

Comments and Communications

Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace

A few days ago an attractive folder arrived in my mail, outlining, complete with olive branch, a "Call to the Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace," scheduled for March 25, 26 and 27 in New York City. The call was made by Harlow Shapley, chairman, and the names of a few prominent scientists appeared among the long list of sponsors.

The "Call" decries our cold war policy, the threats to our intellectual cultural and scientific progress, the curtailment of academic freedom and censorship "on our writers, on the motion picture industry, the theatre and the radio," our enormous military expenditures, and the possibility of World War III, and states that we must "reestablish American-Soviet understanding and cooperation, which alone can make peace possible."

Now certainly no thinking American is in favor of armament and war and all the undesirable economic and political sacrifice that another war would entail. But it is also clear that the only logical and scientific way to solve the problem of establishing and maintaining world peace is to consider not the undesirable symptoms of discord but the underlying cause. We must make every effort at our disposal to prevent the catastrophe of another war and this must be based on some means of getting along with Russia. However, it seems quite clear that peace cannot exist between men or between nations without law and order and that our concept of law and order cannot exist without the authority of a government based on the will of the people.

On the basis of these concepts it seems quite clear that, in view of the present state of international anarchy, our only alternative to defending ourselves by force against a potential enemy with the avowed and acknowledged intent of adopting any measure to overthrow our government and our way of life is to throw every resource into an attempt to establish a federal world government powerful enough to prevent war and protect freedom and justice. In this way we would have a reasonable chance of settling our basic differences with Russia politically and legally, rather than by military action.

It therefore seems to me that to consider the type of recommendations proposed for consideration by the "cultural and scientific conference for world peace" *without at the same time* proposing a sound policy which can assure a mechanism for dealing with Russian-American differences, or those of any other nation, without recourse to war and with preservation of individual freedom and justice under some form of federal world government is definitely inimical to the best interests of citizens of the United States.

As American scientists, we might reasonably ask our colleagues who have taken an interest in this forthcoming conference either to fight within it for adoption of sound, specific proposals for action which might promote world peace (other than unilateral disarmament and appeasement of the present ruthless Russian dictatorship) or to expose the underlying motives of the conference in their true light.

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Terminology for Sedimentation Force in Centrifugation

Adequate terminology for expressing sedimentation force in centrifugation is used by many authors. However, some authors frequently use, for various purposes, the expression of revolutions per minute (r.p.m.) without further qualification to indicate sedimentation force in centrifugation. This manner of expressing the sedimentation condition is almost meaningless to the reader unless either the length of the axis of the centrifuge containers is also given or the type of centrifuge is stated so that the axis may be ascertained and the force computed. The reader deserves an adequate expression of the used force, such as force times gravity or sedimentation constant. If such is not provided, the reader at least is entitled to the information necessary for computing the force times gravity when r.p.m. is used. Since several types of centrifuges and ultracentrifuges with varied length of axis are in use, it is important that more attention be given to adequate terminology.

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Scientific Method and Social Problems

In a discussion of "Science and Security" (*Science*, June 25, 1948, p. 659) E. U. Condon states that "there is still a great reluctance . . . to accept and extend" the use of the scientific method "in the fields of sociology, economics, and politics," and he hopes for "the full acceptance and use of the scientific method in the social sciences."

In this there is the implication that the methods of these sciences are not scientific now—a view that has appeared repeatedly in notes and comments on the needs of social research, and one that is not particularly helpful to those needs. R. O. Bender, in a recent communication (*Science*, December 10, 1948, p. 665), points out some of the discouraging aspects, although he apparently does not altogether accept as final the assumed definition of scientific method. The definition on which such comments are based, as shown in Dr. Condon's discussion, is an equating of science with controlled experimentation. This