



The Future of the AAAS

IN 1951 a group of AAAS officers and members met at Arden House to discuss the future of the Association. The report of that meeting [*Science*, Nov. 2, 1951; *Sci. Monthly*, Nov. 1951], which has come to be known as the Arden House statement, pointed out the general directions of AAAS development which its authors considered desirable. The report was approved by the Council "as a guide in the formulation of policy." The next step—and one to be emphasized in 1954—is to get down to a more concrete level, one sufficiently specific to permit agreement, or disagreement, on proposed policies and actions. The Arden House group recognized this necessity in writing: "Once a clear and agreed framework of policy is established—and really not until then—effective approach can be made to the problems of instrumentation of policy."

Since the Arden House statement appeared, many members have set down their ideas and recommendations in letters to the Association's officers. There is in those letters much enthusiasm and little criticism of two points made by the Arden House group: (1) AAAS should take a more active role in inter-science affairs, in keeping the members of one science acquainted with developments in other sciences, in considering topics of interest to all scientists; and (2) AAAS should try more actively to explain science to the public and to help create and maintain social conditions under which science can be of greater benefit to society.

On another point there was no unanimity. The Arden House statement suggested that detailed research findings might better be presented at more specialized meetings than at AAAS sessions. This sug-

gestion was supported by some members, but others made it the target of some fairly acid comments. Most scientists want to talk about, hear others talk about, and read about their own specialty. Zealous devotion to a field of investigation is an expected and desirable, perhaps even a necessary, characteristic of a good scientist. True, some are also interested in legislation, in scientific manpower, in relations with society and government, in the philosophy and sociology of science, and in other topics of general importance. But these are secondary interests more frequently than primary ones. People who are interested in science in general are outnumbered by those who are interested in individual branches of science. Some members suggested that the AAAS must cover both types of interest. For example, programs scheduled by the AAAS itself might be on general problems, while the concurrent sessions of affiliated societies might be on more specific research progress. One member summarized: "The AAAS is large enough and strong enough to cultivate both breadth and depth."

Whatever the future character of the Association, change is bound to be gradual. It cannot be more rapid than the members approve. But change is also inevitable. As society changes, the role, the obligations, and the problems of science and scientists change. If the AAAS is to live up to its name it must keep abreast, and even ahead, of some of the changes.

The questions which were debated at Arden House are still before us. The answers, whatever they turn out to be, will have to be approved by a majority of the members. That is the only democratic possibility. It is also the only practical one, for to be effective any program of the Association must have the support and cooperation of a large membership.

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