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National Science Youth Month

In his very funny *Whizz for Atomms*, Geoffrey Willans confronts us with a half-literate but irrepressible British schoolboy, Nigel Molesworth, whose bright dreams of glory ("It is the Peason-molesworth Atommic Pile fitted with radio and plug for electric razor") are in grim contrast with school life as he sees it ("... enter sigismund the mad maths master—SIGISMUND [to pupils]: Come on get cracking no talking no smoking . . . you are in my clutches agane"). Although Molesworth, no doubt, poses an insoluble problem to education, it is possible in some cases to make a lively imagination ease, rather than increase, the burden of learning. What is necessary is somehow to lead boys and girls into the discovery that, for those who can do it, intellectual effort is a form of bold adventure.

This principle is the basis for a group of local and country-wide programs that have developed during the past 15 or 20 years with the purpose of locating bright youngsters and making of them students of science. The programs encourage boys and girls to embark on scientific or technical projects suitable to their age—for example, to demonstrate known natural laws by experiments of their own design or to observe known phenomena through instruments of their own construction. In addition, by arranging public activities in the form of science fairs and junior academies of science, the programs bring like-minded youngsters together and give members of the community in which they live an opportunity to learn of their achievements.

To emphasize the programs planned for the new school year, the President's Committee on Scientists and Engineers has designated October as National Science Youth Month. Although the activities are varied, contact with students is usually through local science clubs, which may be set up as an extracurricular activity in a school and which may have a school teacher as the adult sponsor. Several national organizations, among which is the AAAS, advise and coordinate local efforts. The science fairs may be held in museums, school gyms, or school auditoriums, with the winning projects competing at the end of the year in a National Science Fair. The junior academies of science, in which papers are read or talks are given by guest speakers, may be run in connection with state or city academies of science.

One of the best known programs is the Science Talent Search, designed for high-school seniors who are already well on their way to a scientific education. Supported financially by the Westinghouse Educational Foundation and administered by Science Service, it awards each year substantial scholarships and other prizes. Last year's three top entries were by two boys and a girl, who submitted reports titled, respectively, "Automatic cloud chamber," "Use of vapor pressure measurements for analysis of ideal solutions," and "Effects of colchine on *Drosophila*."

As with most human action, the persons and organizations who sponsor the different programs may do so for several reasons. Perhaps some act out of a conviction that scientific activity is one of the goods of life, and perhaps others because science is so important to the national defense and common security. It may well be that during the coming school year some *Science* readers will be asked to help out at a club, fair, or junior academy. For information about the many agencies cooperating in National Science Youth Month, write to Science Service, 1719 N Street, NW, Washington 6, D.C.—J.T