

News of Science

NSF Special Committee

A Special Committee on Medical Research has been named by the National Science Board to review and evaluate the medical research programs of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, according to a joint announcement made on 12 Aug. by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Marion B. Folsom and Alan T. Waterman, director of the National Science Foundation. The review is being made at the request of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The special committee is headed by C. N. H. Long, chairman of the department of physiology, Yale University School of Medicine. Other members of the committee are E. A. Doisy, professor of biochemistry, St. Louis University School of Medicine; Ernest W. Goodpasture, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Walter Reed Army Medical Center; A. B. Hastings, department of biological chemistry, Harvard Medical School; Charles Huggins, director, Ben May Laboratory for Cancer Research, University of Chicago; Colin M. MacLeod, department of microbiology, New York University School of Medicine; C. Phillip Miller, department of medicine, University of Chicago; W. M. Stanley, director, Virus Laboratory, University of California. Joseph W. Pisani, on leave of absence from the State University of New York College of Medicine in Brooklyn, where he is assistant dean, is serving as executive secretary of the committee.

The department's request to NSF was made in a letter addressed to the director by former Secretary Oveta Culp Hobby earlier this year. She pointed out that the department's program comprises a major portion of the Federal activity in medical research and expressed the view that it should be subjected to critical review, particularly with regard to its scope and the distribution of support among the various special areas of medical research.

Specifically, the Secretary requested that the review of the department's program include the following: consideration of the rate of growth of the programs of the National Institutes of Health, other research units of the Public Health Service, and other units of the department in the light of the responsi-

bilities of the Federal Government with respect to health, medical, and related research; a general appraisal of the present level of support of medical research by the department; careful consideration of the proper balance of effort with respect to the support of basic research and research aimed more directly at the prevention, diagnosis, and cure of diseases; and the relative distribution of effort among the major special fields of health research.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare took cognizance of the foundation's survey of the national scientific research and development effort, including the medical research activities of universities, industry, and government. The department's request was for an interim appraisal of its medical research programs by a special committee appointed by the foundation, pending completion of the over-all survey.

The basis of the Secretary's request was NSF's statutory authority to evaluate scientific programs undertaken by agencies of the Federal Government. In accepting the responsibility for an interim study, Waterman pointed out that it would not be possible to relate the medical research program of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to the national effort in medical research in any complete sense until the findings of the foundation's over-all survey are complete. Nevertheless, he expressed a willingness to provide for a preliminary review and has asked the Special Committee on Medical Research to submit its findings to the National Science Board in time for the December 1955 meeting of the board.

Australian Plant Introduction

A number of countries, including Australia, have an active import and export business in the exchange of seeds and grasses and crop plants. Australia has a Plant Introduction Section in the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization that does a flourishing business in meeting requests by other countries for seeds of Australian plants and in arranging similar importations from abroad. Since the Plant Introduction Section was established in 1929, something like 20,000 items have been

imported into Australia for experimental purposes.

When the early settlers discovered that there was an almost complete absence of native plants suitable for crops, they arranged to bring out the seeds of English crop and garden plants and grasses. However, it soon became clear that there were vast areas of Australia where plants from England and from many parts of Europe could never be established.

The early introductions of cereal seeds and grasses formed the basis for the development of Australia's primary industries. Besides the cereals, the importation of such pasture species as subterranean clover, the rye grasses, phalaris, and others, have completely revolutionized grazing and agriculture. Many millions of acres are now seeded with these introduced grasses.

Today efforts are being particularly directed toward finding new plants for the tropical, subtropical, and semiarid areas of Australia, as well as toward searching for better strains of the pasture plants already established in southern Australia.

On arrival in Australia, overseas plants and seeds are given initial trials in the quarantine nurseries that have been established in most states and in the Northern Territory. During these trials an assessment of a plant's suitability is made, and supplies of the more promising seeds are built up for more extensive tests, which may include grazing by animals. This procedure takes a number of years and it may be some time before seed can be released with confidence for use on a commercial or semicommercial scale.

Decision on Cole Case

In a 2-to-1 decision handed down on 28 July, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against Kendrick M. Cole, a former food and drug inspector in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare who was dismissed from his job in January 1954. Cole was removed on security grounds because of charges that he had associated with persons reported to be Communists and had made donations to, and attended meetings of, an organization designated as subversive by the Attorney General.

Cole's case was based on the premise that the Federal Employees Security Program does not apply to men in nonpolicy-making positions. He challenged the presidential authority to issue a security-risk order instructing all agency heads to make sure that retention of every worker is "consistent with national security."

The majority decision of Judge E. Barrett Prettyman and Judge Walter M. Bastian held that the basic law authoriz-