Science Academy Gift

A gift from the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States for the construction of a new wing of the National Academy of Sciences building in Washington, D.C., was announced last month. The gift will provide for the erection of the Equitable Life Assurance Society Hall of the Life Sciences, in which will be housed the many scientific activities of the academy and its National Research Council in the fields of biology and medicine.

Architects for the new hall will be Harrison and Abramovitz, who have been associated with the design of many buildings, such as Rockefeller Center, the Lincoln Square project in New York, and the United Nations building. Harrison, senior member of the firm, was as a young man associated with Bertram Goodhue in the design of the present academy building.

When the academy's building was erected in 1924, it was planned to accommodate additional wings as the need developed and funds became available. With the greatly increased scope of the academy's work, more space has been urgently needed and many activities of the Academy–Research Council have had to be housed in widely scattered locations throughout Washington.

Detlev W. Bronk, president of the academy, made the following comment on the gift: "Erection of this new hall of the academy to house the medical and life sciences will be of great value to our nation. It is eminently appropriate that the Equitable Life Assurance Society thus contribute to the work of the academy, for we are both private organizations devoted to the public welfare."

Thermonuclear Research Progress Slow

Leading atomic scientists from many countries, including the U.S., Germany, France, the U.S.S.R., Sweden, Belgium, and Italy, met in London last month to discuss the problems of thermonuclear processes. The 2-day conference on the study of the release of energy by fusion of the nuclei of light elements was the first meeting on the subject to be held in Britain. The convention was arranged by the Institution of Electrical Engineers in conjunction with the British Nuclear Energy Conference.

B. F. J. Schonland, director of the Atomic Research Establishment at Harwell, opened the meeting by pointing out that while there is no need for undue pessimism about the outcome of experimental thermonuclear work, there is little point at the moment in talking of a thermonuclear reactor. Schonland reviewed the present position of research work and said:

"It became clear in the course of 1958 —and crystal clear after the Geneva [Atoms for Peace] Conference—that in spite of much brilliant theoretical, experimental and engineering work, no one in the world had yet succeeded with certainty in the very first stage of producing a true, controlled thermonuclear reaction. The emission of neutrons from these devices has been in most cases only an index of plasma instability."

After the opening address a correspondent asked Schonland if research in this field is still very promising. Schonland replied:

"It has become clear that we are going to have success in this field only if we multiply the research needed to get an understanding of it. . . . Though everybody believes we shall solve the problem, I cannot hazard a guess as to when. It will take longer than we first thought, but there's general agreement that there is no race in this business. It is friendly cooperation that is needed."

He went on to say that cooperation with America and other countries is very close, but that since the field is completely unrestricted, there is no limit to cooperation with other countries by means of information exchanges and two-way visits.

Asked if he thought it necessary to modify in any way Sir John Cockcroft's prediction that power from thermonuclear reactions would be a reality in "twenty years plus," Schonland said: "I think the work of the last year has shown it would be a matter of extreme good fortune if we could reach the power stage in twenty years. But we might have luck . . . ."

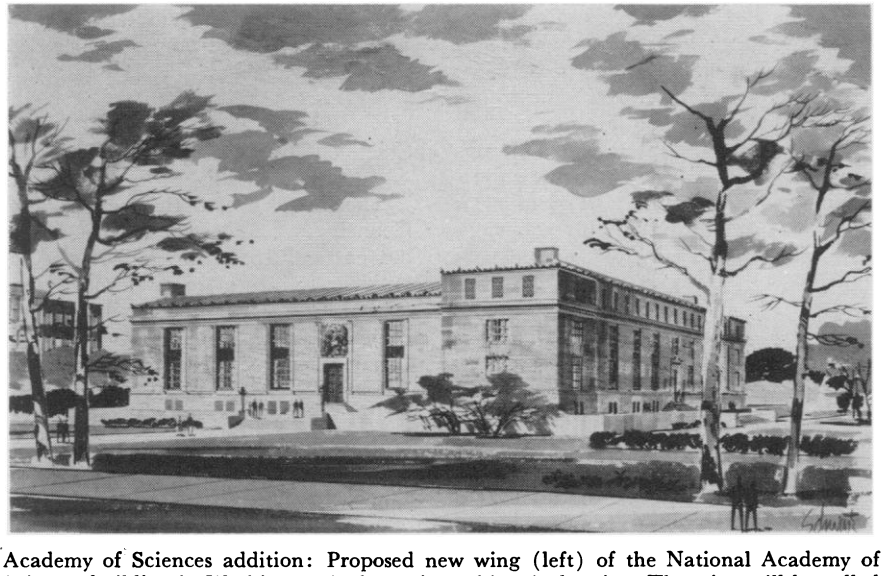
Teaching by Television

More than half a million American students, from the first grade through college, are receiving part of their classroom instruction by television, according to a joint report, *Teaching by Television*, that has been published by the Ford Foundation and the Fund for the Advancement of Education. As of 1 February, 117 colleges and universities offered courses for credit on television, 569 school districts made regular use of televised instruction, and 241 colleges and universities offered credit for the nationwide television course in modern physics, "Continental Classroom."

The report describes educational-television experiments that have been supported by the Ford Foundation and the Fund for the Advancement of Education involving more than 25 colleges and universities and 100 school systems and more than 100,000 students and their teachers. During the past 5 years, the Fund and the Ford Foundation have provided financial support amounting to more than $10 million for more than 50 different experiments at the school and college level involving the use of television as a medium of instruction. The report points out that practically every course in the school and college curriculum, from first-grade arithmetic to college zoology, is being taught somewhere over television.

The new publication presents the following results from the experiments:

1) Two of the most extensive school experiments (Washington County, Md., involving some 18,000 students, and the National Program in the Use of Television in the Public Schools, a nationwide project involving in its first year nearly 40,000 students in more than 100 public-school systems) indicate that superior



Academy of Sciences addition: Proposed new wing (left) of the National Academy of Sciences building in Washington is shown in architect's drawing. The wing will be called the Equitable Life Assurance Society Hall of Life Sciences in honor of the company which is providing the funds for its construction.