

to advantage be organized in branches, an annual meeting of national character should be held. There is much to be said for holding the national meetings in convocation week and in selecting other times for the meetings of the branches and more local societies and academies. There are also good reasons for holding the meetings of all national societies at the same place. Local arrangements can be made once for all, reduced railway rates can be obtained, provision can be made for joint meetings of overlapping sciences, and men of science in different departments can make and renew acquaintance. The national societies do not relinquish in the slightest degree their individuality and autonomy by meeting with the American Association. The association has indeed proved itself ready to leave to the special societies the special programs. The American Chemical Society and the section for chemistry have for years held joint meetings without friction. When the new section of physiology and experimental medicine was organized the special programs were explicitly left to the special societies, the section proposing to confine itself to addresses and discussions which concern more than one science. At the recent Washington meeting action was taken by which all special papers in geology may be presented before the Geological Society of America. Similar plans for union have been arranged in the cases of other sciences, and a natural evolution will leave to the national societies the presentation and discussion of special research, while the sections of the association will aim to coordinate the sciences and

present their advances in a form intelligible to all.

The center of scientific population and of scientific activity is no longer on the Atlantic seaboard. If we have national meetings they must sometimes be held in the central and western states. There is a general sentiment that the association and the national scientific societies might with advantage meet once in three years at Washington, once in three years in an eastern city and once in three years in a central or western city. The recent meeting at Washington was certainly successful from every point of view. It is to be hoped that all men of science will unite in making the meetings next year at St. Louis and the following year at Philadelphia equally representative of the scientific work and interests of the whole country.

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

THE board of regents of the Smithsonian Institution held their annual meeting on January 28. The time was so fully occupied with routine business that there was no opportunity for adequate discussion of important questions concerned with the policy of the institution. An adjourned meeting was consequently called for March 11, when questions of administration will be considered. There is undoubtedly a widespread impression that the Smithsonian Institution is not accomplishing as much for the diffusion and increase of knowledge as it did in its earlier years. It is easier to criticize than to outline a constructive policy; but scientific men should certainly unite in the latter course.

The regents of the Smithsonian Institution are men of eminence, who meet once a year for an hour or two at Washington, and who can scarcely be expected to give the time or to secure the information needful for the conduct of the institution. Its organization is somewhat similar to that of our universities with one important exception—it lacks any body corresponding to the faculty. We have in most of our learned and educational institutions a board of trustees, who represent the authoritative and conservative classes. They do not give much attention to the conduct of the institution, delegating their powers largely to an executive officer. But our universities have faculties of experts, whose legal powers are unduly limited, but whose moral influence determines largely the policy and new appointments. The Smithsonian Institution and the Carnegie Institution lack such bodies of expert advisers, and if the executive officer is not in touch with the scientific men of the country, there is no way to bring the consensus of opinion before the regents or the trustees. It seems important that the board of regents should have more frequent meetings; and that the scientific men of the country should have the opportunity of appearing before it and discussing matters with the regents and with the secretary. The difficulty seems to be that there are but few members of the board of regents who could afford the time necessary. The executive committee, however, might hold sittings for the purpose of conferring with men of science, and act as the medium by which scientific public opinion could be

brought to the attention of the regents. Perhaps it would be possible for the Smithsonian Institution to appoint a visiting committee or a board of advisers who would give more attention to the detailed management of the institution than it is possible for the regents themselves to afford.

There is every reason to suppose that the regents and the secretary would be glad to learn the opinion of scientific men, and we suggest that those who have given attention to the subject should write to Secretary Langley or to the regents with whom they are personally acquainted or to whom they are known by reputation, making suggestions as to policy. The points which appear to need special attention are: (1) How the regents and secretary can be brought in contact with the scientific sentiment of the country; (2) whether it would not be advisable for the National Museum and the Bureau of American Ethnology to be given greater autonomy, and (3) if the institution is released from the conduct of government bureaus, in what directions its activities should be turned. The board of regents consists of:

Hon. M. W. Fuller, Chief Justice of the United States, Chancellor; Hon. W. P. Frye, President *pro tempore* of the United States Senate; Senator S. M. Cullom; Senator O. H. Platt; Senator Francis M. Cockerell; Representative Hugh A. Dinsmore; Representative Robert R. Hitt; Representative Robert Adams, Jr.; Dr. James B. Angell, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Dr. Andrew D. White, Ithaca, N. Y., at present abroad; Hon. J. B. Henderson, Washington, D. C.; Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Washington, D. C.; Hon. Richard Olney, Boston, Mass.; Hon. George Gray, Wilmington, Del.; Dr. S. P. Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.