

SCIENCE

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ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS FOR THE WAR¹

By Dr. KARL T. COMPTON

PRESIDENT, MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

IN ordinary times any American scientist would deem it a distinguished honor to be nominated as the Pilgrim Trust lecturer. In these extraordinary times the significance of this lectureship is enhanced by the fact that American and British scientists are working hand in hand, not only to advance science as an important aspect of man's culture, but now especially as a powerful tool for the preservation of our opportunities for continued life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Consequently, when Sir Henry Tizard transmitted your invitation for me to deliver this lecture I accepted the invitation with profound appreciation and humility.

There were also two personal aspects of this invitation which aroused in me a sentimental reaction. The

¹ Pilgrim Trust Lecture, under the auspices of the Royal Society of London, London, May 20, 1943.

establishment of the Pilgrim Trust lectures was announced to the Royal Society by your late colleague, Sir William Bragg, in his presidential address at the anniversary meeting of the society in 1937. Not only has Sir William Bragg, together with his distinguished son, been an inspiration to my generation of American physicists, but it happens that he delivered the address at the graduation exercises of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the occasion of my inauguration as president of that institution in 1930. I recall very vividly his remarks on that occasion and my feeling that his presence was an inspiration to me at that time when, with considerable trepidation and regret I moved from the research laboratory into an administrative office.

In that address Sir William traced the development of modern institutions for technical instruction and drew his illustrations from the lives and work of

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