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William D. Carey

“I am abdicating, not retiring,” said William D. Carey, executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as he decided to step down from his post as the association’s administrative head. That is appropriate phrasing after a reign that has been both regal and constitutional. A great deal of the shape of the current AAAS has been sculpted by William D. Carey.

The AAAS, founded in 1848, is one of the largest and most sprawling associations for science in the world. It has 133,000 direct members and 285 affiliated societies and academies of science. It was already a large organization when Carey took over in 1975, but new projects and significant new emphases have been created by his energy and enthusiasms. A Research & Development Colloquium in which leaders of the major funding agents for science, such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Defense, exchange views on their budgets with interested scientists and their representative organizations is now a major annual event in Washington. A new project in science and mathematics education, entitled Project 2061—Education for a Changing Future, has been launched to help provide knowledge that will lead to more and better scientists in the years ahead. A daring opening to scientists in China before normalization in relations between the U.S. and Chinese governments has led to a productive relation between the AAAS and the China Association for Science and Technology.

A Committee on Opportunities in Science has been effective in developing information for minorities, the handicapped, and women in science, great reservoirs of underutilized talent in our country. A Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, initiated by Carey, has been concerned with the flow of scientific information and the civil rights of scientists in countries where oppression is endemic. A Committee on Arms Control and National Security sponsors symposiums for experts in Washington and elsewhere.

Individuals are often tested more by battles lost than by battles won. Carey launched a new magazine, *Science 80*, to fill a void in science education for the layman. It was an editorial success and a financial failure, but there is little doubt that its initiation activated others and led to expanded coverage of science in the media. It was an honorable adventure and typical of Carey’s willingness to take risks.

The new initiatives did not remove Carey from commitment to the important ongoing activities of the AAAS: the long-standing cooperation between the AAAS and the Westinghouse Educational Foundation in which awards are presented to outstanding science journalists, the extensive cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences, testimony at congressional committees, service on boards, and personal relationships that add to the presence of science in the seats of government. He was responsible for bringing in a new editor of *Science* with encouragement to expand the readership, scope, and influence of the magazine even beyond the excellent base established by Philip H. Abelson.

A recitation of detailed accomplishments and procedural initiatives is only part of any story in the achievements of an executive officer. A delocalized society of busy professionals can have three kinds of leaders: those who quietly go about the mundane work of their organizations, risking little and expanding little; those who in a dictatorial manner lead a large but naive giant down paths it does not completely comprehend; and those who discern what the needs and desires of the giant are and become the pathfinders. Bill Carey was the latter. He was faithful to his beliefs in the integrity and importance of science and dedicated to increasing its scope and power. A great deal of his effectiveness was derived from his personal charm and his genuine concern for what he frequently called “the family of the AAAS.” In that regard, one of his proudest accomplishments was the consolidation of the diverse activities of the AAAS in one building where “the family” could interact.

For his activities in behalf of science, he has received many awards—the National Civil Service League Award, the Rockefeller Public Service Award, the Public Welfare Medal of the National Academy of Sciences, the Distinguished Service Award of the National Science Foundation. Bill Carey is not retiring. He is stepping up his other activities as he turns over an enhanced directorship to an able successor. He leaves behind a landscape of good deeds for science further brightened by the legion of friends who wish him well.

—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.

Science

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