

Science, Information Science and
the Information-Conscious Society

September 9, 1971

On December 27, 1971, at this year's Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Philadelphia, I shall have the pleasure of chairing a symposium on the "Information-Conscious Society." I believe the symposium will be one of the meeting's most stimulating sessions.

Information-consciousness is to me peculiarly characteristic of much of the on-going criticism of our institutions, and of the attempts, whether inside or outside the "system", to change them and make them more responsive to society's present needs. There should be nothing surprising in this. We knew long before Orwell gave us *1984* that the essence of tyranny is the suppression or manipulation of information, compared to which despotism by constant application of force is relatively amateurish in government. Neither political nor personal freedom is possible where information, however trivial, is controlled.

I am reprinting here remarks I made as chairman of the 1970 Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science,¹ also held in Philadelphia. They deal with what may seem trivial information problems, but trivial problems about which, strangely, our advanced information systems have done little or nothing. The theme of the meeting was "Information Science

and the Information-Conscious Society." The theme of the coming symposium will be, in effect, "Science and the Information-Conscious Society."

The program of the AAAS symposium is not yet complete, but this preliminary view will suggest its flavor. Professor Barry Commoner of Washington University will talk about the political impact of scientific information. Harold Green of the George Washington Law School will discuss information for public policy decision making in licensing nuclear power plants. Jeremy Stone of the Federation of American Scientists will talk about getting the scientist's message across, with particular reference to the arms race. Robert Ackerly, a Washington attorney, will review the Freedom of Information Act. Ralph Nader and the Rev. Leon Sullivan have been invited to discuss information problems of consumers and the poor. Ambassador Abbott Washburn will speak on aspects of information flow as they affect such negotiations as those which were successfully concluded in the INTELSAT agreement.

Hopefully, the coming symposium will heighten awareness of a more important type of "information problem" than documentalists describe with that term. There will be ample time for discussion and questions from the floor. I hope that many CC® readers will find it possible to attend.

1. Garfield, E. Information science and the information-conscious society. *J. Amer. Soc. Inform. Sci.* 22(2):71-73, 1971.