

editorial

Drugs versus Science

Glenn Seaborg recently observed that "we are now in an era when we have achieved almost a universal awareness of the major problems that must be solved by man in the coming decades . . . We have almost crystallized these problems so that there is a broad consensus on their nature and scope, on their relationships and on the urgency with which they must be dealt."

But it is equally as clear, as Seaborg further noted, that none of these problems will be solved by the end of this century. At most, we will be able only to hand over work in progress, which we would hope the new generation will pick up and carry forward.

For this reason it is especially disheartening to see the antirational and antiscience movement taking hold among our young people. Perhaps it is no overstatement to say that the problem with the highest priority of all is how to persuade our youth that preoccupations with witchcraft and astrology or the psychic experiences of the drugged brain are "cop outs" in lieu of really doing something about the difficult problems that both generations agree exist.

In their well meant concern to emphasize human values, young people are mistakenly accepting what Seaborg calls "the myth that reason and emotion . . . can not coexist." We scientists are in a unique position to help in dispelling this myth. I. I. Rabi has pointed out that scientists and the youth culture have an important thing in common—they are both deeply interested in exploring the mysteries of life and experiencing the feelings of wonder and awe that can accompany this kind of search.

And Edwin Land in *Science* (15 January, page 151) has just suggested an even further parallel between the two groups. He feels that he is addicted to doing his research in very much the same sense that some teenagers feel compelled to take drugs to generate feelings of excitement and well being. (Land writes that he experiences distinct discomfort on days when

he is unable to find time for his experimental work.) The difference, of course, is that the scientist gets his kicks from activities that can bring about significant changes in the real world and have the potential, at least, of improving the human condition, while those who look to drugs for their daily excitement typically become preoccupied with a private world of sensations and fantasies that cuts them off from the opportunity of making positive contributions to society. In addition young people can get hooked on mysticism and the occult with similar consequences.

How can we spread the word to the youth culture that people who are addicted to creative work in the real world not only experience unmatched highs of *feeling* but have a *real* chance to make things better?

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