EDITORIAL

THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE PRESENT DAY WORLD

THIS Journal had recently highlighted the impact of science on the community at large (Editorial: Science and Society, Volume 17, No. 1, 1968). We have reverted to this topic in a general way again, since it is repeatedly engaging the attention of scientists, administrators and the public all over the world.

It has been pointed out that science and its applications are the seeds of our future, and they are the bread and butter of a modern society. The crisis in science will not be resolved by simply directing the work of scientists and technologists to day to day problems. The need is for the scientific community to attempt to solve some of our complex social problems. It is such an involvement that helps keep science in the main-stream of national life in the only way that is really meaningful. We cannot really withdraw from the challenge of space exploration, education or health, or the supreme challenges of intellectual advance.

The American industry planned to invest 18,000 millions dollars in research and development during 1968, a seven per cent increase over 1967. The United States channels a substantially larger proportion of its productive effort into R and D than do other countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development—18 European nations together with the USA, Canada and Japan. R and D, when based on national objectives, involves the whole community in an effort toward progress by stimulating the creative spirit. Those responsible for R and D management have to face two problems: (1) the prediction of opportunities that will arise as a result of social change and (2) anticipation of the degree of social acceptability of the technological changes we create. This needs a continuing discourse between the social and physical scientists.

The communications revolution that has blossomed so hearteningly in the wake of the last war has offered scientists an irrestitible opportunity to compare notes with their colleagues around the globe. Scientists and their "bankers" should be looking for still more effective communication to bring about the international sharing of the costs of "big science", and spread the benefits of research to a wider population. A recent article from the U.S.S.R.: "Scientific-Technological Revolution and Certain Contemporary Problems" discusses in detail certain basic trends in the development of contemporary international life under the impact of the revolutionising upheavals in the productive forces of society.

The discussion on this vital theme of the present day can be aptly concluded with the following quotation: "The more meaningfully scientists spend their lives, the more rewarding life will be. They should become humanists, philosophers and theologians, questioning the moral impact of their work on the world of men, which includes themselves. Is this asking too much of scientists? Ask anything less of them and you reduce them to the level of automatons". (Scientific Research, August 5 and 19, 1968; Participant Journal, USAID, New Delhi, October 1968; Battelle Technical Review, September-October 1968; Soviet Review, September 17, 1968).

—T.L.R.