

aurora or polar lights; the natural electric currents which flow in the earth's crust; the electric condition of the atmosphere; the relation of radio transmission and reception to all these phenomena and to the condition of the surface of the sun, also meteorological conditions to great heights in the atmosphere.

The Senate committee in making its favorable report for authorizing the \$30,000 expenditure said:

It must not be forgotten that this polar year program has by now become irrevocable, except in the event of direct calamity. Too many nations have already made extensive preparations for the work to permit its being dropped except under very special circumstances. There is at present not the slightest prospect that it will be dropped. The present plan is that the United States of America shall provide funds for a polar-year station at Fairbanks, Alaska. The request for \$30,000 has been made with full realization that adverse economic conditions demand that the amount shall represent the irreducible minimum for carrying on the work at that station.

Fairbanks, Alaska, occupies a key position in the distribution of polar-year stations. There are no other stations near-by—in fact, unless Fairbanks is occupied as a station, about one fourth of the Arctic region will be totally neglected. . . . Economically we are probably not worse off than are other nations that are participating.

COMMITTEE ON NOISE MEASUREMENT OF THE AMERICAN STANDARDS ASSOCIATION

THE organization of a sectional committee on noise measurement under the procedure of the American Standards Association was recommended by a general conference of 32 representatives of 18 national bodies held in New York on January 29. It was also recommended that the committee function under the technical leadership of the Acoustical Society of America.

The scope of the project as recommended by a steering committee consisting of Professor Vern O. Knudsen, Acoustical Society of America; E. E. Free, American Society of Mechanical Engineers; P. L. Alger, American Institute of Electrical Engineers; H. R. Summerhayes, National Electrical Manufacturers Association; R. G. McCurdy, ASA Telephone Group; and Dr. Harvey Fletcher, Acoustical Society of America, is the "Preparation of general standards of nomenclature, units, scales and measurement in the field of acoustics, with special reference to noise measurements."

The conference followed a request made by the Acoustical Society of America to the American Standards Association to set up a national committee to correlate the activities of various technical and trade organizations which have been attempting indi-

vidually to set up standards for noise measurement. Eight such organizations now have committees on this subject. It was pointed out that the diverse nomenclature and methods of measurement growing out of these uncorrelated activities were interfering with the progress of scientific work on the subject and that without real national standardization this condition would become worse as different individuals became accustomed to different concepts and terms.

For the present the committee's work will be concentrated chiefly on the standardization of nomenclature, units and scales. It is believed that further progress in the science of noise measurement is necessary before effective standardization of this phase of the subject can be completed. There is some confusion in the measurement of noise at the present time because of the complex nature of noises and their effect upon the ear, and the fact that none of the noise meters yet designed can translate the approximate physiological and psychological effects of noise into definite units of measurement. Dr. Harvey Fletcher, of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, pointed out at the conference that to the average individual a noise composed of widely separated frequencies is less disturbing than a noise of equal intensity, but having components close together in the frequency range.

SUPPORT FOR BIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS

DURING the year 1931 the following sums have been contributed to *Biological Abstracts* and to the Union of American Biological Societies in support of this publication:

To the Union of American Biological Societies	
American Association for the Advancement of Science	\$ 400.00
American Association of Anatomists	100.00
American Physiological Society	125.00
American Society of Biological Chemists	100.00
American Society for Experimental Pathology	50.00
American Society of Naturalists	50.00
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics	50.00
American Society of Zoologists	200.00
Botanical Society of America	150.00
National Research Council	1,500.00
Society of American Foresters	50.00
Contributions by individuals	55.00
Total	<u>\$2,830.00</u>
To <i>Biological Abstracts</i> directly	
American Society of Naturalists	\$ 50.00
American Society of Zoologists	500.00
Total	<u>\$550.00</u>

An accounting for expenditures under these sums, as received to December 15, 1931, was made by the

treasurer of the union at the meeting of the council of the union in New Orleans on December 28. The results of the solicitation of subscriptions in recent months have thus far led to cash receipts to *Biological Abstracts* that exceed by several hundred dollars all the funds expended during 1931. This is comparable to turning over cash to the *Abstracts* in excess of all money contributed by the societies and in addition financing all activities of the union on behalf of the *Abstracts*. Moreover, the newly acquired subscriptions are likely to be continued in subsequent years, and the activities of the union have been given publicity that should have a continuing value.

In addition to the contributions listed, the American Society of Zoologists passed the following motion by unanimous vote of the forty-five members in attendance at the business meeting held in New Orleans December 30, 1931:

It is moved, subject to approval by two thirds of the members voting in a mail ballot to be sent out by January 10 and returned by February 1, 1932:

(1) That the annual dues be advanced to \$5.00 of which \$3.00 shall be paid by the Treasurer to *Biological Abstracts* with the proviso that any member or associate

member subscribing to this publication shall have this \$3.00 credited upon his subscription.

(2) That for the year 1932 and for any later years the Executive Committee be authorized to reduce this addition to the dues by such amounts paid from funds then in the treasury as may be possible without undue reduction of the balance desirable for current activities of the society.

The returns from this mail ballot among life and active members are: 256 for the motion; 60 against. Ballots were also sent to the associate members, who pay the same dues as the full members of this society but have no votes, in order that their sentiment might be recorded. The returns from this vote by associate members are: 48 for the motion; 8 against.

In addition to the substantial amount involved, this action by the zoologists is important because it points the way for societies to support the *Abstracts* even though there may be no immediate prospect of making full subscription a condition of membership.

W. C. CURTIS,

President of the Union of American Biological Societies

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS

ON the occasion of his sixtieth birthday anniversary on February 5 Dr. Lafayette B. Mendel, professor of physiological chemistry at Yale University, was presented with a portrait of himself painted by John Quincy Adams, the Viennese artist. Over four hundred students and associates participated in making the gift "in recognition of Professor Mendel's long and distinguished service as a teacher and as a leader in his field of science."

DR. JOHN M. T. FINNEY, professor of clinical surgery at the Johns Hopkins University, received on February 1 the Bigelow medal of the Boston Surgical Society. At the meeting when the presentation was made he spoke on "Changing Methods of Surgery."

THE faculties of Northwestern University gave a dinner on February 19 in honor of their colleagues who had taught in the university for twenty-five years. These included Dr. Thomas F. Holgate, professor of mathematics and dean emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts. Dr. Holgate was acting president of the university from 1904 to 1906 and from 1916 to 1919.

DR. W. B. MERCIER, director emeritus of the agricultural extension division of the Louisiana State University, was awarded the distinguished service ruby of Epsilon Sigma Phi, honorary agricultural extension fraternity, at a recent meeting in Chicago. Only

three others have received this honor, which is given in recognition of meritorious service to agriculture.

AT the recent elections of the Société de Biologie of Paris, Dr. A. F. Blakeslee, of the Department of Genetics of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, was made an associate, having previously been a corresponding member of the society.

THE Duddell Medal of the Physical Society of London has been awarded to Professor C. T. R. Wilson, Jacksonian professor of natural philosophy in the University of Cambridge.

DR. DAVID HILBERT, professor of mathematics at Göttingen, celebrated his seventieth birthday on January 23. Dr. Carl Duisberg, professor of chemistry, celebrated on January 21 the fiftieth anniversary of his doctorate.

DR. L. H. ADAMS, of the Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution, has been elected president of the Washington Academy of Sciences. Dr. W. S. Eichelberger, director of the Nautical Almanac Office of the U. S. Naval Observatory, and Dr. W. H. Wilmer, director of the Wilmer Institute of Ophthalmology of the Johns Hopkins University, have been elected non-resident vice-presidents.

AT the thirty-ninth annual meeting of the Geological Society of Washington, Dr. François E. Matthes, of the U. S. Geological Survey, was elected president.