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SCIENCE, which is now combined with THE SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY, is published each Fri-
day by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Business Press, Lancaster, Pa. The joint journal is published in the SCIENCE format. Entered at the Lancaster, Pa., Post Office as second class matter under the Act of 3 March 1879. SCIENCE is indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.

Editorial and personnel-placement correspond-
ence should be addressed to SCIENCE, 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington 5, D.C. Manuscripts should be typed with double spacing and submitted in duplicate. The AAAS assumes no responsibility for the safety of manuscripts or for the opinions expressed by contributors. For de-
tailed suggestions on the preparation of manu-
scripts, book reviews, and illustrations, see Science 125, 16 (4 Jan. 1957).

Display-advertising correspondence should be addressed to SCIENCE, Room 740, 11 West 42
St., New York 36, N.Y.

Change of address notification should be sent to 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington 5, D.C. 4 weeks in advance. If possible, furnish an address stencil label from a recent issue. Be sure to give both old and new addresses, including zone numbers, if any.

Annual subscriptions: $8.50; foreign postage, $1.50; Canadian postage, 75¢. Single copies, 35¢.

Cable address: Advancesci, Washington.

Psychic Income

One characteristic feature of modern management is its concern about the conditions responsible for good employee morale and job satisfaction. Management has come to realize that pay, although of great importance, is only one among many factors to be considered in employee relations. Some of the other factors important in both job satisfaction and productivity are, according to a committee of the United Nations, "the need to give the staff a sense of belonging to their organization; the opportunity to do con-
structive work on important problems; adequate recognition of work well
done; a reasonable sense of security." These nonfinancial factors constitute
"psychic income and are in many cases far more important to the recruit-
ment and retention of superior staff members than pay and fringe benefits" [James M. Mitchell, Public Personnel Rev. 17, 268 (Oct. 1956)].

That employees themselves regard "psychic income" as important is apparent from the results of a study of 17,439 Government and 3317 in-
dustrial scientists and engineers [Attitudes of Scientists and Engineers in Government and Industry (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1957)]. Government respondents on the average ranked the following factors in research employment either as of considerable or of great im-
portance on this descending scale: interest potential of the work, integrity of
management, opportunity to discover and do creative work, opportunity
to move up in the organization, caliber of supervision, living condi-
tions, pay, chance to contribute to basic scientific knowledge, and so on.

One large-scale program designed to stimulate endeavor in Government
work was only lightly touched upon in this study. This is the program that began following passage of the Incentive Awards Act of 1954 and
that has since been expanding rapidly. The act permits departments to make awards—either cash or honorary—for useful suggestions or super-
ior performance. The number of awards made for suggestions adopted was 35,246 in fiscal 1955, 79,295 in 1956, and 86,209 in 1957; the total cash
awarded during the three years amounted to $6.1 million and resulted in
estimated savings in Government operations of $176.1 million. Similarly, the
number of awards for superior performance was 3856 in 1955, 23,054 in 1956, and 41,340 in 1957 and resulted in estimated savings of $136.1
million.

From an administrative standpoint the program is clearly a success even
though the estimate of savings—about $18 for each dollar of awards—may
be somewhat inflated. Whether the program stimulates scientific creativity
(as opposed to money-saving suggestions) is uncertain, as is its effect on
morale and job satisfaction. In those agencies such as the Bureau of
Standards and the Office of Naval Research where awards are frequent and
in general regarded as based on merit, the employee reaction is favorable;
in other agencies where awards are infrequent or where there is
dissatisfaction with the mode of selection, the employee reaction is less
favorable.

Further experience and study will doubtless show how best to use the
awards and indeed whether the program has any effect upon the creativ-
ity and job satisfaction of scientists and engineers. Most Government
scientists (69 percent) would, if selected for an award, prefer a cash to an
honorary award. This is hardly surprising since the cash award constitutes
both psychic and real income.—G.DuS.