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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

## The First Director

Toward the end of World War II, President Roosevelt asked Vannevar Bush, director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, how science and government might most usefully collaborate after hostilities ended. In *Science, the Endless Frontier*, Dr. Bush replied with the proposal that there be established a national science foundation as a permanent agency of government. It took the federal government 5 years to decide to adopt this recommendation. It took the first National Science Board and President Truman only a brief time to decide to invite Alan T. Waterman to become the foundation's first director.

Fortunately for the foundation and for American science, he accepted. Now, after serving for over 12 years, Dr. Waterman has retired. When we look back over those years, it is abundantly clear that the foundation has been managed wisely and skillfully. In this appraisal we join many others. On 21 June the National Science Board honored Dr. and Mrs. Waterman with a farewell dinner. This pleasant reunion of several hundred friends and admirers provided an opportunity for expressions of appreciation and gratitude from President Truman, who first appointed Dr. Waterman as the foundation's director; President Eisenhower, who reappointed him for a second term; and President Kennedy, who asked him to continue in office after that term had expired. Vannevar Bush, for the first time since the foundation was established, gave publicly his assessment of its progress. A dozen years ago, he said, a number of rocks were clearly visible as the foundation started on its course. How the foundation avoided coming to grief on these rocks was the theme of Dr. Bush's testimonial to the skill of its first pilot.

The confidence of Congress, the respect of other agencies of government, and the loyal support of scientists in this and other lands have all been earned when none of these was assured at the beginning. In any enterprise of this magnitude, and under circumstances requiring the charting of policies in controversial areas, some amount of dissatisfaction would be inevitable. But in looking back now on the foundation's first dozen years, perhaps the most remarkable thing is that when so much could have gone awry, so little did, and so much work of a first-class nature was accomplished. For this we can thank an able staff, a thoughtful and devoted National Science Board, and, chief among these, a skillful and patient director.

Now the foundation is in fresh hands. The new director will have his problems and his successes, and so will those who follow him. But the first director occupies a unique position in the history of a successful institution. Whatever glories other men have since brought to the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper stands alone as its first president, and no matter what has been and will be accomplished by a chain of successors, Joseph Henry will live in memory as the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. Each had a greater range of choice than did his successors, a greater opportunity to doom the new institution to mediocrity or to point it toward high achievement. In like fashion, Alan Waterman will be remembered as the first director of the National Science Foundation, the wise head who steered it through its formative years and set it on its course of great and growing usefulness.—D.W.