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Science Writing Awards

The interpretation of science to the public is an activity of such high importance that we are glad indeed to announce that the AAAS is again sponsoring two annual awards of \$1000 each for excellence of science writing. One award will be made for newspaper and the other for magazine articles. Funds are being supplied by the Westinghouse Educational Foundation. General management is in the hands of the AAAS and a committee representing the three sponsoring organizations, the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, the National Association of Science Writers, and the AAAS. Announcements and rules of eligibility are being distributed to science writers and to newspapers and magazines. The rules are given on page 1348. Entry blanks may be secured from the AAAS. Because excellence of medical reporting is already recognized by the Lasker Awards, writing in the clinical medical field will not be eligible. The new awards are therefore complementary to the Lasker Awards.

A panel of judges representing newspaper and magazine editors, schools of journalism, science, and the general public will select the winning entries. Winners will be informed early in December, and the awards will be presented during the AAAS annual meeting at the annual dinner of the National Association of Science Writers.

Improving the communication of science to the public is a AAAS responsibility that we have not been carrying out as well as we should like. The new awards are one aspect of what we hope will be a more effective program. Fortunately, other organizations are also interested in improving science reporting. The British Association for the Advancement of Science is one that is trying out a rather different approach. Three special lectureships have been established, tenable only by comparatively young scientists who have demonstrated exceptional skill in lecturing to general audiences. Each year the three lectures will be given at the annual meeting of the British Association, and may be repeated later in other cities.

The British Association lectureships are—if the term may be used—for talented amateurs. The AAAS-Westinghouse Awards, in contrast, will probably usually go to professional science writers. That both groups include members with real talent for popularizing science is evident from the list of winners of UNESCO's annual Kalinga Prize. American winners of this award have been Waldemar Kaempffert and George Gamow. Karl von Frisch was last year's winner, and a particularly worthy one, for he has not only provided a wide audience with accounts of interesting zoological work, but in some of his writing, for example *Bees, Their Vision, Chemical Sense, and Language*, has also done the more difficult task of conveying to the general reader a beautifully clear picture of the mode of thought, the point of view, and the interplay of hypothesis and experiment that characterize scientific work.

There is nothing in the rules of the AAAS-Westinghouse Awards to prevent a scientist from winning. In fact we hope that once in a while a dyed-in-the-wool scientist will be announced as the winner. But any scientist will face stiff competition, for there is a growing body of highly competent professionals in the field.

Whoever wins, this new program will provide an opportunity to reward excellence in an activity that is of importance both to science and to society.—D.W.