

Beware of the Expert

Mr. Ford, we read, is a scientist, although we are told nothing of his background. Certainly Mr. Ford is a disillusioned scientist — so much so that he has set out enthusiastically to debunk the whole present-day scientific scene in a barrage of satirical small-arms fire.

Not that he lacks justification for taking pot-shots at the Establishment; far from it. Most of us would earnestly agree with his contention that science, or rather technology, which is science in overalls, has become a victim of muscular paralysis and suspected mental derangement. Indeed, the author has coined a special word for this hardening of the arteries, this Parkinsonian syndrome which has bedevilled science this last decade or two.

True science he defines as the application of intelligence to experiment in the interests of the human race: the nasty growth which has gathered on the body corporate he calls Non-science (pronounce it as you wish) and its high priests he calls the Experts.

Satire is the chosen weapon: indeed, one must confess that so many shots of this ammunition are fired that on occasions one cannot see the battle for powder smoke. The virtues of Science in the old Darwinian sense are extolled (though the author's tongue is so firmly fixed in his cheek that all his observations are some-

what suspect) as Originality, Heterodoxy, Creativity, and Integrity, all presided over by Intelligence. These out-moded proprieties have quietly and almost unnoticed been replaced by a new set of criteria which are named as Conformity, Orthodoxy, Economics, and Circumspection, with Good Memory as chairman, Intelligence being no longer the vogue.

A chapter of the book explains in detail how you too can aspire to the exalted rank of the Expert. Instead of just being clever and finding things out like the old-fashioned scientists did, you must progress steadily through a pre-determined process of conditioning, looking neither to the right nor to the left and hearing no voice but that of the Expert Tutor. You must excel in collecting paper qualifications and long strings of peculiar letters after your name — very important this to the neophyte with his eyes set firmly on the heights.

This special conditioning programme is then elaborated with much hilarity. Among the recommendations to the aspirant for Experthood Mr. Ford includes "The Rapt Attention Posture. Hold yourself at all times with a briskness and bearing calculated to reveal a configuration of alert respect, awe, and reverence for the Non-science Movement. The sitting position

is all important; those dubbed the Curate's Crouch and the Scrubber's Sprawl should be avoided at all costs. This is the first lesson in the cultivation of the Correct Image, the first decisive move towards Expertism at its best."

Then comes a full glossary of the learned jargon used in the Expert world to befog both the listeners and themselves. A single example will suffice: If in your examination questions you want to say "I really don't know, and, anyhow, I am too tired to write any more", you should phrase it: "Further evidence in favour of the contention is legion

though clearly beyond the scope of a representative essay."

Although the book is a bit of a frolic, written by a young man for young men, behind it and really the object of the whole exercise is a warning of the sinister spiders-web that is being steadily woven round us by the arachnoid octopod (=spider) of Big Brother Technology.

Perhaps, after all, we older ones will have to admit that there may be something meritorious in the refusal of our present student generation to accept meekly the established state of scientific education today.

A book to be chortled over between the shudders.

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