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SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

By HAROLD G. MOULTON

PRESIDENT OF THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION¹

THIS series of discussions of "Science and Society" may well begin with some quotations selected with a view to placing the problem before us in broad perspective. The first two statements suggest the vast contributions of science in the evolution of society.

Science is the soul of the prosperity of nations and the living source of all progress. Undoubtedly the tiring discussions of politics seem to be our guide—empty appearances! What really leads us forward is a few scientific discoveries and their application.²

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of the section on social and economic sciences of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, given at Indianapolis on December 27, 1937. The address was introductory to a series of five conferences on "Science and Society" to be held under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The first conference was held at the Indianapolis meeting.

Science as fundamental knowledge has been the greatest factor in freeing our minds from the preconceptions and superstitions handed down to us through the ages. Our mental attitude has been profoundly modified by our knowledge of the processes of evolution. . . . Knowledge not only helps to set us free, but will lead us on to higher things. . . . The applications of scientific knowledge have made possible a standard of living undreamed of a generation ago. . . . Our greatest hope for future well-being and prosperity lies in further applications of science.³

While the authors of the two quotations which follow would not deny the vast rôle which science has played in the evolution of society they nevertheless question

² Louis Pasteur, quoted in Millikan, "Science and the New Civilization," p. 41.

³ Irving Langmuir, in address on "Chemical Research," at the dedication of the new building of Mellon Institute, 1937.

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