

A BACKGROUND TO MUSEUM EXHIBITION

By Their Works. By H. PHELPS CLAWSON. 260 pp. 107 illustrations. Buffalo, N. Y.: Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences. 1941. \$4.00.

"BY THEIR WORKS" is an interesting and important addition to the growing literature of that nascent social science, museology. The purpose of the volume is to create a historical and cultural setting for an exhibition of anonymous art, drawn from all epochs and all quarters of the globe, on view at the Buffalo Museum of Science. It provides a framework on which to hang an appreciation of the arts of the European Stone and Iron ages, Egypt, the Near East, China, Greece, Indonesia, Australia, Oceania, the Americas, Africa, Luristan, Ordos and the Syro-Hittites. The volume is copiously illustrated, an important feature, since the educated public is more used to two-dimensional visualization in terms of the printed page than to direct appreciation of an object in its three-dimensional reality.

The text is really subordinate to the pictures, or rather to the specimens which they illustrate. There

is no need to cavil at Mr. Clawson for handling his material in this way, since an exhibition speaks for itself and lush verbalization is unnecessary. The examples are on the whole well-chosen and there is a feeling of balance and continuity in the quality of the display. A person who has major interests in any one art field might bawl and scream that some of his pet pieces were left out. The reason many of these finer examples are lacking is that the book is designed to cover only the material available in the Buffalo Museum. Thus "By Their Works" fully achieves its basic purpose.

Mr. Clawson has provided a point of reference to the exhibitions which can not be attained through the medium of labels. He has sketched in the social history of the makers of the objects in the display and given the serious visitor a means of preparation for what he is about to see, and a method of conserving the memory of what he has already contemplated. How many museums can claim to have done the same for their clientèle?

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REPORTS

THE PROPOSED SOCIETY FOR FREEDOM IN SCIENCE

(1) It is generally agreed that if totalitarian dictators were successful in the present war, they would ultimately put an end to the freedom of scientific research throughout the world. Their pronouncements and their practice alike can leave no doubt upon the point. Defense of scientific freedom, equally with other freedoms, is therefore an integral part of the struggle.

(2) The threat to scientific freedom comes not only from existing dictatorships. Great social changes are inevitable after the conclusion of peace, and some of the changes now ardently advocated in democratic countries contain a definite threat to scientific freedom. There is a widespread and vigorous movement which sees the solution of social difficulties in a complete recasting of the structure of society under a system of central control. Thus there is a threat to scientific freedom, less direct though perhaps as dangerous, from some of the adherents to the doctrine of "central planning."

(3) Science has a value which is independent of the practical benefits it yields to society. The methods of science, its heritage of knowledge and the scientific habit of thought together constitute a scientific culture which must be recognized as being on a par with the artistic and literary cultures; and freedom is essential for all alike. Without freedom science can not flourish,

and therefore can not serve the cultural and practical needs of society.

(4) The threat to freedom in science is believed to be real and dangerous because of the enthusiasm which can be evoked by the doctrine of central planning in the supposed interests of the community. Those who would apply this doctrine to almost every detail of social life represent a school of thought which makes a strong appeal to many of the more active-minded and socially conscious scientists. It seems to be clear that many of the adherents of planning are unaware of the decisive limitations implied by their aims to the freedom and progress of science. Others appear to minimize or to disregard these dangers in their determination to follow the aims of general social planning, whatever its consequences in the province of science.

(5) The vindication of scientific independence is not a doctrine of social indifference but is on the contrary a positive assertion of rights and duties. One of the principal social duties of the scientist is the defense of scientific freedom, for he knows how essential that freedom is for scientific discovery and for the origin of those practical benefits to society which are the natural by-products of his work. At the same time he must recognize the need for continuous reform both in the life of scientific institutions and in the fields where science impinges on society. Almost every professional scientist has some duties apart from pure research: he may undertake teaching, ad-