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Addresses given on the occasion of the dedication of the building for the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council, Washington, April 28, 1924

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

IF there be one thing in which America is pre-eminent, it is a disposition to follow the truth. It is this sentiment which characterized the voyage of Columbus. It was the moving impulse of those who were the leaders in the early settlement of our country, and has been followed in the great decisions of the nation through all its history. Sometimes this has been represented by political action, sometimes by scientific achievements. On this occasion, the emphasis is on the side of science.

By science I mean the careful assembling of facts, their comparison and interpretation. Of those who are entitled to high rank in both our political and scientific life, perhaps Benjamin Franklin was the earliest and one of the most conspicuous examples. But it is the same spirit that has moved through all our life, which makes it particularly appropriate that our national government should be active in its encouragement of the searching out of the truth in the physical world, and applying it to the wellbeing of the people, as it is interested in the searching out of the truth in the political world with the same object in view.

President Washington, in his farewell address to the American people said: "Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinions it should be enlightened." It was the first President of the United States who saw the necessity of research in this country. Jefferson, our third President, was himself a research worker by natural gift, and loved the problems which gave him a broader knowledge of our natural surroundings. The beginning of our government, therefore, had to do with the inception of scientific research in the United States.

American science may be divided into five periods—the Jefferson period, that of Silliman, the Agassiz period, the present period of cooperative research when no one dominates, and the future for which definite foundations are being laid.

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