

own affairs in town-meeting, so to speak, as an absolute democracy, in which every member has an equal voice. It has made all nominations; it has recommended all promotions; and it has requested all increase of salary; and in every case its nominations and recommendations have been favorably received by the president and by the trustees, who have granted all our requests—excepting only those not at the moment financially advisable.

Almost every member of the department serves on one or more of the special committees, to whom we confide the oversight of our several activities. Whenever we have felt the need of developing instruction in any part of our field, we have never had to draft a man for service, for all have been ready to volunteer for duty. As a result of this harmony every part of our work—graduate and undergraduate, in college and in school, and in the extension courses—has been coordinated in response to our individual and united understanding of the demands of the occasion. And so complete is this harmony, that since the department was established, no action of any kind has been taken and no recommendation has been made, other than by a unanimous vote.

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK,  
May 14, 1914

#### THE NEW FUR SEAL INVESTIGATION

THE present Commissioner of Fisheries and Secretary of Commerce, having grown distrustful of past investigators, have arranged for a new fur-seal commission for the season of 1914. To those who have followed the fur-seal situation in the past few years this is a disappointment, delaying as it does for one season more the emancipation of the herd. Without wishing to prejudice the work of the new commission, but in simple justice to those whose work is thus put on trial, it seems fair to point out certain phases of the situation which confronts the new investigators.

By the law of 1912 commercial killing of fur seals is prohibited for five years. The object of any investigation at the present time

must be to determine the wisdom or unwisdom, the necessity or lack of necessity, of this law. In effect the law was condemned eighteen years ago by the joint commission of American and British experts of 1896-7. The following words from the ninth paragraph of their joint agreement are worth quoting:

The methods of driving and killing practised on the islands, as they have come under our observation during the past two seasons, call for no criticism or objection. An adequate supply of bulls is present on the rookeries; the number of older bachelors rejected in the drives during the period in question is such as to safeguard in the immediate future a similarly adequate supply; the breeding bulls, females, and pups on the breeding grounds are not disturbed; there is no evidence or sign of impairment of virility of males; the operations of driving and killing are conducted skillfully and without inhumanity.

This very positive conclusion was reached after two seasons of thorough study, involving the observation and inspection of drives aggregating 150,000 animals, 50,000 of which were killed. The commission of 1914 will have no opportunity whatever to observe the normal methods of land sealing, the law preventing it. The commission of 1896-7 had opportunity to carefully weigh and consider the action of pelagic sealing, in its judgment the sole cause of the herd's decline, determining the proportion of pregnant and nursing females in the catch on board the sealing vessels and observing the starvation of the dependent young on land. The new commission is entirely cut off from this source of information, the treaty of 1911 having suspended pelagic sealing. The new commission can obtain definite information from the rookeries of the present condition of the herd, but it will have no basis of comparison arising from previous experience, and can not, therefore, of itself determine whether the herd is increasing or diminishing.

Another difficulty confronts the new commission. It is said to "have been selected by outside agencies and to have no previous connection with the fur seal controversy." In other words it is a non-partisan commission.

The Secretary of Commerce has, however, taken pains to show that the issue is by no means a non-partisan one. On October 13, 1913, Secretary Redfield appeared before the House Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and thus expressed himself regarding the law of 1912: "I shall be glad to cooperate in any way within my lawful power or within the scope of my personal ability in carrying out to the spirit and to the letter what I regard as very wise legislation for the protection of our fur-seal herd." He even went further and announced to the committee that he had discharged the chief of the Alaska division of the Bureau of Fisheries and the naturalist of the fur-seal herd, because, forsooth, their "mental attitude" toward this law was not right. In other words, because these men believed the law was a mistake, they were disciplined.

The new commission is therefore in a dilemma. It must find the law of 1912 to be right or else to be wrong. In the one case, in a single season's work and with opportunity to get first-hand information on vital matters cut off, it must either review and turn down the work of an eminent body of men acting on unlimited data, or else it must contradict the expressed belief of the very authority under which the commission acts.

Meanwhile there hangs over the commission and its work a most heavy forfeit. The law of 1912, in so far as it prohibits the killing of male seals, was adjudged unnecessary eighteen years ago; the increase of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the stock of breeding seals in 1913, the second season under exemption from pelagic sealing, fully bears out this decision. The Secretary of Commerce has in his possession to-day adequate data to warrant the immediate repeal of the law. Such repeal now would permit of the resumption of normal land sealing in 1914 and the taking of the half million dollars' worth of sealskins which the hauling grounds of the Pribilof Islands stand ready to yield. We lost a like sum in 1913 through the operation of the law. The delay necessary to let the new commission make its report will inevitably repeat this loss. In short, the report of the com-

mission will cost at a minimum \$500,000, fifteen per cent. of which belongs to Canada, fifteen per cent. to Japan, and seventy per cent. to the treasury of the United States, under the treaty of July 7, 1911.

GEORGE ARCHIBALD CLARK

#### THE PRESERVATION OF ANTHROPOID APES

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: The suggestion of Professor Robert Yerkes in SCIENCE of May 1, that permanent stations should be established in tropical countries for the preservation of anthropoid apes in order that observations of value from a psychological standpoint be obtained, prompts me to urge the same thing on another and more important ground. As readers of SCIENCE doubtless know, the question of the etiology and the treatment in a number of diseases which have hitherto baffled investigators, probably will depend upon the use of these apes as objects of experimentation, and for this, if for nothing else their extinction should be prevented.

H. GIFFORD

OMAHA, NEB.

#### SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

- Clean Water and How to Get It.* By ALLEN HAZEN. Second Edition. New York, John Wiley & Sons. 1914. Pp. 181. \$1.50.
- Studies in Water Supply.* By A. C. HOUSTON. New York, Macmillan Co., Limited. Pp. 193. \$1.60.

These two volumes may well be considered together, for they occupy the same general field, although their scope and method of treatment are quite different. Both authors are acknowledged experts in the subjects with which they deal.

Hazen's book is decidedly American in point of view and makes a strong case for the filtration of public water supplies as a means of protecting municipalities against typhoid and other forms of disease and for the improvement which can be so produced in the appearance, taste and odor of surface waters.

By some, the book will be regarded as too condensed to give a comprehensive knowledge of the many topics dealt with, but the