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National Goals for Education

The accelerating rate of change in our society poses difficult questions for education. Our children must be educated not for living in the present world but for living in the unpredictable world of the future. No recent report on education has shown a clearer grasp of the implications of change than has that of the Panel on Science and Engineering Education of the President's Science Advisory Committee ("Education for the Age of Science," Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. 20¢).

The report is remarkable not so much for the novelty of its suggestions—all of them have been made in more or less similar form before—as for its sharp focus on the needs of the future, for its broad, well-balanced approach to the proper goals of education, and for its vigorous recommendations about what ought to be done to improve the education of children and adults.

The report calls for a doubling of the present expenditure for education; for greater support of education in all of its branches rather than merely in science and mathematics; for imaginative approaches to the education of adults in the sciences, to prepare them for making policy decisions in which scientific considerations will play an ever larger part; for more scientific education for girls and women; for higher standards and better community status for teachers; for greater utilization of advanced placement courses in the high schools; for experiments with audiovisual aids in teaching; for improvement and modernization of textbooks and laboratory equipment; for greater cooperation between college and university teachers and their high-school colleagues; for strengthening of engineering schools and engineering curricula; for a more rigorous high-school program; and for recognition and educational support of the intellectually talented.

What influence will the report have? The status of the panel that wrote it and the refreshingly straightforward style in which it is written should assure it a large number of readers. In addition, the panel plans to give the report wide circulation among colleges and high schools and their governing boards, so that those who are most directly concerned with education will have a chance to see it.

Even though most of those who read the report will agree with all or many of the recommendations, they will look in vain for more than hints about how they may be put into effect. Aside from an occasional plea that some foundations or some government agencies might act on some of its recommendations, the report is silent. The report, to take one example, states that no able students should be forced to discontinue their education for economic reasons and that "the nation as a whole should take the responsibility for seeing that they are permitted to make themselves as useful as they can become." And elsewhere the report urges that "measures be evolved to discover and provide financial support for bright students whose needs cannot be met in their local community, and to make it possible for them to study in more adequate schools."

Throughout the report it is made clear that education is a national rather than a purely local concern and that intellectual talent is our greatest national asset—an asset that should be developed to its fullest potential no matter where it is found. Fine, but who is going to be responsible for the development of talent? Local governments? Foundations? The Federal Government?—G.DuS.