22 September 1967, Volume 157, Number 3795 **SCIENCE**

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Science serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

Editorial Board

ROBERT L. BOWMAN — EVERETT I. MENDELSOHN
JOSEPH W. CHAMBERLAIN — NEAL E. MILLER
JOHN T. EDSALL — JOHN R. PIERCE
EMIL HAURY — KENNETH S. PITZER
ALEXANDER HOLLAENDER — ALEXANDER RICH
WILLARD F. LIBBY — DEWITT STETTEN, JR.
GORDON J. F. MACDONALD — CLARENCE M. ZENER

Editorial Staff

Editor
PHILIP H. ABELSON

Publisher: DAEL WOLFLE
Business Manager: HANS NUSSBAUM

Managing Editor: ROBERT V. ORMES

Assistant Editors: ELLEN E. MURPHY, JOHN E. RINGLE

Assistant to the Editor: NANCY TEIMOURIAN

News Editor: DANIEL S. GREENBERG

News and Comment: Staff writers: JOHN WALSH*, ELINOR LANGER, LUTHER J. CARTER, BRYCE NELSON, ROBERT J. SAMUELSON, KATHLEEN SPERRY, GILLIAN PARRILLO. Contributing correspondents: NIGEL CALDER, VICTOR K. MCELHENY

Book Reviews: SYLVIA EBERHART

Editorial Assistants: JOANNE BELK, ISABELLA BOULDIN, ELEANORE BUTZ, BEN CARLIN, GRAYCE FINGER, NANCY HAMILTON, OLIVER HEATWOLE, ANNE HOLDSWORTH, KONSLYNNIETTA HUTCHINSON, ELEANOR JOHNSON, PAULA LECKY, KATHERINE LIVINGSTON, HELEN OLNEY, LEAH RYAN, BARBARA SHEFFER

**European Office:* Lime Tree Farm, East Hagbourne, Berkshire, England. Telephone Didcot 3317

Advertising Staff

Director: EARL J. SCHERAGO
Production Manager: ROSE MARIE ROMAGNOLO

Advertising Sales Manager: RICHARD L. CHARLES

Sales: New York, N.Y., 11 W. 42 St. (212-PE-6-1858): ROBERT S. BUGBEE

Scotch Plains, N.J., 12 Unami Lane (201-889-4873): C. RICHARD CALLIS

Medfield, Mass. 02052, 4 Rolling Lane (617-359-2370): RICHARD M. EZEQUELLE

Chicago, Ill. 60611, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Room 426 (312-DE-7-4973): HERBERT L. BURKLUND

Los Angeles 45, Calif., 8255 Beverly Blvd. (213-653-9817): WINN NANCE

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE: 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: 202-387-7171. Cable: Advancesci, Washington. Copies of "Instructions for Contributors" can be obtained from the editorial office. ADVERTISING CORRESPONDENCE: Rm. 1740, 11 W. 42 St., New York, N.Y. 10036. Phone: 212-PE 6-1858.

Whither AAAS Annual Meetings?

In the early years of its existence the AAAS met the need for face-to-face communication through its annual meetings. As professional societies grew in strength, in size, and in introspection, the AAAS offered them hospitality at its meeting and sponsored events that would not bend to specialization. Today, the physical limits on attendance, the mental boundaries on the information that can be transmitted usefully, and the subtle demands of interaction between speakers and audience call for an examination of these aims.

There is a growing awareness, expressed as early as 1951 by a special study group of the AAAS under the chairmanship of Warren Weaver, that heavy reliance on "standard" scientific papers and symposia can no longer serve. Functions that are best performed by groups and societies of experts should not be duplicated. Topics that are better resolved at small private meetings, by small groups of specialists, and at a particularly suitable time and place need not be discussed at AAAS meetings. Rather, the meetings should pay heed to those topics that benefit from illumination from many directions, before an audience of wide interests, by any method that insures the smooth flow of ideas. Emphasis should be on vigorous discussions of issues where resolution would be facilitated by exposure to public view. Individuals would report unusual discoveries and insights that will influence the direction of research and the future of our society. The most valuable function of the AAAS meetings would be to assist a questioning public to understand causes and weigh trends and prospects so that wise choices could be made, and made in time.

These are difficult demands. They require answers to many questions: How large should the meeting be? What should be the balance between the many claimants who want to be heard? What techniques of presentation and response? How varied the program? How specialized?

Caryl Haskins, the president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, posed the problem in his most recent Report (1965/1966). "If the primary task of those engaged at the frontiers of scientific investigation is still, as it always has been, to enlarge and extend those frontiers, that task is also accompanied today by . . . a responsibility that, in effect, is twofold. First, for the scientist, is the challenge to communicate, to directly share, the experience which has been his—a relatively easy task vis-à-vis those who share his precise special interests. It becomes much more difficult when his audience, though scientific, has somewhat more distant concerns. Yet it is quite as important here. The other half of the task, however, is far broader and even more difficult. It is the challenge to communicate, by every effective means the imagination can command, the nature, the purpose, the rationale, and the intense social relevance of the scientific way. . . . For the link between the order of a society's understanding of the nature and significance of scientific investigation and the actual quality of the science going forward within it; the relation of the prescience of its own questioning to the quality of the answers that it receives; the shaping of effort by the specific nature of the demands made by society at any given moment, have never been so notable as they are now . . ."

This is a worthy challenge. For its resolution many ingrained habits must be modified and new paths be charted. Yet, failing to respond would have grave consequences.—WALTER G. BERL, *Editor, AAAS Annual Meeting*