically 100,000 persons were given this sort of training. In 1933, lack of funds caused the number to drop below 75,000. It is estimated that in the coming fiscal year not more than 40,000 can possibly be given the advantage of this training.

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GEOLOGY

Geological Survey Dismissals Held Up

THE DISMISSAL of professional and sub-professional employees in the Geological Survey was delayed by Secretary of the Interior Ickes pending an investigation of their efficiency ratings. Complaints made to the Secretary by some of the dismissed staff led to the action.

The Secretary also relaxed his former policy requiring outright dismissals rather than long administrative furloughs. He has now provided that the geologists and topographers may be put on split furlough to allow them time to place themselves in other positions.

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It is reported that the Japanese are endeavoring to increase their dairy supplies, hoping that more milk-drinking will make bigger-boned Japanese.

In one of the newest hospital rooms where operations on the eye are performed, observers can look down through glass, from a gallery, and see the operation without the old disadvantages of being close to the table.