

may be a falling off is a matter of conjecture. It depends upon several factors. The growth of the graduate school in the larger universities and in the state universities is an essential element, but not a disturbing one so long as college and university are reared side by side, and college spirit submerges and smothers university soul.

Thus is one fourth of all the master minds in American science a direct product of Johns Hopkins influence. So is 25 per cent. of all American scientific thought impelled by the mainspring of Baltimore. It is not quantity of university influx but quality of university output that is telling and worth while.

CHARLES KEYES

THE FUR SEAL INQUIRY, THE CONGRESSIONAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE SCIENTIST

SOME three years ago the "Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce" of the House of Representatives, headed by Congressman Rothermel of Pennsylvania, undertook the investigation of the work of the Bureau of Fisheries on the administration of the fur seal fisheries, apparently with the definite purpose of discrediting, for political reasons, this branch of the government service. In February, 1909, there had been appointed an advisory board of the fur seal work, consisting of the following well-known zoologists, David Starr Jordan, C. Hart Merriam, Charles H. Townsend, Leonhard Stejneger and Frederic A. Lucas, to serve without pay in advising the government as to the best means of regulating the killing and the protection of the fur seals on the Pribilof Islands.

To discredit the work of the administration of the seal fisheries it was necessary also to discredit these men. The fact that they served without pay was of course open to suspicion to the machine type of politician, who naturally finds it difficult to conceive of any one doing any work for the government with no emolument attached thereto. Accordingly the majority of the committee proceeded to measure them according to their own standard and took up charges which had been filed

against all and sundry by one Henry W. Elliott. This man Elliott, it may be mentioned, is a disgruntled ex-employee of the government who was dismissed in 1891 because he had been "found guilty of grave improprieties." For more than twenty years this man had persistently brought charges, not only against all the scientific men who opposed his propositions, but against seven secretaries of departments, besides senators and congressmen. These charges had been repeatedly disproved and their author discredited and officially branded as "a person unworthy of belief."

However, this repeated repudiation of the Elliott charges did not prevent the committee from taking them up again in the attempt to make political capital of them. In the face of all the testimony submitted at the hearings and on the unsupported evidence of the man who preferred the charges, the majority of the committee found in favor of the charges.

To their everlasting credit be it said that a minority of the members of this committee were so incensed at the findings of the majority in direct face of the evidence, that they insisted on presenting a minority report (Report 500, Pt. 2, 63rd Congress, 2d Session, Fur Seal Industry of Alaska, 22 pages, July 27, 1914, signed by Congressmen McGuire and Patton). This report is a scathing arraignment of the methods of procedure and the findings of the majority and of Elliott who brought the charges. A few excerpts may not be amiss here.

The charges preferred by Elliott are without foundation in fact,—the same charges have been preferred by him with regularity for over 20 years to various committees of Congress and executive departments, and in each case found to have been groundless.

Elliott, the author of these charges and the sole witness in support of them, is a person unworthy of belief and one who has been consistently repudiated in the past.

The committee had no justification for the reopening of these hearings on the same charges.

There is a total absence of evidence of any irregularities on their (the government's representatives) part.

Notwithstanding this well-known record, which demonstrated Elliott to be actuated by motives which rendered him wholly unreliable as a counselor in matters pertaining to this question, it is nevertheless the fact that this committee in 1911 took up these old Elliott charges—now repeated with renewed vehemence, but with no more basis of fact—erected Elliott in its midst as prosecuting witness and *amicus curiæ*, accepted his mere unsupported assertions of fraud and illegality as proof thereof, endeavored by every means in its power to substantiate them, and strove by severe cross examination to nullify as far as possible the effect of testimony of witnesses appearing in their own defense to answer charges. The hearings have covered thousands of pages of printed testimony.

The minority report recommends that the Department of Justice investigate Elliott with a view to bringing charges for the misuse of congressmen's franks by sending out under them abusive and defamatory matter to witnesses before the committee and for perjury under various heads, and that a joint committee of Congress be appointed to investigate "all proceedings in connection with the investigation as conducted by this committee."

It is interesting to note that of the original committee who presented the majority report, Congressman McDermott was compelled to resign from Congress owing to his connection with the disgraceful Mulhall disclosures, while Rothermel, the chairman of the committee, who was particularly vindictive in the prosecution, failed to secure renomination in his home district after charges had been made against him on the floor of the House for improper and illegal use of funds allotted to his committee.

The Rothermel committee sent Elliott as an investigator to the seal islands during the summer of 1913, a proceeding which the minority report brands as "nothing but a farce" on the grounds that "if the object of the committee had been the substantiation of the Elliott charges, it could not have adopted a more certain means of accomplishing this result than by sending Elliott himself." However, it seems that the committee overstepped its authority in doing this and Congress has refused to refund the expenses of the trip.

There is a verse concerning a mountain, which after great labor, brought forth a mouse. The work of the congressional committee headed by Rothermel has produced similar valuable results. The fiasco has been a very expensive one, however. It has cost the country many thousands of dollars, it has further endangered the existence of the seal herd already depleted by many years of pelagic sealing, it has caused the loss to the Bureau of Fisheries of the services of the eminent ichthyologist Dr. Barton W. Evermann, who has since become director of the museum of the California Academy of Sciences, and has inflicted needless expense, humiliation and irritation upon the scientists who formed the advisory board. As far as the scientific standing of these men is concerned, it is not necessary to remark that it will not suffer in the least on account of this political attempt to discredit them.

It should be mentioned that the Bureau of Fisheries has had no part whatever in these attacks on the scientists mentioned and that whatever changes have been made in the plan of conducting the seal work have been those prescribed by law. Whatever may have been the attitude in the past, of the Department of Commerce, under which the Bureau of Fisheries is placed, it is evidently desirous of learning the truth in regard to the work on the Pribilofs, for Secretary Redfield this past summer sent a special committee of three zoologists to the islands to investigate and report upon conditions there. At his request, one of these was nominated by the Department of Agriculture, one by the Smithsonian Institution and one by the National Academy of Sciences. While none of these men has had any previous acquaintance with work on the islands, they will at least be able to give an entirely unprejudiced report, even if they are unable to make any comparison with past conditions. The Dominion of Canada and Japan have also sent investigators to the seal islands. The report of this committee is awaited with interest.

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