
AAAS Annual Meeting

Philadelphia, 25–30 May 1986

We Must Keep Meeting Like This

GOOD SCIENCE IS A CREATIVE ENTERPRISE, ONE WHICH sees new relationships among ideas, gives new syntheses, and perceives connections where none had been noted before. To paraphrase Szent-Gyorgi, creative science is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought. By definition, there cannot be a prescription for creativity, but we know that breaking out of routine thought patterns is essential. And what better way to break out of your own routine than going to hear stimulating presentations by leading researchers in fields other than your own? And where better than the AAAS Annual Meeting, which brings it all together in one place at one time? As scientists, we cannot succumb to the popular trend of narrowing our individual focus to our own immediate activities, of merely sticking to our lasts.

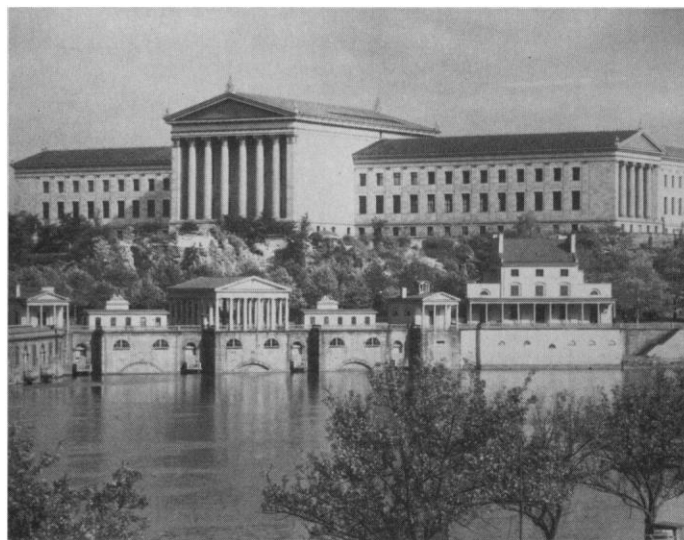
Look at the 28 March issue of *Science*, at the Preconvention Program (pp. 1586–1607). Consider the astounding variety of ideas, concepts, theories, facts, personalities, debates, arguments, and experiences offered. The meeting content was deliberately chosen to fill the need we scientists have to be wise in ways beyond our narrow specialties. Scientists must not work in a vacuum, unconnected to the developments in other fields, unconcerned about the issues which engage us as intelligent, contributing citizens. This imperative has guided us in selecting the topics and speakers for the Philadelphia Meeting.

No matter what each of our specialties is, each of us has a need to understand the implications of the latest developments in all of the natural and social sciences and engineering. We cannot be oblivious to the new developments in expert systems and computing. We should care about what is happening in condensed-matter physics, in new engineering and medical materials. What of the new results in cosmology and in space exploration and its future possibilities? Or the geological and ecological state of our planet and of the possibilities for predicting earthquakes? And what of a promising new approach to understanding cancer and the structure of proteins? And the many new research results in medicine: chronobiology, sleep, diabetes, calcium metabolism, and more?

Can natural scientists really be oblivious to the developments in the social and behavioral sciences? To recent developments in neuroscience and behavior? To the latest research and issues in anthropology? To the cultures of religions and of corporations? To whether gender bias goes so far as to bias the very results of science? To questions about how scientific discoveries are made? And, of course, the converse is equally true: can the social and behavioral scientists be oblivious to the recent developments in the natural sciences discussed earlier?

Is policy inherently uninteresting to working scientists and engineers? Are we insulated from the issues involved in malpractice, the pros and cons of animal experimentation, civil liberties and AIDS, the problems of the elderly, what is happening to the family? What of the crisis in American agriculture and the causes of famines in other parts of the world? What of our environment and the impacts of our new technologies? Do we care about the crisis in science education? About the issues of human rights in too many parts of the world? What of arms control and the ultimate environmental disaster?

There are probably 50,000 AAAS members within easy transit to Philadelphia. Breathes there one in ten whose soul is not dead, who has a need to do creative science? Come to Philadelphia this May: discount airfares are available if you book 30 days in advance, Amtrak spans the northeast corridor, the roads are good to Philadelphia, we have secured low rates at three good hotels, and the ambience of the city is delightful. Come and join me in a toast after President Piel's lecture (28 May) to science, the most exciting activity the human mind has ever created, and to all of the living souls who make it prosper. ■ **ARTHUR HERSCHMAN**



The Philadelphia Museum of Art as seen from the west bank of the Schuylkill River. The Art Museum contains over 100,000 works spanning 20 centuries of man's finest creative achievements. (Courtesy of The Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau)