support from the National Science Foundation and several private foundations—students are placed in research laboratories throughout the New York and the New England areas, where they gain valuable experience as apprentices.

Conference Spurs Nuclear Energy and Basic Sciences in Pan American Union

At its first meeting last week, the Inter-American Nuclear Energy Commission set the framework for the future activities of South and Central American states in the use of nuclear energy and, more broadly, in the role of science. Representatives of 15 nations took part in the 5-day organizational meeting in Washington which, by means of 11 resolutions, charted the future development of the commission. The resolutions, in addition to establishing the working practices of the group, call for cooperative programs for training, education, and research in the nuclear sciences and for dissemination of information on nuclear energy in Latin America. They also call for a survey of the use of radioisotopes in research in the Americas, symposia on the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, and the elimination of tariff barriers on materials used in scientific training and research.

The commission is an outgrowth of a proposal made by President Eisenhower at a meeting of the presidents of the American states in July 1956. At that time he suggested that the field of atomic energy represented one possible avenue toward closer cooperation among the American republics. At a later meeting, this proposal was given specific form when Dr. Milton Eisenhower suggested the creation of the Inter-American Nuclear Energy Commission. After some delay, the commission was formed as a semiautonomous organization with its own secretariat and with strong ties to the Organization of American States. The relationship, according to a spokesman, is very similar to that between the United Nations and its many specialized agencies.

Basic Science Needs Stressed

Although most of the Central and South American nations are eager to put atomic energy to work as soon as possible, there is general realization, which was evident at the Washington meeting, that the immediate major need is for a cadre of scientific and engineering personnel to train and direct others, in both the national and international programs. Toward this end, the members of the commission considered two possibilities. The first, a single large center for training, education, and research in the nuclear sciences for all of Latin America, was rejected on the grounds that it would be inefficient. "A better alternative," one of the resolution papers states, "appears to be the increased utilization of existing national facilities and the encouragement of worthwhile new endeavors in the various fields of nuclear specialization on a regional, rather than purely national, basis." A resolution to study the latter plan was among the 11 adopted by the commission. Such a cooperative program, the commission directed, should give priority to the following subjects, in the order given: mathematics for nuclear science; basic physics and nuclear physics; nuclear engineering and technology; use of isotopes in scientific research, agriculture, medicine, and industry; health and safety in the use of nuclear materials; and geology and mining of nuclear materials.

The priority list reflects the general view among the delegates that nuclear studies cannot be pursued *in vacuo*, and that a general advancement in all the sciences underlies progress in the nuclear sciences. On this point, J. D. Perkinson, executive secretary of the commission and a former member of the training and education division of this country's Atomic Energy Commission, said: "The secretariat of IANEC and the delegates were consistently concerned during the sessions with the importance of the basic sciences as a foundation for any nuclear program." The other side of the coin, as the secretary pointed out, is that "it is well established that the institution of a national nuclear program has frequently stimulated the improvement of basic science and research."

U.S. Sees Health Gain

At the meeting, which was attended by leading scientists and atomic energy officials of Latin American countries, the United States' delegate, John J. Floberg of the AEC, said that atomic energy, chiefly through the use of radioisotopes, can be expected to make great contributions in the field of health. Work in which radioisotopes are used to study human parasites has been under way for some years under the direction of Marcel Roche, who attended the Washington meeting as president of the Venezuelan delegation.

Because it is expected the commission will develop relationships with other international groups dealing with atomic energy, the meeting was attended by a number of representatives of these organizations, including Sterling Cole of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Others attending as observers were members of the National Academy of Sciences, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization.

In addition to representatives of the U.S. and Venezuela, the meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Uruguay.

As the last of its resolutions, the commission set 22 August 1960 as the date for its second meeting, to be held at the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C.

In one of the last addresses at the conference, Roche, who was elected vice chairman for the coming year, summarized the work done.

"The general working plan for the coming year has been drafted. The seat of the next Inter-American symposium and the topic of discussion has been selected. Valuable inter-American contacts for cooperation in future atomic energy programs have been established, and in some cases more detailed preliminary agreements have been reached. A working group has been established for the purpose of drafting a coordinated and complete plan for training, education, and research in nuclear sciences in America. The importance of the work of this group cannot be over-emphasized. We all know—and in the present meeting this has been repeatedly stated—that education in all fields is the first need of our Latin America, and that all our efforts are doomed to failure if we do not take vigorous steps to increase our technical capacity and to augment the number of men trained in science in our countries."