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AAAS Meetings

ALTHOUGH we live in an epoch of security restrictions, which limit areas of free and untrammelled scientific discussion, professional organizations do not seem to be victims of inhibition. During 1951 chemists, medical scientists, doctors, and dentists assembled in conventions that dwarfed the average AAAS meeting, and even the petroleum geologists turned out in numbers that rivaled attendance at the Association's Cleveland convention a year ago. An analysis of comparative statistics prompts one to wonder why Association meetings have earned the reputation of being large. The Philadelphia meeting, from all indications, will be a normal meeting; and so far as preconvention facts and figures permit predictions, only one record will be broken—the number of participating organizations will be greater than ever before.

Seventy-one of them are taking part in the program. Not all are affiliated with the AAAS, but more than 25 per cent of the affiliated and associated societies will sponsor or cosponsor functions of one kind or another. This figure contrasts with anticipated individual attendance, which will probably approximate 11 per cent of the Association's membership.

The participating groups have a variety of reasons for joining in the 1951 meeting. Local organizations have generously cooperated in planning many activities and have scheduled a few functions of their own. Several societies have arranged their annual meetings to coincide with the AAAS convention. Others, like the Society of the Sigma Xi, the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, RESA, the National Geographic Society, are continuing traditional functions as a service to those scientists who attend. Many groups are providing their members in the North Atlantic states with opportunities to read and to hear papers in their own fields. But practically all have another objective: Association meetings provide opportunities for that most difficult type of intercommunication among scientists—communication across the bound-

aries of individual disciplines, not simply to impart information, but to inspire cooperation.

That this is a factor of some importance in inducing organizations to join with the AAAS at Philadelphia is evident from the number of joint sessions cosponsored by two or more groups. More than a third of the individual meetings are in this category. Even a casual analysis of the many symposia (*SCIENCE*, 114, 521 [Nov. 16]) and of the Summary of Events in the pages that follow reveals how many subjects refuse to stay in disciplinary compartments. The most significant advances in science will be in interdisciplinary areas for some time to come, and it is here that the Association can render its greatest service.

At St. Louis in 1952, to conclude a year in which engineers will observe the centennial of engineering, the AAAS will try to assess the contributions of science and mathematics to engineering and industry. It will not be amiss to consider the stimulus the sciences have received from engineering and industry, where necessity has frequently mothered not only the proverbial inventions, but also discoveries in basic scientific principles. The theme of the meeting is one that invites the active participation of scientists and societies in all fields.

Meanwhile the business of "putting science back together" will go on in the Divisions. During the week of May 4, Southwestern members will assemble at Boulder, Colorado; the Pacific Division will gather at Corvallis, Oregon, June 16-21; and the Alaskans are planning another September conference. Specialties will not be neglected at any of these meetings, but even where they comprise the subject matter of meetings, as they do in the Gordon Research Conferences, the major concern is synthesis—the specialists strive to put together the fragmentary results they have achieved in their individual laboratories into a coherent whole. Whatever attention may be given the parts, Association members are trying to comprehend the whole.

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