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Letters

Reservoir of Good Will

The present international tensions are so serious and the danger of an almost unimaginable catastrophe is so threatening that attempts to find a solution for it should not be left only in the hands of political leaders, however competent they may be. The crisis touches everyone so closely that no one should fail to have a deep and personal concern in keeping it from culminating in universal destruction. Only a surge of public opinion, drawing on the reservoir of good will that certainly exists on both sides of the iron curtain, will have much chance of dispelling the clouds of hopelessness, frustration, and fear in which we live today.

To achieve this end I believe that men of science everywhere can make a notable contribution. They are regarded with great respect in the Soviet Union, not only by those who direct affairs but by the people in general. In Western countries, and particularly in our own, scientists in the last few years have enjoyed a substantial increase in public confidence and esteem. They are listened to, here and abroad, more than ever before and consequently have an unparalleled opportunity and responsibility to lead public opinion. If the men of science from both East and West, could come together for a friendly conference on the problems, both scientific and political, that both groups face, the outcome, I am sure, would be a great gain in good will on both sides. To plan such a gathering on a grand scale is obviously out of the question, but the recent conference at Stowe made clear the possibilities in such face-to-face discussions. It was disappointing, to be sure, that this conference could come to no agreement as to how some of our major problems could be solved, but the absolute necessity of avoiding atomic warfare was unanimously voiced.

To arrange many personal discussions of this sort as a means of reaching agreement and stimulating good will is impracticable, but I should like to suggest that attempts be made to gain the same ends, so far as possible, by personal communication. If every member of the AAAS, or even one out of every four, could be persuaded to sit down and write to a few of his Soviet friends,

or to other Russian scientists with whose work he is familiar, I believe the effect would be a very happy one. These communications, of course, should not be form letters or letters concerned with propaganda, but sincere gestures of friendship and expressions of hope for international understanding and for a peaceful settlement of our various problems. Unless something of this sort is done, and on a rather large scale, we shall be guilty of failing to take advantage of a very great asset that is available to us—the mutual friendship of men of science here and in the Soviet Union and its important possibilities for the formation of public opinion.

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Reprints of Journal Articles

After reading Jack Alan MacWatt's article, "Improving scientific communication" [*Science* 134, 313 (1961)], in which he suggests that reprints available from the publisher at a reasonable fee could supplement today's journals, I began wondering if his suggestion could also be interpreted in the following way.

Publishers should consider their principal product to be, not the journal, but the reprints of the articles in the journal. The journal and its contained articles would be considered advertisements (possibly financed by page charges) for copies of the individual papers. A subscription to the journal would provide all of the advertisements (the articles). A reader without a subscription could obtain copies of the advertisements (the articles) by buying them from the publishers. The copyright law would, of course, be enforced.

Whether this is a reasonable working method is up to the publishers to say. However, what would happen to the whole system of publishing technical journals if it were discovered that only a few readers were interested in buying a particular article? Would technical publications then be considered as important as they are now considered to be? Or is the use of a technical article by even one person at a later date of almost incalculable value?

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