News of Science

Atomic Energy Commissioners Named

President Eisenhower has nominated John S. Graham and John F. Floberg as members of the Atomic Energy Commission. Floberg, now a Washington attorney and a political independent, served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air from 1949 to 1953. He would replace Democrat Thomas E. Murray, whose term has expired. Graham, a Democrat and a financial and business consultant who was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury from 1948 to 1953, would fill the vacancy created by the death of John Von Neumann.

Since Von Neumann was also an independent, the political balance of the commission will be retained if the nominations are approved. However, the five-man body would be left with only one scientist member, Willard F. Libby. The other commissioner is Harold S. Vance.

When questioned about the nominations, White House Press Secretary James C. Hagerty commented that Strauss had personally recommended Floberg and Graham. He said that he thought this made it obvious that Strauss had not supported Murray's reappointment. An editorial in the 16 June issue of the *New York Times* says of the failure to reappoint Murray:

"For the past seven years Thomas E. Murray, industrial engineer and New York Democrat, has served on the five-man Atomic Energy Commission. During that period he has developed a reputation for frankness and independent judgment. He has often been at odds with A.E.C. Chairman Lewis L. Strauss. For example, Mr. Murray has advocated a halt to hydrogen bomb tests, championed a limit on the size and number of nuclear weapons in the U.S. stockpile, and opposed giving private industry a lone hand in the development of atomic power for peaceful purposes.

"Washington observers have felt, accordingly, that Mr. Murray probably would not be reappointed to the A.E.C. when his term expired June 30, despite strong pressure from Senate Democrats upon the Administration."

FAS Test Ban Statement

The executive committee of the Federation of American Scientists, whose membership now includes some 2200 scientists and engineers, has released a statement urging the United States Government to seek, through the United Nations, an international agreement to ban further tests of large nuclear weapons. The committee emphasized that such a ban would not involve complicated inspection systems, since explosions above the level of 100 kilotons could be detected by "monitoring systems outside national boundaries."

The statement pointed out that, while the Atomic Energy Committee's recent hearings contributed to our appreciation of the potential danger from fallout, "decisions regarding limitation of future bomb testing programs must ultimately rest on other factors of political and strategic nature, and the current concentration on the radiation hazard problem should not be allowed to obscure these other considerations." The Federation of American Scientists' committee listed five points which argue for a ban on testing large nuclear weapons at the present time:

Such a ban (i) would be likely to be acceptable because detailed inspection inside national boundaries is not a prerequisite, and such a limited agreement would not preclude tactical weapons testing; (ii) would not endanger national security because, without further testing, the United States undoubtedly has enough power in the large nuclear weapons class "to deter an aggressor"; (iii) would impede perfection of the intercontinental ballistic missile with H-bomb warhead (in the Soviet Union as well as here), thus postponing a more terrifying era when aggressors can launch more devastating surprise attacks, and when the increased difficulty of devising practical inspection schemes will make international agreement even harder to achieve; (iv) would keep additional fallout to a minimum, thus relieving "present world-wide anxiety"; and (v) would minimize the chances that additional nations would perfect nuclear weapons and possibly use them irresponsibly.

World Health Assembly

The World Health Assembly, which met in Geneva in May, adopted the 1958 budget, amounting to $13,500,000, as recommended earlier by the Program and Budget Committee. This was the figure previously suggested by the WHO Executive Board, and represents a reduction of half a million dollars below the amount requested by the Director-General, Dr. M. G. Candau. The assembly rejected a Belgian amendment setting the budget at $12,750,000, presented as a compromise between the WHO Executive Board recommendation of $13,500,000 and a United States proposal, previously rejected by the Program and Budget Committee, of $12,000,000.

When he presented the WHO annual report to the assembly, Candau pointed out that the WHO had collaborated during 1956 in some 700 projects in 120 countries and territories and had maintained close and fruitful collaboration with nearly 1800 scientific institutions, particularly medical research laboratories, all over the world. In reference to this collaboration, Candau commented "only forty of these have received financial aid from WHO, the others working voluntarily for the Organization solely in the interest of scientific progress."

The U.S. Government has invited the World Health Assembly to meet in the United States next year.

NBS Guest Week

Nearly 6000 high-school students and their teachers visited the laboratories of the National Bureau of Standards during the bureau's recent Guest Week, 20–24 May. Through lectures, demonstrations, exhibits, and visits to individual laboratories, the students were given a general introduction to the world of science and the activities of a large research establishment. They saw, for example, a controlled demonstration of uranium fission, a solar furnace that heats materials to 6300°F, a new laboratory equipped to study high-temperature materials, and a demonstration of recent NBS experiments that led to the breakdown of the law of conservation of parity.

Theme of the 1957 Guest Week was "Understanding the physical world through measurement." The program was planned in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Education and the National Education Association. The student visitors were selected from science and mathematics classes of high schools within a 100-mile radius of Washington, D.C. The states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia were represented, as well as the District of Columbia.