

News of Science

AIBS Protests Civil Service Action on Pay for Scientists

Approximately 28,000 biologists on the Federal payroll did not benefit from recent pay increases granted by the Civil Service Commission [*Science* 127, 21 (3 Jan. 1957)]. On 10 December the Civil Service Commission announced pay increases for "scientists" employed by the Federal Government, but biologists, agriculturists, and bacteriologists were not included. The raises were granted to physicists, mathematicians, engineers, some chemists, and a number of technologists.

Hidden T. Cox, executive director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences has protested the action in a letter that was sent to President Eisenhower; his scientific adviser, James R. Killian; the Secretaries of Defense, Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Education and Welfare, and Interior; the chairman of the Civil Service Commission; and the chairman of the House and Senate Committees on Civil Service, Government Operations, and Agriculture.

The presidents and secretaries of all societies affiliated with the AIBS also received letters from Cox explaining the situation and pointing out the serious consequences, present and future, to biology. Many of the society officers have, in turn, written to the above officials, as well as to their individual state senators and congressmen. It is understood that the Civil Service Commission has begun a study of the availability of biologists and the salary scales paid by industry and academic institutions. Opposition to the Civil Service Commission action was taken on the grounds that:

- 1) While there may be no serious quantitative shortage of biologists at the present time, there are growing shortages in certain areas. Moreover, there are qualitative shortages in almost all fields of biology, and many are in areas critical to the national defense effort.

- 2) The Civil Service action is discriminatory and makes second-class scientists out of biologists. The financial discrimination is real enough but the discrimination against the prestige and importance of biological scientists is much more significant.

- 3) The lowering of morale among

Federally employed biologists can already be seen.

- 4) The effect of this action upon future recruitment of superior students into the biological and agricultural sciences is serious. The fact that biologists appear to be considered second-rate by the Federal Government cannot fail to reflect itself in a reduction in the numbers of students attracted to biology.

- 5) Science must advance in all fields, not in just a few. Artificially stimulating certain areas, even for political expediency, is extremely shortsighted.

In a statement to the press, the American Institute of Biological Sciences emphasized that it does not intend simply to register protests. The statement said:

"The Institute was established in 1948 as the national organization for professional biological societies to speak for the science and to plan effective cooperative action that will advance the research and teaching efforts of all participating biologists.

"The Institute has, in recent weeks, been instrumental in having the first biological representative named to the IGY Space Satellite Panel. The United States alone among cooperating nations has no organized biological program in the International Geophysical Year. Since the ultimate purpose of a space satellite program is to put life—man—on a space platform, the role of biology seems obvious. An *ad hoc* AIBS Committee has been advising the Office of Naval Research on the design and development of a biological experiment to be included in an early U.S. satellite. A member of this Committee, Dr. Otto Schmitt (University of Minnesota) is the newly appointed member to the U.S. Space Satellite Panel. The AIBS, through this Committee is now planning a Symposium on 'Biology in the Space Age.' Tentatively the Symposium is planned for the 1958 annual AIBS meeting for biologists, to be held at Indiana University, Bloomington, August 24–28.

"Biological research results of the last fifty years are impressive. Improved world food production has virtually eradicated famine. This has been accomplished by the development of new hybrid crops, disease resistant grains, improved animal stocks, increased harvests from the sea, and the recent devel-

opment of insecticides, fungicides and growth substances. The discovery and production of a spectrum of antibiotics, the almost complete conquest of communicable diseases, the application of plant taxonomy to jungle survival techniques are other notable advances.

"Many of the most important scientific problems that remain to be solved are biological—methods for protection against atomic radiation and fallout; solution to the mystery of how green plants provide man with the air he breathes and the food he eats, without which he could not survive; and the problem of the future—how to maintain human life for indefinite periods in submarines and manned space vehicles.

"The Institute represents nationally the men and women who will solve these problems in the next few years. It is for these reasons that the AIBS is concerned, at the moment, with the action of the Civil Service Commission, and continually with the need to develop and encourage a well-qualified corps of biological scientists in the United States."

Conquest

CBS Television's *Conquest* will present its second program at 5 P.M. on 19 January. The telecast will deal with the following subjects: the life and accomplishments of Gerard Kuiper, director of the University of Chicago's two observatories, the Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin and the McDonald Observatory at Fort Davis, Tex.; the story of H. Julian Allen, an aerodynamicist who, by redesigning the shape of rockets and missiles, has solved the crucial "re-entry problem," enabling objects to return to earth from space without burning up through friction with the atmosphere; and a special round-up of the scientific work being done around the world in connection with the International Geophysical Year, including interviews with leading American scientists cooperating in the international scientific effort. *Conquest* is being presented in cooperation with the AAAS and the National Academy of Sciences and under the sponsorship of the Monsanto Chemical Company.

Soviet Science Overestimated

Amid a growing number of claims that science in the U.S.S.R. may more than match that in the United States, Donald J. Hughes, a physicist with the Brookhaven National Laboratory, reports that the Soviet achievement in basic research is being overestimated in this country. Writing in the December issue of *Physics Today*, Hughes bases