

Meetings of the A.A.A.S. and A.I.B.S.: A Joint Statement

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THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE at this time is engaged in planning future meetings for its affiliated scientific societies, and is completing arrangements for the 1950 meeting at Cleveland, December 26-30. At the same time, the American Institute of Biological Sciences is engaged in completing arrangements for the 1950 meeting of biological societies at The Ohio State University, September 11-13, and is exploring the available campus facilities for possible future meetings of biological societies. To some biologists, these activities have appeared competitive, and so many queries have come to the attention of the secretaries of the two organizations that a joint statement seems the best means of providing some of the answers and of clarifying objectives.

The American Institute of Biological Sciences has a variety of functions, as stated in its Constitution; one of these is rendering assistance to biological societies in matters of common concern, such as arrangement of joint annual meetings, should any member society request it. Like the 216 scientific societies affiliated or associated with the AAAS, the 16 biological societies of the AIBS have varying degrees of affinity with respect to meetings. Some have customarily met with the AAAS; others have regularly arranged independent meetings; a few have chosen meeting associates and locales to accomplish immediate objectives. Like the AAAS, the AIBS has neither the power nor the desire to force any change in pattern or tradition upon its affiliates.

Scientific societies that are members of both AIBS and AAAS should realize that the objectives of the two organizations are different. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, as its name implies, was founded to serve the interests of *all* science and *all* scientists. At its annual meetings the AAAS endeavors, not so much to put on a specialized program for each individual discipline, as it does to explore the interdisciplinary relationships between and among the several fields of pure and applied science. The 17 sections and subsections of the Association may, it is true, plan specialized programs, and those societies that meet with the Association are expected to stress their own fields of specialization. But all of them have the opportunity to meet jointly with other groups and to enjoy the fruits of cross-fertilization that have opened up so many horizons in scientific

theory, in laboratory and field research, and in application. The American Institute of Biological Sciences, on the other hand, was founded to serve the interests of biologists, and the application of biological research to human welfare. At any joint annual meeting of biological societies under its sponsorship, the AIBS serves chiefly as a central organizing agency for making all arrangements necessary to insure a satisfactory meeting and to relieve the individual societies of as much detailed responsibility as possible.

In offering its services to affiliates, the AAAS gives each one complete autonomy in arranging its own program. By making use of the downtown hotels in large cities the AAAS can, and does, insulate each affiliate from the simultaneous activities of other scientific groups to the degree it may desire, and in this way it achieves the same effect as could be attained in a small, independent meeting. Members have the option of seeing exhibits that may not strictly relate to their own field, of hearing general lectures, or of playing "hooky" to learn what goes on in other societies—or even what comes off in the local burlesque theater!

Meetings arranged by the AIBS, on the other hand, are deliberately planned for an academic atmosphere, with the number of participants therefore naturally limited to the facilities of the university selected. Such meetings are arranged to provide the physical setting and facilities appropriate to the type of meeting desired by the participating AIBS societies. Among the desires that have been expressed, and to which particular attention is being paid, are (1) smaller meetings than those involving many scientific societies, but larger than those than can be organized by an individual society; (2) greater coherence of subject matter than is possible or desirable in a general scientific convention, but broader in scope than can be achieved by a single organization; (3) use of campus facilities, or other similar locales; (4) avoidance of a Christmas meeting, with preference, at present, for a September meeting just before or after Labor Day.

The extent to which these desires can be met is severely limited. There are 16 constituent societies in the AIBS, with a nonduplicating membership of 14,000—a figure that is impressively large. It is evident that any meeting involving all, or most of, the member societies of the AIBS—and nonmember biological societies that, additionally, may wish to meet with it—could not be small. Furthermore, there are few campuses that can comfortably accommodate more

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than 2,500 visitors, even when universities are not in session. Thus, 2,500 becomes an upper limit of size if the Institute wishes to maintain some geographic mobility and, at the same time, avoid using the hotels of a few metropolitan centers.

The best time for meetings can be a subject of endless debate. Although the AAAS has not always scheduled its meetings during Christmas week (September, 1944, at Cleveland; March, 1946, at St. Louis; September, 1948, at Washington), it generally plans to utilize this period of the year because the universities are not in session and, despite family ties and customs, more scientists are freer than than at any other time of year. Hotel commitments are normally lighter during the holidays, facilities can be stretched to their utmost in any city selected, and maximum service can be obtained. It is a time when the commercial demand for auditorium space is low or nonexistent, and when favorable arrangements can be made for the use of every type of facility that is necessary or desirable for a large meeting.

There are only a few periods in each year when university campuses are available. The best times are in June, following commencement but before service personnel has dispersed, summer maintenance work has begun, or summer sessions have been started; or in September, just before the fall semester begins. If dormitory accommodations and university restaurant facilities can be used, the cost of attending meetings can be reduced so far as these items are concerned. Here, again, sentiment is divided between those who wish to economize and those who wish, temporarily, to break away from an academic atmosphere and to explore metropolitan attractions.

It is clearly impossible to please everyone either in the timing, or in the locale, or in the type of meetings. It is partly for this reason that the AIBS and the AAAS, deliberately, are diverging in their choice of the time, place, and kind of meetings each of them will arrange. (That both organizations selected Ohio cities for their 1950 meetings was a coincidence.) In 1951, the AIBS-sponsored meeting will be at the University of Minnesota, the AAAS in Philadelphia; in 1952, the AIBS is considering a campus in the Southeastern states, and the AAAS will meet in St. Louis.

Because of the need to limit attendance to the restricted capacities of the cities or campuses selected, both AAAS and AIBS must know, well in advance, the wishes of their respective societies. Neither can accommodate all, or even a majority, without drastic alterations in its plans. There are, for example, but three localities in the country that can handle as large a convention as the 116th meeting of the Association at New York last December, yet there are obvious advantages in scheduling meetings in many other com-

munities. If it continues to preserve its traditional mobility, even the Association may be compelled to limit participation on the part of societies that make their wishes known too late, when meetings are scheduled in smaller cities. Thus, for both organizations, the need to plan ahead more than a year at a time is imperative; the need to know what meeting plans affiliated societies are making is no less urgent. Even now, as the Association is investigating available facilities for 1953, 1954, and 1955, it encounters prior reservations on hotel space in some cities.

If it were possible to do more than guess at the prospective attendance, the problems of the AIBS and the AAAS would be greatly simplified. But "guesstimates" are all that are available until the societies reach their decisions. Both the AAAS and the AIBS hope that they can continue to provide suitable physical facilities and to print general programs without special assessments or levies on participating societies. It must not be thought, however, that scientific meetings can be run without cost. AAAS meetings usually have been operated at substantial deficits, notwithstanding the offsetting income from registration fees and the sale of exhibition space. The AIBS faces the same situation. For this reason, both the AAAS and the AIBS expect that all scientists who attend their respective meetings will register and thus contribute their share to carrying the financial burden. The registration fees are kept at a minimum, but, with mounting costs everywhere, it cannot be expected that they will ever be less than \$2.00 to \$3.00.

Unless scientists meet to exchange views and laboratory experiences, their sciences are dead or dying. Few of them have the time to devote to the minutiae of arranging meetings, and it is inevitable that they—and their societies—should entrust this onerous task to organizations that have the staffs and the experience for this purpose. Meetings of any size are arranged, not by magic and miracle, but by hard and patient work for a year or more in advance. The final effectiveness of this work depends very largely on the cooperation received from the participating societies, and the support given by individual society members. The AAAS and the AIBS are confident that society officers and members will appreciate this mutuality of interests and responsibilities, not only at Columbus and Cleveland, in 1950, but at the meetings planned for subsequent years.

It will be most helpful to the AAAS and the AIBS if, at these meetings, the biological societies can decide on their meeting places for the next few years and will advise both the Association and the Institute of their decisions at their earliest convenience. Officers of the two organizations will be available for consultation at both Columbus and Cleveland.