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Mutual Aid

The United States Government, through numerous agencies—the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Science Foundation—supports research by foreign scientists in foreign countries to the tune of some \$60 million per year. In addition, a large but untabulated amount is spent to help foreigners attend scientific meetings here, to help our scientists attend meetings abroad, to support international science conferences, and to support research programs such as continuing research in the Antarctic or the prospective 11-nation investigation of the Indian Ocean. These ventures in aiding foreign science or supporting work of American scientists abroad are justified by the interest of the granting agencies in obtaining results of value to their missions or by the benefits to our foreign relations that flow from strengthening science and technology in the recipient countries. Exchange programs, on the contrary, are based on the assumption that scientific cooperation is in itself good for international relations.

In view of the diversity of scientific enterprises of this kind, it is little wonder that the agreement reached by President Kennedy and Prime Minister Ikeda of Japan last June to seek ways to strengthen scientific cooperation between their countries attracted little notice. Subsequently, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State and the Foreign Ministry of Japan, a joint committee was appointed to meet in Tokyo last December. This United States-Japan Committee on Scientific Cooperation, under the alternating chairmanships of Dr. Kan-kuro Kaneshige of the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission and Dr. Harry C. Kelly of the National Science Foundation, came up with some recommendations for appropriate areas of cooperation. What makes these recommendations worth considering here is not that they foreshadow earth-shaking events but that they represent the first steps in a novel approach to international scientific cooperation. For one country to support the scientists of the other, as has been our practice, is not the intent. On the contrary, the plan is to look for problems of interest to both countries and then to set up joint scientific teams to carry out the research. Both countries will contribute men, materials, and financial support, in the expectation that the results will be of value to both.

One panel of scientists from each country has been appointed to select problems for oceanographic scientific investigations in the Pacific Ocean, another to study the ecology and plant and animal geography of the Pacific area, and still others to consider cancer research, exchange of scholars, and exchange of information and materials. Among the specific problems under discussion are those of seismology, tsunamis and typhoons, and air pollution.

In May the panels will meet in Washington to get down to detailed planning. If all goes well, this pioneering effort may set a new pattern for international cooperation in science: the touchwords will be mutual aid, not foreign aid.—G.DUS.