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## THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE UPON SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

By Sir JOSIAH STAMP

SCIENTISTS see very clearly how, if politicians were more intelligent, if business men were more disinterested and had more social responsibility, if governments were more fearless, far-sighted and flexible, our knowledge could be more fully and quickly used to the great advantage of the standard of life and health—the long lag could be avoided, and we should work for social ends. It means, says Mr. Julian Huxley, “the replacement of the present socially irresponsible financial control by socially responsible planning bodies.” Also, it obviously involves very considerable alterations in the structure and objectives of society, and in the occupations and preoccupations of its individuals. Now a careful study of the literature of planning shows that it deals mainly with planning the known, and hardly at all with planning for changes in the

known. Although it contemplates “planned” research, it does not generally provide for introducing the results of new research into the plan, and for dealing with the actual *impact*—the unemployment, redirection of skill and location and the breaking of sentimental ties that distinguish men from robots. It seems to have not many more expedients for this human problem than our quasi-individualist society with its alleged irresponsibility. It also tends to assume that we can tell in advance what will succeed in public demand and what will be superseded. There is nothing more difficult, and the attempt to judge correctly under the intellectual stimulus of high profits and risk of great losses is at least as likely to succeed as the less personally vital decision on a committee. Would a planning committee, for example, planning a new hotel in 1904, have known any better than capitalist prevision that the fifteen bathrooms then considered adequate for social demand ought really to have been ten

<sup>1</sup> Concluding part of the address of the president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Blackpool, September 9, 1936.

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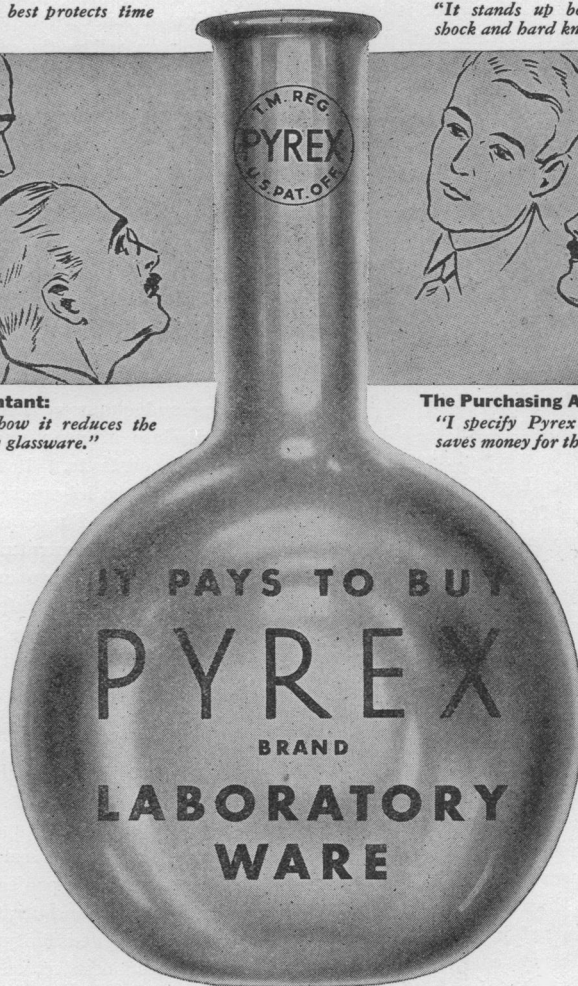


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