

If selfish interests are fostered at the expense of the public welfare, the question can not have an affirmative answer, and if such selfish interests are those of a minority they have no place in a democracy once they are recognized as selfish.

No doubt the problem of selfish interest is a perplexing one, and like all perplexing problems should be approached scientifically. But the possibility of "approaching it with the same order of scientific intelligence as one approaches the problems of instability in gravimetry or geomagnetism," as Dr. Stetson suggests, seems at present rather remote. It is particularly so if selfish interest is "a specific entity in human behavior inherited through evolutionary processes as a means for the preservation of the individual and the species." Must we await the same slow evolutionary processes which millions of years ago eliminated selfish interest in societies of insects and which has brought about little if any change since? Fortunately there are psychological and social means, the effectiveness of which is more immediate if less permanent than strictly biological processes. To different degrees and at different times human society has imposed restrictions on the free play of selfish interests by legal and judicial processes or by other cultural means. Selfishness is not legislated out of existence, but it may be checked with fair success. It is a social solution of a social problem, and is as scientific as the use of water to extinguish fire.

Restrictions which may be imposed by majorities on the selfish interests of smaller groups are the safeguards of a democracy. The lack of such safeguards contributed to the seizure of power in Germany by selfish interests which raised their puppet Hitler to the dictatorship. It can't happen here if an informed public opinion is alert to any threat to the general welfare.

The conclusions to which I come are nearly the same as those of Dr. Stetson—that the question resolves itself into the relative merits of no control as against centralized control, of haphazard arrangements as against organization. In this paraphrase I have avoided the words "dangers" and "compulsion" which he uses. There need be no danger so long as we have our democratic rights and privileges to prevent the usurpation of power by selfish interests; there need be no compulsion exerted on any who do not require it in the interest of public welfare.

The National Research Council has done a good job within the limitations imposed on it. It has stimulated, surveyed, promoted, served, directed attention, gathered and collated, and the men who have carried on this work are to be commended for their accomplishments. The fears of some scientists which were expressed contemporary to the creation of the council

have not been justified. But it is doubtful if the council has had the power, even though willing to use it, to accomplish all the major objectives of the Science Mobilization Bill.

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DATES OF PUBLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

In taxonomy, the solution of a problem often depends upon the determination of the exact dates of publication of the various papers concerned (the application of the law of priority), although in other fields the point is only of historical interest or involves only a desire to give credit where due.

It seems important to emphasize that editors should take pains to make known the actual date of appearance of the journals in their care, especially in these times when printing delays mean that the month or sometimes even the year of actual appearance does not coincide with the stated imprint date.

In one instance which I have met with, the cover and title page both state that the volume appeared on July 15, 1936, whereas I was informed by letter of November 25, 1937, that it was still being proofread. My copy actually arrived on February 18, 1938! A survey of the current periodicals in our library in my own field showed that most of the numbers are now being received from one to three months later than the date stated on the title page.

Some journals, fortunately, have made it a regular practice to insert somewhere in each issue, usually at the end, a statement of the "actual date of publication," date of mailing, date of mailing to a selected list of depositories to establish publication, date offered for sale, etc. Whatever the method, it does seem desirable for editors to consider for their journals some policy relative to making known the actual date of publication, especially for periodicals in fields where questions of priority may be involved.

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MORE ON "STARRING"

It is hard to believe that Dr. C. A. Browne really believes that the situation is as bad as he indicates on page 281 of the September 24 issue of *SCIENCE*. I am primarily writing to answer his first question because of my position as a member of the visiting committee for the Chemistry Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology but with no other connection with that institution. The question is as to why the list of 82 suggestions for "starring" in the seventh edition of the Biographical Directory of "American Men of Science" includes so many from that institution. The reason is historical. In the past twenty