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Scientific Manpower Commission

There is a frequent and familiar problem of deciding how general regulations should be applied to a particular group or individual. As a common recent illustration, Selective Service boards and officers responsible for recalling military reservists to active duty have frequently wrestled with the problem of whether or not to require military service of a father, a public official, a student, or a man of particular importance in some civilian capacity. Such decisions must be made on the equities of individual cases, yet guidelines are desirable; thus orders of priority, lists of critical occupations, deferment procedures, and other aids have been developed to assist those who must make these decisions.

Scientists and engineers constitute one of the groups particularly concerned with these matters, for their skills make them critically useful in both military and civilian service, and their numerical shortage makes them hard to replace when military calls take them out of civilian life. Because in many respects these problems can be better handled by an organization that represents all of science than by the individual efforts of individual societies, the AAAS joined with the principal specialized scientific societies a few years ago in organizing the Scientific Manpower Commission. The commission has just held its third annual meeting, and the occasion makes an appropriate opportunity for appraising its effectiveness.

The commission is a good example of cooperation among the sciences and between scientific associations and industry. It consists of representatives of agriculture, biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics, and psychology. It has been supported financially by the sponsoring societies and by generous contributions from industry. Its new president is a biologist; its vice president is a chemist; its secretary is a psychologist; and its executive director, Howard Meyerhoff, is a geologist. The Scientific Manpower Commission has worked closely with the Engineering Manpower Commission. For example, the two organizations jointly publish the *Engineering and Scientific Manpower Newsletter*, an occasional publication that brings to its growing circle of readers current information on legislation, research studies, population trends, and other matters concerning the training and effective utilization of scientific and engineering talent.

The commission has worked on a number of other matters, but most effectively as a consultant to federal agencies that deal with manpower problems. Its advice has been sought in framing legislation, in formulating policy, and in designating occupations in which manpower shortages are of such severity as to recommend that military service be required only when there are specific military requirements for the technical skills of men in those occupations.

That there remains a continuing opportunity for valuable work by the Scientific Manpower Commission can be demonstrated by a single example. In 1955 Congress enacted new military reserve legislation. How the new law will be administered remains to be seen. There will be the necessity for many decisions and there will be opportunity for careful consideration of the ramifications of alternative decisions. The decisions will affect the nation's military strength, educational programs, civilian industry, and scientific progress. In reaching these decisions, the Scientific Manpower Commission will have an important advisory role.—D. W.