

No. 583

A Science Service Feature

March 24

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.

VARYING SPEEDS OF THE WEATHER PROCESSION

The weather is always passing by, a procession of highs and lows. The fore-caster may have trouble judging the time of arrival of any particular storm, because even if a low follows the usual track it may get ahead or behind schedule. A weather time table would show that storms, like trains, travel faster in America than in Europe. Moreover, they are speedier in winter than in summer. In the United States we may expect our storms to make about 30 miles per hour in winter and 20 in summer, while in western Europe the average rates are 20 and 16 miles per hour for the same seasons. Sometimes, however, a block on the track will spoil the forecaster's calculations. A large, robust high pressure area in the path of a low pressure area may cause a deadlock. The "low" becomes stalled and the unfortunate persons in that vicinity wonder why it doesn't stop raining. Sometimes the delay is more than local. Says Forecaster E. H. Bowie: "We live in a river of air that is moving eastward in our latitude. If for some reason, a stoppage occurs in northwestern Europe, a stagnation backs up to the Mississippi Valley in five or six days. Then the dam breaks away and things assume normal movement over in Europe, and four or five days later everything starts off in good shape over the United States."

(Tomorrow: Changeable Weather)

All rights reserved by Science Service

SCIENCE SERVICE,
B and 21st Sts.,
Washington, D.C.