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Philip Hauge Abelson

In 1962 Philip Abelson assumed the editorship of *Science*. The publication at that time had a circulation of 75,000. The News and Comment section was two pages, and the Reports section eight pages, with four items. From that beginning, *Science* has expanded to a current circulation of 155,000, a News and Comment and Research News section of 14 pages, individual science reports of 30 pages, and lead articles that span the entire range of scientific disciplines. It has the widest circulation of any scientific journal that publishes articles on original research, science policy, and news. Special issues on such diverse subjects as landings on the moon, neurobiology, and computers have become scientific and educational landmarks.

Success in any complex undertaking cannot be dissected like a frog nor simulated by a computer. Its most prominent features catch the light and seem obvious. The subtleties are hidden in the shadows, yet they are the matrix that converts the good into the excellent. In Phil Abelson, the well-lit features are the development of an organizational structure that has turned out a weekly magazine containing both high scholarship and interesting journalism, a willingness to take controversial positions and stand up to the criticism that they generate, and the decision to maintain a magazine devoted to all of science.

The subtleties of his leadership are more difficult to perceive, but one component is his enthusiasm for the discoveries of science. A significant new finding makes his eyes glisten. The narrator finds that she or he is bombarded with probing questions of both a good journalist and an indefatigable scientist. Phil Abelson's own research interests, which cover the disciplines of chemistry, microbiology, geophysics, and nuclear chemistry, explain why the magazine, under his leadership, continually probed the entire fabric of science—physical and social, academic and industrial, political and ivory tower.

There is a second quality, illustrated by a theoretical scientist who was asked by an irate colleague, "Don't you have any common sense?" The theoretician replied, "Common sense is a rare gift of God. I have only a technical education." Phil Abelson has that rare gift to discern the significant from the trivial, to ensure financial success while avoiding decisions that would compromise the integrity of the magazine, to discriminate between the major shifts and the ephemeral fashions of science. He has harmonized in the same magazine two potentially discordant goals, journalism and scholarship, so that the magazine has never succumbed to the meretriciousness of sensational journalism nor the desiccation of overspecialized scholarship.

Fortunately for his successor, Phil Abelson is not retiring but is moving to a position of consultant for the AAAS, which will involve continuing association with *Science* and assuming special projects for some major foundations and scholarly societies. Although he has received many awards, of which the Mellon Institute Award of the Carnegie-Mellon University and the Kalinga Prize of Unesco are indicative, he seeks new frontiers as always and is not content with well-earned relaxation and the enjoyment of his impressive past triumphs. I have exploited his love of science and disdain for protocol by persuading him to serve as Deputy Editor for Engineering and Applied Sciences, a situation that will allow me to draw on his general wisdom and allow *Science* to be kept up to date in important areas such as agriculture, materials, computers, and energy.

There are many prominent statues to generals in Washington, apparently only two to scientists, and none that I know of to an editor. Phil Abelson has a living monument, an edifice that provides fast-moving journalism for today and tomorrow and scholarly science for the ages. Scientists throughout the world are and will remain indebted to him for his contribution to science and to a better world.—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.