



Is There a Generation Gap in Science?

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Concern with the "generation gap" has mounted over the past several years to the level of near panic. The widespread attention paid to the revolt of youth has served to point up and redefine the breakdown in communication which exists in other elements in society—the polarization which sets group apart from group. The results of this fragmentation may be seen in the unrest on campuses, in the rioting in urban ghettos, and in antiwar demonstrations. The communications gap is prominently featured in the news media and will undoubtedly be of increasing importance as a political issue.

The concern of this symposium will be with the effect of this polarization on science. Since World War II, and with recent advances in science and technology, considerable fear of the potential danger of science has been generated in the minds of many people. Today science has become big business. It has also to a large degree become dependent upon government for financing. Along with the heavy investment of government in the fields of science and education, has come the necessity for accountability to the public and the possibility of political and social controls imposed on scientific research and teaching. The concept of consumer participation in policy-making is gaining ground. Groups of citizens beleaguer the school boards and the halls of legislatures to protest school curricula and policies. Groups of students storm scientific and professional meetings to protest what they consider to be the misuse of science.

Youth charges the Establishment with incompetence—an inability to cope with the contemporary world, with the breakdown of cities and the destruction of the natural environment. The Establishment is foundering. The rules by which it was operated and the values it upheld have been rejected suddenly and drastically. The experts appear to be in disagreement as to the future course of action and what types of controls, if any, should be established. Age finds youth's anti-Establishment ways of cop-

ing with problems unacceptable. Youth, understandably, finds it easier to point up problems than to propose constructive solutions. Modern society is assailed with shrill demands from the "radical" segment and with counteractions by the Establishment, while the silent majority remain passively involved and bewildered. We seem to have lost the ability for meaningful communication and for compromise.

This symposium aims to provide an opportunity for a free exchange of opinion on the part of some of the embattled elements. It will seek first to place the last 50 years of scientific endeavor in some sort of historical perspective by having as spokesmen men who were outstandingly identified with science in different eras—in the decades before World War II, during and immediately after World War II, and in the post-Sputnik era. We will also hear from a student who is about to start his scientific career, and thus project ourselves into the immediate future. This presentation of what science saw to be its role and its responsibilities in past years, and the ideas of scientists-to-be will serve as a frame of reference for discussants in a formal panel to evaluate prevailing opinions. Finally, discussions of issues raised will be possible in small informal groups to allow the maximum opportunity for free exchange of opinion. Through such opportunity for informed discussion of issues by young and old, scientist and citizen, minority and majority in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good will can beginnings be made toward understanding and cooperation.

The meeting will accommodate both the scientific Establishment which likes to communicate sequentially through formal presentations, and those who make contact through "rap" sessions. Speakers and discussants will identify some areas of breakdown in communications and then participate as leaders in general discussions of issues by small groups.

Speakers will represent different generations of scientists who can discuss

various points of view on the role and responsibilities of the scientist. Speakers and discussants will include representatives of youth, minorities, government, and the communications media. Age, outlook, and political orientation of participants have been considered.

The symposium will be a 1-day afternoon session with speakers and discussants, and an opportunity for informal "rap" discussions in the evening. The meeting will be chaired by Margaret Mead who will be the introductory speaker. This will be followed by formal presentations by four speakers. They will point up stages in the development of the present conflict between the Establishment and the antiscientific movement and the various points of view of the antagonists in this conflict. Papers will be circulated in advance of the meeting. A panel session will offer formal discussions of the preceding presentations. Discussants will include representatives from science, government, and the communications media.

In the evening, there will be an opportunity to partake in any of the three "rap" sessions. Groups of not more than 30 persons will be formed by a drawing of cards at the conclusion of the afternoon session. The three groups may be reduced or increased in number depending upon the response. Each group will be led by three individuals consisting of one of the formal speakers or discussants or another selected scientist; of a reporter or journalist; and of a local activist. The discussion leaders will meet in advance to be instructed on the specific objectives of their discussions. All speakers, discussants, and leaders of groups will be expected to have read each other's written materials in advance of the symposium. Active participation from all those on the formal program, as well as from the audience, will underline the importance of such involvement as a *sine qua non* for a meeting on the absence of communication. Discussion in the small groups will be taped, and later will be analyzed for differences between groups. Of interest will be such things as group interaction, content of discussion, and the role of group leaders.

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