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Second Thoughts

Charting Man's Future

PHILOSOPHERS, SCIENTISTS and theologians, mostly connected with institutions of higher learning from all parts of the United States have been meeting here at Columbia university for the past three days at a conference on science, philosophy, and religion. The aim of the conference is, in the words of the announcement, to seek "Bridges for Cultural Understanding."

All the participants are concerned with the fact that each separate science, each separate field of knowledge, seems to go its own way, independent of the rest. Knowledge is too scattered to be brought

to bear effectively on the great and pressing problems of the times. They want, therefore, to unify knowledge so that the experts in all the different fields will, instead of scattering their energies, back each other up in the task that Matthew Arnold called "The Application of Ideas to Life."

The rapid events of the last few weeks have deeply intensified the sense of urgency on the part of most of the scholars present. Indeed, Mr. Norman Cousins of the Saturday Review of Literature declared that the world took a leap of one thousand years into the future on the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. We are now living not in 1945, but in 2045. What, he asked, are the men of letters, the men of learning, going to do to prevent the world from being blown to pieces?

U. S. Ignores Social Sciences

ON FRIDAY EVENING, the conference struck one of those snags common at meetings where philosophers and theologians are present in great numbers. People got lost in a purely metaphysical discussion of whether or not evil is inherent in human action. It must have been almost two hours before a speaker got up and pulled us out of the verbal morass.

The speaker was Bruce Melvin, of the Office of Foreign Economic administration and a secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He called attention to the fact that an urgent problem needing action faces the meeting. Congress, acting on the suggestions of the sub-committee of War Mobilization of the Committee of Military Affairs of the



Senate is likely to set up a huge, nation-wide program for the encouragement of scientific research, providing funds, scholarships, etc., and hoping to enlist some 6,000 of the brightest high school graduates each year for training in science.

The grave fact pointed out by Mr. Melvin is that this great government-sponsored research and education program makes no provision for work in the social sciences. In other words, if the atomic bomb weren't already an embarrassing enough problem for the work, the government is going to gather up America's best talent to make the physical sciences even more powerful, at a time when the greatest need all over the world is the more research, more experiment, and the most rapid possible application of the sciences of living together.

Problems of Minorities

THE SCIENCES that will teach men to live together—law, economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, semantics, community organizations, consumer problems, etc., are going to be left out of this huge government-sponsored research and education program if the public does not immediately demand amendments to the bills now before Congress. Mr. Melvin stated so emphatically the necessity of immediate action that a group of interested scientists and scholars held a committee meeting the following day.

At that committee meeting, John Collier of the Department of the Interior presented the case again. He pointed out that the social sciences are in danger of even worse eclipse than they suffer at present. Left at the mercy of private endowments, social sciences will hardly be encouraged to make those fundamental inquiries suggesting far-reaching changes in social and economic structure needed to establish some peace in the world.

It wasn't necessary for Dr. Alain Locke of Howard (who was present) or for me or for anyone else to say it, but it was clear that the omission of the social sciences from the research program would mean the omission of all inquiry into minority problems, housing, education, and the thousand other social problems faced by Negroes in the United States, to say nothing of the vast social problems that all people are now faced with if they mean what they say about not wanting another world war. We all agreed at the committee meeting that if we are to have a national scientific research program financed by government it must include ample funds for the sciences of living together.