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STANDARDS OF LIVING AS FUNCTIONS OF SCIENCE AND OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION¹

By Dr. STUART A. RICE

CHAIRMAN, U. S. CENTRAL STATISTICAL BOARD

THE purposes of my paper as first projected for inclusion in the symposium on "Science and Society" were: "(1) to take stock of the extent to which the standards of living of the people in the world have been raised in recent times; (2) to examine the extent to which production must still be expanded in order to provide satisfactory standards of living." It was hoped thus to "provide a factual basis on which to consider the needs for further applications of science to productive enterprise."

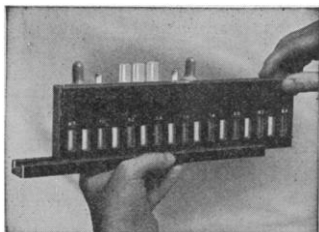
The phrasing of these intended specifications implies an attempt at statistical precision. "Take stock," "extent," "raised," "factual basis," "further applica-

¹ Condensed from the address on "World Standards of Living" of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section K, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the Ottawa session, June 28, 1938.

tions," are expressions appropriately used in discussing measurable and measured or enumerated phenomena. Alas! Quantitative evidences of changes in the world's standards of living are not to be here presented. The concept "standard of living" is a will-o'-the-wisp. Its incarnate shapes and dimensions at different times in different climes have not been calibrated.

Alfred Marshall avoids the term "standard of living"² and distinguishes between the *standard of life*, meaning "the standard of activities adjusted to wants," and the *standard of comfort*, "a term that may suggest a mere increase of artificial wants, among which perhaps the grosser wants may predominate." "A rise in the standard of life implies an increase in intelli-

² "Principles of Economics," 8th ed., Chapter XIII, on "Progress in Relation to Standards of Life."

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