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THE ROLE OF THE SCIENCE ADVISER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OR FOREIGN OFFICE

I have chosen this subject, not because I have exciting and important new suggestions to make regarding the role, but rather because I hope to elicit such suggestions from the distinguished and experienced group at the Ronneby conference. I also feel that since I am one of the few who have had experience in the role, I should go on record with such thoughts and suggestions as I have.

Science advisers in the defence, agriculture, commerce and interior departments in the United States, or their counterparts in other countries, have obvious usefulness in keeping the chief administrators in their departments informed on the scientific work going on in the department and on the changing needs for scientific work by the department. Occasionally, an adviser with vision and insight can initiate and promote a new important programme. The situation is necessarily different in the Department of State or Foreign Office. In most cases this department does little or no scientific work itself, and the task of the Science Adviser becomes one of keeping the department informed on scientific developments which may affect foreign policy or foreign relations, and when appropriate, taking the initiative to insure that scientific matters are properly taken into account in foreign policy and in the conduct of foreign affairs. In addition, or rather as a part of this task, he can perform many useful services for the scientific community, both in helping individuals or groups in their international scientific activities and in making the assistance of the Department of State available to international organizations on suitable occasions. This assistance which the science adviser can give the scientific community will incidentally help to insure that the Department of State stays in touch with the scientists and will be quickly informed of significant developments.

Occasionally, the Science Adviser will be able to point out some new way in which science or a scientific development programme can be useful in foreign affairs, but normally the suggestion will already have been made by someone, long before the development has progressed to the stage where one can tell whether it will be useful or not. The normal role of the adviser is then to keep aware of the possibilities, to examine them, making use of the resources available to him in other government departments and the scientific community, and to actively promote those which would be helpful in the conduct of international affairs, being especially careful to keep the appropriate officials in the Department of State informed of the possibilities.