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SCIENCE, AND ITS CHANGING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT¹

By Professor P. W. BRIDGMAN

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THE first part of this address dealt with recent work of the author in extending the pressure range attainable in the laboratory. The subject has been similarly treated in the third volume of *Science in Progress*, published by the Society of Sigma Xi.

And now I will turn from these technical matters, with which I have been personally concerned, to matters of more immediate and vital interest to all of us. In the present world struggle physics has come to occupy a position in the very front line. A large part of the body of physicists has been asked to divert its activities from accustomed channels, and all of us who have been able have rejoiced that the opportunity has been offered and that we can be of service. Because

of the obvious importance of the service that physics is rendering, many physicists are anticipating, after the war, a permanent increase of the appreciation of the public for physics, and a great increase in the attractiveness of physics as a profession for our abler young men.

There are, however, other aspects of this rosy future to which I wish to direct your attention. Because of the heavy social impact of the products and techniques resulting from scientific investigation, there is a growing tendency in many quarters to maintain that science, and this of course includes physics, is the servant of society and that all scientific activities should be under complete supervision and control by society or the state. This point of view is finding advocates among scientists themselves. It seems to be growing in favor in some quarters in this country,

¹ Part of the retiring presidential address to the American Physical Society, given at Columbia University, January 23, 1943.

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