

Letters

Right-Wing Bibliography

I would like to attempt to set the record straight on the two points you make in your review of the pamphlet "The American Right Wing" [*Science* 134, 2025 (22 Dec. 1961)] that concern me personally.

1) There is no basis for the inference you seem to draw concerning the relation of our report to the Fund for the Republic. The Fund for the Republic made available a small grant to enable me to expand the "Tensions file" collection at the University of Iowa, particularly the writings of the American right wing and their relations to southern groups on the issue of segregation. As a token of appreciation for the grant (although it had not been requested by the Fund), we compiled an annotated bibliography of the American right wing and sent a copy to the Fund. This bibliography carried on its title page the words, "A report to the Fund for the Republic, Inc." They thanked us for the bibliography, and that was that. We neither asked for nor expected the Fund's endorsement, reaction, or judgment. Robert M. Hutchins's reply to you (mentioned in your review) was entirely correct. When our report was published, our title page was used by both publishers (Illinois and Public Affairs Press), as was proper.

Thus, although our report was a report to "the Fund for the Republic, Inc.," this does not mean that the Fund endorsed, approved, or otherwise agreed or disagreed with the report. It just was not that kind of situation. Furthermore, in the introduction I stated this relation clearly in the following sentence: "Although originally prepared as a report to the Fund for the Republic and initially issued in the Occasional Papers series of the University of Illinois Library School, this work is not, of course, a report of either organization. The authors alone

are responsible for the findings and interpretations presented in these pages."

2) The conclusion you draw from our statement, that we were "not for or against this body of opinion," is not justified. Both the late Sarah M. Harris and I tried to do a fair and impartial job of reporting the views of the American right wing. We worked very hard to discipline ourselves so that we could keep our personal feelings out of the report. This would be the aim of any scholar under the circumstances, and I think we should be judged by the degree to which we attained impartiality. It is incorrect for you to conclude from this that our personal views were neutral. They were not neutral at the time we wrote, nor are mine neutral today. However, I think our own personal views have no place in this report.

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Science of Human Survival

I am writing to express my approval of, and general agreement with, the "position paper" of the AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare [*Science* 134, 2080 (29 Dec. 1961)]. I should also like to express my disapproval of the editorial of 12 January [*Science* 135, 68 (1962)], which seemed in doubtful taste. You are, of course, entitled to your own opinions, but it would seem that you owe the authors of the paper you criticize the courtesy of reading it carefully before attacking it.

My own reading of the paper, and subsequent discussion with Barry Commoner, chairman of the committee, gave me to understand that the committee is not proposing that there are "experts who will solve the problems";

moreover, it is explicitly stated that "whether society shall continue to rely on war . . . is a social decision to which scientists have no greater or lesser rights and duties than other citizens." The point of the paper is that there are issues which cannot be decided (rationally) by citizens unless they have information of a more or less technical nature. Scientists, as I read the paper as saying, have the responsibility to translate this information into language readily understandable by the nonscientifically trained, and to present it, and keep presenting it, until a significant portion of the populace is aware of the facts which should determine their decisions. A science for human survival could very well be a "science of communication." I have met surprisingly large numbers of university faculty members who are not scientists but are, presumably, well educated, and who do not, for example, know that "megaton" means "million tons of TNT equivalent." Such people rarely have any hesitation about declaring themselves for or against some government policy such as the shelter program or the resumption of atmospheric nuclear tests, yet I cannot see how it is possible for them to contribute anything rational to public discussion. And certainly their decisions, and their votes, if based on demonstrated ignorance, cannot represent rational choices.

If we are to preserve at least some semblance of a democracy in this country—and I take it that at least most citizens would agree that we should try to do so—then an increasing number of decisions are going to have to be made by virtually every citizen on matters that will demand increasing knowledge of scientific and technical developments. Since for many years these decisions will be made mainly by a large group who cannot resume their formal education, the schools cannot be expected to do the job of educating this public. The press cannot do it either, without considerable aid from the scientific community, since many writers and editors (especially newspaper editors) themselves lack the information, training, and background needed to evaluate the raw data, if even they have the data.

It is necessarily the case that it becomes the responsibility of scientists not only to gather data—their traditional role—but to evaluate and interpret it, not only for their colleagues in the convenient and codified language of science but for the public, in lan-