

# SCIENCE

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## THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. KARL T. COMPTON

PRESIDENT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

THE range of opportunity in science in this country is so great and the extent to which the government should undertake responsibility in this field involves such complex considerations that it is perhaps rash to undertake a discussion of the problem. Nevertheless, the problem is as important as it is complex and events of the last two years have conspired to focus on it the attention of several organized groups of scientists with the result that some aspects at least of the problem have been somewhat clarified. I will attempt, therefore, to give a brief sketch of the problem of the government's present responsibilities in science, together with some suggestions as to ways in which these responsibilities may profitably be extended as they have been developed through discussions in the Science Advisory Board and in conferences with many other agencies and individuals.

<sup>1</sup> Address given on March 16 at the initiation banquet of the Yale Chapter of Sigma Xi.

My own contact with this study dated from a radiogram from my assistant, received in the summer of 1933 while on the boat from Boston to Bangor, stating: "Word received that you have been appointed chairman of committee to reorganize Federal Government." Realizing that there was some major misunderstanding, I was naturally interested to learn what had really happened and found in the paper on the following day that the President had appointed a Science Advisory Board of scientists and engineers with authority "to appoint committees to deal with specific problems in the various departments."

This board now consists of fifteen men, including: Dr. Campbell, president of the National Academy of Sciences; Dr. Bowman, chairman of the National Research Council; Dr. Dunn, president of the J. G. White Engineering Corporation; Dr. Jewett, president of the Bell Telephone Laboratories; Dr. Kettering, president of the General Motors Research Corporation; Dr.

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