

H. L. Payne, secretary, 223 West First St., Los Angeles.

E. O. Slater, E. E. Chandler, councilors.

A meeting of the affiliated sections of the American Chemical Society will be held Saturday evening, June 21.

WESTERN SOCIETY OF NATURALISTS

T. C. Frye, president, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

Forrest Shreve, vice-president, Desert Laboratory, Tucson, Arizona.

Tracy I. Storer, (acting) secretary-treasurer, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, Calif.

The Western Society of Naturalists will hold sessions for the presentation of papers on biological subjects on Thursday and Friday, June 19 and 20, at 9 A.M. One of these will be a joint session with the Ecological Society of America. On the afternoons of these two days the society will meet with other organizations in the two symposia under the Pacific Division. On the evening of Friday, June 20, a dinner for members of the society will be held at one of the local hotels. Luncheon will be provided at Throop College of Technology on Thursday and Friday for all in attendance at the scientific meetings. On Saturday, June 21, there will be a field excursion up Mount Wilson Via Sierra Madre and Little Santa Anita Canyon. This trip affords excellent opportunity to see the fauna and flora of the region from the dry washes at the southern base of the San Gabriel Mountains to the Transition Zone forest on the top. At the observatory opportunity will be afforded to see the astronomical equipment. Luncheon will be provided for all visitors. Those who do not care to walk may arrange for transportation up and down the mountain. Other trips to Rancho La Brea and Catalina Island.

PACIFIC FISHERIES SOCIETY

Barton Warren Evermann, president, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco.

C. McLean Fraser, vice-president, Nanimo, British Columbia.

G. R. Hoffses, vice-president, Seattle, Wash.

Willis H. Rich, secretary, Stanford University, Calif.

E. Victor Smith, treasurer, Seattle, Wash.

The Pacific Fisheries will hold sessions on Thursday and Friday.

A UNION OF SCIENTIFIC FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

THE recent formation of a union of scientific employees of the federal government is an event of more than local importance, as is also the work of the Congressional Joint Commission on Reclassification of Salaries of federal employees. The work of this commission was the immediate cause of the formation of the union, which took place at a mass meeting at the New National Museum in Washington, May 8, 1919.

In the call for the mass meeting the advantages of organization which had been urged were summarized as follows: improvement of conditions and facilities for more effective scientific and technical work; adequate presentation of the needs and results of such work to the public and to legislative and administrative officers (the Reclassification Commission wishes to deal with employees through organizations, and not as individuals); greater freedom in both official and non-official activities; just and reasonable salaries based on service performed and the economic and social conditions which prevail; greater public recognition of the aims and purposes of research; advancement of science and technology as an essential element of national life.

While the advantages of forming a national scientific union had been the subject of considerable discussion it was felt by the committee that such an organization could not possibly be formed in time for the work of the Reclassification Commission, and only the following plans were suggested for consideration at the mass meeting:

Plan No. 1.—To work only through existing scientific organizations.

Plan No. 2.—To form an independent organization of those federal employees doing scientific or technical work.

Plan No. 3.—To form a scientific and technical branch of Federal Employees Union No. 2. (Union No. 2 is the main Washington section of the National Federation of Federal Employees, and has 21,000 members.)

Plan No. 1 received very little support, but there was a spirited discussion between the advocates of plans 2 and 3, the point at issue being the advisability of organizing as a branch of the Federal Employees Union, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Plan 3 was adopted by a substantial majority, although there was a considerable minority composed of those favoring either Plan 1, or Plan 2, together with a small number favoring a separate organization directly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

In order that work might be started without waiting to perfect a permanent organization, a temporary organization was formed composed of a general interim committee, consisting of a chairman, a secretary, and representatives from the bureaus, one for each twenty members. The organization is already functioning, while the permanent organization is being worked out.

The considerations which lead to the organization of scientific and technical employees of the government into a branch of the Federal Employees Union may be summarized as follows:

1. The belief that science can never play its real rôle in the development of our national life until the great body of workers of the nation has a sympathetic understanding of the significance of research, and that such an understanding can be brought about only by the scientific workers joining hands with the other workers of the nation.

2. Specifically, the belief that the affiliation will greatly accelerate a general understanding of the economic relation between scientific research and the problem of a higher national standard of living; and that, when the workers generally, fully realize that there is a limit beyond which the standard of living of the average of the population can not pro-

gress by usual methods of readjustment, and that this limit can only be raised by research and the utilization of the results of research in industry, the cause of science will be placed in a position which we can not now anticipate.

3. The necessity of contact with a body having the confidence of, and influence with, those with whom decisions rest.

4. The complete autonomy enjoyed by the Federal Employees Union in its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor, and by the Scientific and Technical Branch in its affiliation with the former.

5. The complete freedom from any compulsion upon the individual, the constitution pledging all its members not to strike, or support any strike against the government.

6. The methods and the record of the Federal Employees Union. There has been cordial cooperation with legislative and administrative officials in collating and presenting reliable data, which has produced very concrete results without producing friction or resentment. For half a century the status of the government employees had, on the whole, not improved, or had even grown worse. In three years of organization four important advances have been made: the enactment of a compensation law; the presidential veto of a bill increasing hours of service without an increase in pay; a flat increase of \$120 (next year \$240) for all employees receiving \$2,500 or less per year; and the formation of the Reclassification Commission.

7. The urgency of the reclassification problem, which made it doubtful whether a new independent organization could be formed in time to be effective, while here was at hand a going, experienced organization with machinery and funds available, and already working in close cooperation with, and enjoying the complete confidence of, the commission; and this organization already numbered among its members more than six hundred of the scientific workers, among them many of the ablest and best known men in the scientific service.

The Reclassification Commission is to recommend a plan of classification and compensa-

tion to Congress by January, 1920. The members of the Commission are Senators Jones (chairman), Henderson and Spencer, and former Representatives Keating (secretary), Cooper and Hamlin. The commission is doing the work through central committees on which the commission, the administrative officers and the employees (through their organizations) are represented. Thus it is expected that misunderstandings will be avoided or removed as they arise, and that the completed work may receive the support of all the interests concerned.

The work of this commission seems bound to have a profound influence on the scientific services of the government for a decade or more, no less from the point of view of the government than from that of the individual. Its influence will not stop with the government service, but will extend indirectly to practically all scientific laboratories, college, university, industrial, state, and municipal. By cooperating, by furnishing data from similar studies that may have been made in other organizations, men in such laboratories can do their colleagues in the federal departments a very real service, and a service to the cause of science and to the fraternity as well. General arguments will not be useful. What is needed is comparative data, such for example as salary studies made by universities, or statistical studies of the investment equivalent of a university training, the accuracy of which can be vouched for. The commission is undertaking the problem in the same spirit that is necessary in an investigation in chemistry or in biology.

R. H. TRUE, *Chairman,*
Bureau of Plant Industry,
P. G. AGNEW, *Secretary,*
Bureau of Standards

WASHINGTON,
May 12, 1919

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

A BRITISH GEODETIC AND GEODYNAMIC INSTITUTE¹

A COMMITTEE, consisting of Dr. Shipley (the Vice-Chancellor), Dr. H. K. Anderson, Col.

¹ From *Nature*.

Sir C. F. Close, Sir Horace Darwin, Sir F. W. Dyson, Dr. E. H. Griffiths, Sir T. H. Holdich, Sir Joseph Larmor, Col. H. G. Lyons, Professor Newall, Sir Charles Parsons, Sir Napier Shaw, Sir J. J. Thomson and Professor H. H. Turner, has been formed for the purpose of making an appeal for the creation and endowment of a geophysical institute at Cambridge. The question of the establishment of an institute of this character has been under consideration by the British Association for the last three years. A large and representative committee reported unanimously in favor of the project, which was then considered by the Conjoint Board of Scientific Societies. This Board also reported that there was a real need for such an institute. The chief reasons which have been put forward on behalf of the scheme are: (1) Geodetic work must form the basis and control of all the state surveys of the empire, on which about a million sterling was spent annually before the war. (2) A geophysical institute could render great assistance in connection with the particular group of geodetic problems now of most practical interest in the United Kingdom, namely those associated with leveling, mean sea-level, and vertical movements of the crust of the earth. (3) Such an institute is greatly needed to assist in the study of the tides and in attacking the great problems which must be solved if tidal prediction is to advance beyond its present elementary and fragmentary state. (4) There is at present no provision for the collection and critical discussion of the geodetic work which is being done within the Empire, or for its comparison with the work of other countries. There is no institution available for research work or higher training in geodesy. There is no British institution which can be referred to for the latest technical data and methods, and until the outbreak of the war it was the custom of many British surveys (notably the survey of India), when confronted with geodetic problems, to refer to the Geodetic Institute at Potsdam. This was not even then a very satisfactory arrangement, and now a radical change is inevitable.