

Comments and Communications

The Informal Research Laboratory—A Proposal

One of the areas of international cooperation which has consistently functioned with maximum goodwill has been the informal research laboratory. The examples set by the Marine Laboratories at Naples and at Woods Hole need not be detailed here. During the summer months, research workers, freed of their teaching duties of the academic season, come from universities and laboratories all over the world to spend their vacation time together in discussion and research. The opportunities for free exchange of ideas, the deeper insight into the problems of the individual scientist, and the stimulation derived from working together closely are of inestimable value both to the scientists themselves and to the cause of international understanding.

Unfortunately, only a few such laboratories for informal research are open to scientists throughout the world, and these few institutions are restricted to a definitely circumscribed group of sciences. I know of no such laboratory devoted to chemical or to physical research. The emphasis has been mainly on the sciences related to marine biology.

In view of the proven benefits to be derived from such institutions and the paucity of adequate installations for the several sciences, I believe it would be advantageous for such an organization as UNESCO to investigate the feasibility of sponsoring and initiating such laboratories. It would emphasize the purpose of such an international laboratory if its foundations would be set by an organization devoted to the interchange of scientific information among investigators throughout the world.

Ideally, such a laboratory should be established for each of the scientific specialties or for groups of sciences where the pattern of research would suggest practical combinations. As a specific example, one laboratory might be devoted to the physiology and biochemistry of mammals. Facilities should include most of the basic instruments of research. In this case, an ultracentrifuge, adequate instrumentation for work with radioactive tracers, and an adequate animal colony might be considered as some of the requisite facilities. The laboratory should be planned to accommodate a group of 200–300 qualified investigators during the “season,” with a permanent staff as required for the maintenance of the plant and for technical assistance.

Choice of the location of the existing Marine Laboratories was dictated, to some extent at least, by the marine flora and fauna in the waters adjacent to the selected areas. Similar considerations of special requirements might be desired in certain of the installations here considered, but since the basic materials for research can now be accumulated at any point, other factors should be

considered. For example, the purpose of disseminating information might be served better if the location chosen were somewhat removed from the calculated center of concentration of scientists. On the other hand, the location should not be so remote as to make emergency equipment and supplies too difficult to obtain. Since investigators would be expected to spend their vacations at the laboratory, it should be located in a region which has some of the attributes of a desirable vacation area (certainly the case with the Woods Hole Laboratories!).

Details for the operation of the laboratory, for the financing of the venture, for mechanics of invitation of qualified investigators, and a host of other problems should receive careful attention, but at the moment, it is merely the general proposal which I should like to present for discussion among the members of the AAAS. More concrete proposals might be formulated at the forthcoming meetings of the Association.

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The Norton County, Kansas, Meteorite

Fragments from the large detonating bolide that startled the inhabitants of several Midwestern states on February 18 were recovered and identified on April 28 by an expedition sent into the field by the Institute of Meteoritics of the University of New Mexico. Most of the specimens so far recovered have been found on one of the farms of G. W. Tansill in Sections 12 and 13 of Rock Branch Township in Norton County, Kansas, but the largest specimen recovered, a mass weighing over 100 lbs, was recovered on the McKinley ranch in Section 1 of this township. All specimens recovered to date have been either donated to or purchased by the University of New Mexico.

The Norton County meteorite belongs to the rare class of achondrites and, while presenting many points of similarity to the remarkable Cumberland Falls Whitleyite, possesses certain features so distinctive that it seems quite possible that it will serve as the type stone of a new class of achondrites.

A detailed report on the field survey resulting in recovery of the meteorite and a description and analysis of the specimens recovered will be published in the near future.

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A Proposed Petition to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature

The numerous applications now before the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, requesting exercise of the Plenary Powers for Suspension of the International Rules and establishment of a number of nomina conservanda, are commanding considerable interest among zoologists. The large number of applications, it is true, has resulted in part from the long hiatus in nomenclatural activity followed by a postwar revival of