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National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel

THE registration of scientists, as with other inventories of our scientific potential, must be accomplished by methods consistent with the protection of the traditional freedoms fundamental to the continued advancement of science. In keeping with this philosophy, the professional scientific societies, representing scientists, and the National Science Foundation, representing Government, have identified a mutual interest in cooperatively developing uniform registers of scientific and technical personnel in the various fields of science. The primary purposes of the registers are: 1) to provide standby machinery for the location of scientific talent in the event of a national emergency, and 2) to provide scientific manpower information necessary for the development of policies regarding science. Some professional scientific societies plan additional uses for the registers in connection with their placement programs, to facilitate and to provide a broader base for special surveys of particular interest to the society, to assist in the compilation of society directories and in the furnishing of information for biographical directories.

Accordingly, in the fall of this year several professional scientific societies, with the aid of grants from the Foundation, will begin to distribute to member and non-member scientists in their respective fields brief questionnaires on their educational, technical, and professional backgrounds. The information provided on the returned questionnaires will serve as the basis for decentralized registers to be housed and maintained in the offices of the societies.

The composite of these individual registers will form the National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel to implement that section of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, which authorizes and directs the Foundation "to maintain a register of scientific and technical personnel and in other ways provide a central clearinghouse for information covering all scientific and technical personnel in the United States."

Previous rosters and registers, including the Roster of Scientific and Technical Personnel (1940-47), registrations of scientists and engineers sponsored by the military services (1947-50), and the National Scientific Register (1950-52), were undertaken primarily to meet short-term emergency needs. The present register has been designed as a long-range, continuing program, decentralized, yet flexible enough to serve emergency needs. Normally, registration will cover personnel having four or more years of professional experience in a scientific or technical field beyond the baccalaureate degree or its equivalent. Registrants will be recanvassed periodically in connection with those items of background information which are likely to have changed, in order to keep the records up to date.

Four organizations are now actively engaged in this new program: the American Geological Institute; the American Institute of Biological Sciences; the American Veterinary Medical Association; and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. Others who are formulating their plans for cooperation in the register are: the American Chemical Society; the American Institute of Physics; the American Mathematical Society; the American Meteorological Society; The American Psychological Association; and the Engineers Joint Council. The American Medical Association has indicated that it will cooperate with the biological groups in the registration of medical scientists. Special procedures will be devised to register any qualified scientific or technical group not associated with the societies named above.

The present registration program has received the warm approval of specialists on scientific manpower and of the professional and scientific organizations. Its success will depend upon the cooperation of scientists and technical personnel in completing and returning the brief questionnaires sent to them. Scientists who do not receive questionnaires may assist in the program by requesting the appropriate professional scientific society, institute, federation, council or association to include them in its mailing list.

HARRY C. KELLY

National Science Foundation, Washington, D. C.

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