



PRESENT METHOD

Miss Neva Snell, of the U. S. Civil Service Commission, is scoring one of the thousands of examination papers that must be graded there each year. The stencil sheet, containing correct answers and windows for the examinee's answers to show through, is a great aid in the scoring but still it is a tedious task and involves nervous- and eye-stain.

chine, it will be possible to determine the qualifications of applicants for positions in large companies, and city, state and federal governments with a speed and efficiency heretofore unknown and impossible.

In many cases, it will be possible to hand out the ratings to applicants before they leave the examination room. Employers can be furnished with a list of eligibles within a week after a large competitive examination is held. Men can be placed on the job soon after the opening occurs and before the best of the eligibles have had time to secure other employment, to move away, or to be washed under the morale-depressing tide of unemployment and destitution.

The criticism, well-founded, that has imperiled or defeated the merit system in many government systems is the tedious delay attendant upon the scoring of thousands of examination papers. In ordinary times, the delay is onerous; in emergencies it seems intolerable. With this new machine, it appears to be possible to eliminate most of the delay.

Labor sympathizers may object that the robot will throw examining clerks out of employment. Even in the case of the United States Civil Service Commission, such an objection would be based

upon a misconception. Always the commission is hampered by lack of sufficient personnel to keep abreast of their work. Something like 100,000 examination papers are always waiting to be scored.

The implications for education and vocational guidance are as striking as those for the field of employment. The possibility of daily tests to check the gain of pupils and efficiency of teaching methods. Immediate discovery and quick attention to pupil deficiencies. Relief for teachers of the arduous clerical work of marking papers and obtaining term averages and percentages. These are but a few of the most obvious possibilities promised by the robot.

Developments will probably follow its use that are as far-reaching as those which came after the development of the group intelligence test.

Credit for the invention should be shared by Dr. Ben D. Wood, of Columbia University. In conducting research for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 200,000 tests were given to high school and college students. When faced with the task of grading these papers, Dr. Wood realized the necessity for mechanical aid. After a year of experimentation, he laid the problem before officials of the Interna-

tional Business Machines Corporation. The robot, invented by R. B. Johnson, is the result of many years of further research on behalf of that company.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1937

ASTROPHYSICS

Neon, Gas of Signs, Found Abundant Among the Stars

NEON, the gas that glows redly in modern advertising signs, is rare on earth but very abundant in the starry universe as a whole, it was disclosed at the meeting of the American Philosophical Society following a report presented by Dr. Donald H. Menzel of Harvard College Observatory.

In some of the glowing gaseous nebulae that are included in our own galaxy neon is fully as abundant as oxygen, the most common element on earth, or even more abundant.

Dr. Menzel reported on the results of months of study of photographs of the eclipse observed last summer in Siberia. During this eclipse the corona, or pearly glowing halo that always surrounds the sun but can be seen and photographed only during eclipses, was far brighter than it has been in past eclipses. Earlier observations showed the corona about as bright as the moon, but during the Siberian eclipse it glowed sixty times brighter than the moon.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1937

PUBLIC HEALTH

Industrial Unrest And Poor Health Linked

INDUSTRIAL unrest is closely associated with the poor state of health of the industrial population, Dr. Emery R. Hayhurst, industrial health authority of Columbus, Ohio, told members of the Midwest Conference on Occupational Diseases.

Organized labor, he continued, gives little evidence of interest in industry as a source of disease.

About 45 million workers are employed in the United States today. Of this group the shop employes suffer from 3 to 5 times as much sickness-absenteeism as office staffs.

Illness accounts for 20 times as many cases and 7 times as many days of absenteeism as accidents among industrial workers. The blow, Dr. Hayhurst pointed out, falls especially upon the semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1937