

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

18 September 1964

DR. POPPE: Gentlemen, it gives me pleasure to introduce to you, Dr. Howard Vollmer who will lecture this morning on the "Social Organization of Science and Technology." Dr. Vollmer.

DR. VOLLMER: Today we find ourselves in what is becoming more and more a science-dominated society, even as our ancestors once lived in a social milieu dominated by concerns of theology. In his recent book on "Science: the Glorious Entertainment," Jacques Barzun has written:

The scientific stance is everywhere, even among the overt enemies of science; it is the strongest unifying force, because in the world of thought it is the only one. . . . Just as the language of theology ended by permeating common thought, so with us the language of science. The ultimate appeal (in medieval culture) was to the certitudes or sanctions of theology, as with us to the certitudes or sanctions of science. The highest concern of the culture was to support, perfect, and disseminate theological truth and practice, as with us to support, perfect, and disseminate scientific truth and practice. . . . It is worth noting that "layman" now means "not a scientist" as before "not a cleric. . ."1

So we find that faith in science and its methods of thought and expression has come to be almost a worldwide religion (or perhaps I should say a pseudo-religion) that dominates the value structure of all advanced modern nations. The atom bomb and sputnik have boosted the public image of science and technology to an all-time high.² Along with these developments has come the penetration of scientists into the "power elite," that is, the key decision-making councils, of modern nation states.³ We see this power elite in action in the scientific advisory boards related to many agencies of our own Government, where both military and civilian executives are dependent not only upon the advice and assistance of leading representatives of scientific communities in order to achieve the