

SCIENCE

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SCIENCE AND THE AMERICAN PRESS¹

By DAVID DIETZ

SCIENCE EDITOR OF THE SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPERS

THERE was a time when a speaker at a session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science spoke only to those within the sound of his voice. To-day, he may speak to the entire nation.

Even as he stands upon the platform, his words may be going over the telegraph wires to newspapers in every part of the country. In the case of the address of the president or one of the vice-presidents or in the case of an address containing some discovery of outstanding importance, the telegraphed account may run to several thousand words.

Each day of the meeting, the larger metropolitan newspapers of the nation devote from one to five columns to reports of the papers presented. The total amount of space devoted by the newspapers of

the nation to the meeting is in excess of a thousand columns per day.

This is a fact of major significance in American life. It represents a change of the first order in the character and meaning of these annual meetings. It possesses profound importance for the progress of science, the conduct of journalism and the future of the nation.

The fine and friendly relations which now exist between the scientists and the press is symbolized by the fact that you have invited me to be the speaker of this general session to-day. As the former president of the National Association of Science Writers, I think that I may say that the growth of this accord has been the source of great pride and satisfaction to all its members.

There was a day when the newspapers had no interest in the reporting of science. Those were the days

¹ Address given at the general session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Atlantic City, December 29, 1936.

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