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The Gordon Research Conferences, AAAS

THE research conferences now known as the Gordon Research Conferences were organized by Neil E. Gordon at the Johns Hopkins University in the summer of 1931. The success in developing these conferences resulted from faith in ideas and faith in people. It was the belief that scientific men and women would profit by knowing one another better and by having an opportunity to discuss their scientific interests in a leisurely and informal manner amid pleasant surroundings.

The first conference was attended by about 25 faculty members and students of the University. The history of the first conference was not recorded in detail because of the informal character of the organization. It is known that in 1932 one conference was held on the subject of X-rays and Crystal Structure. The first summer proved that the basic principles from which the conferences were organized were sound, and the conferences continued each summer at Johns Hopkins University for the next 2 years.

In 1935, it was decided to hold the conferences at Gibson Island, Maryland, on Chesapeake Bay. The program consisted of three conferences: the Chemistry of the Aliphatic Free Radicals, Long Chain Molecules, and Vitamins. The following year the conferences were again held at Gibson Island and five subjects were covered. After Dr. Gordon resigned from Johns Hopkins, the University carried on the Seventh Annual Research Conference at Virginia Beach, Va., in 1937. Subsequently, a meeting was also held at Rehoboth Beach, Del. In 1938, the conferences returned to Gibson Island, and for the next 9 years they continued to increase in number and demand.

In 1946, the AAAS appointed a Management Committee to study the future of the conferences and to recommend definite plans for the continuation of what has proved to be one of the outstanding developments in science. The Committee consisted of George Calin-

gaert, chairman, Dean Burk, L. H. Flett, K. C. Hickman, and Sereck Fox. This Committee in 1947 decided to move the conferences from Gibson Island, where the summer atmospheric conditions were not too satisfactory, to Colby Junior College in New London, N. H. By this time, the number of conferences had increased to 10. In 1948, it was decided to organize 11 weekly conferences during the period from June 15 to Labor Day. The demand on the Management Committee for additional summer conferences continually increased, until in the summer of 1950 a second location for conferences was selected at the New Hampton School in New Hampton, N. H. In 1950, six conferences were organized. The following year 11 conferences were held at the New Hampton location. During the summer of 1953, 24 conferences were held, 12 at each location attended by 2466 scientists. The total requests for attendance has always exceeded the maximum permissible number.

In 1954, history will be repeated. A third location is necessary to attempt to satisfy the demand. Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, N. H., has been selected for the third series of seven conferences. The complete program appears elsewhere in this issue.

The Gordon Research Conferences were a natural development from a small beginning. The general pattern of scientific value has been established. They are highly regarded by scientists throughout the world. Inquiries and requests for information on the organization and operation of the conferences have been received from individuals who desire to organize similar meetings in other areas of science. It is believed that these conferences provide opportunities for the advancement of science that are not available at any other type of meeting.

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