

SCIENCE

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THE FUNCTIONS AND IDEALS OF A NATIONAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEY¹

Introduction.—During the period of unrest and uncertainty through which we are still painfully groping, the many distracting calls upon my time and thoughts have made performance of the duty to prepare a presidential address particularly difficult. In view of these circumstances I may perhaps hope for some indulgence on your part if my effort shows some lack of thoroughness in its preparation and falls somewhat short of the high standard set by some of my distinguished predecessors. The subject of a presidential address to the academy should, I think, be of wider interest and more general character than would ordinarily be an account of work in the speaker's particular branch of science, and this condition I have attempted to fulfill. Although what follows will deal especially with national geological surveys much of it will apply in principle to any scientific bureau conducted as a government organization.

Reasons for the Existence of a National Geological Survey.—In the beginning it may be well to review briefly the reasons for the existence of a national geological survey. Why should the government undertake work in geology while investigations in other sciences are in general left to private initiation and enterprise? The reasons that may be adduced will differ with the point of view. The geologist will suggest that whereas some sciences, such as chemistry, physics or astronomy may be pursued with success with stationary and permanent equipment at any one of a number of localities, geology is regional in its scope and is primarily a field science as contrasted with a laboratory science. Geology, it is true, must avail itself of laboratory re-

¹ Address delivered as retiring president of the Washington Academy of Sciences on January 13, 1920.

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