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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Annual Subscription, $6.00 Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

SCIENCE AND GOVERNMENT

By Dr. Harold G. Moulton
President of the Brookings Institution

The term "science" is in some ways ambiguous and confusing: to some it merely connotes an area or field of study—science as distinguished from art or literature; to some it suggests a body of exact principles regarded as of fixed and unchanging character—called a science; to still others it means a particular method of analysis—the method of science. What we are really interested in should be the scientific spirit, which is an attitude of mind, rather than a field of inquiry, a body of principles or a particular method of analysis.

The objective, open-minded, scientific outlook is not restricted to natural phenomena or to any particular field of investigation, nor is there any single methodology or technique for scientific inquiry. There are as many different methods of observation, experimentation and analysis as there are divisions of science. Even a single research project may require the use of several methods. True scientists are alike only in their pursuit of the common purpose of deriving their conclusions from ascertained facts.

It is this scientific outlook, this scientific attitude, this scientific frame of mind with which we are concerned when considering the problems of modern government. If we are to conduct the greatest of all businesses, namely, that of government, with even a reasonable degree of proficiency, if we are to maintain a stable and efficient democratic, political system, it seems obvious that the effort must be increasingly animated by and permeated with the scientific spirit.
Editor's Summary

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