

# The Profession

## Bass Report

The Behavioral and Social Sciences (BASS) Survey Committee of the National Academy of Sciences and the Social Science Research Council has issued its report entitled *The Behavioral and Social Sciences: Outlook and Needs*. The report was published by Prentice-Hall and costs \$7.95. A companion report on the discipline of political science, by Heinz Eulau and James G. March, was also published by Prentice-Hall and was described in the Fall *P. S.* Other disciplinary companion reports to the overall report are on the subjects of anthropology, economics, geography, history as a social science, linguistics, psychiatry as a behavioral science, psychology, sociology, and statistics/mathematics/computation in the behavioral and social sciences.

"The social sciences will provide no easy solutions in the near future", the report concludes, "but they are our best hope, in the long run, for understanding our problems in depth and for providing new means of lessening tensions and improving our common life."

Noting the needs for better information on the quality of life in our society, the Committee recommends that the Government support, through funds and legislation, efforts already under way to develop a system of "social indicators" that would measure particular aspects of our national life and help to assess changes in the state of society. (Juvenile delinquency and infant mortality statistics are examples of currently existing social indicators.)

The Committee further recommends that social and behavioral scientists outside the government begin to prepare an experimental "annual social report to the nation" that would interpret social indicators as one basis for formulating social policy. If the experiment is successful, preparation of the report might become a government responsibility similar to the preparation of the annual economic report.

Stressing the need for better data, the Committee recommends that a commission be established by the President of the United States to work out details of a national data system that would make social data more accessible for research while protecting the privacy of individuals. The report stresses that the individual's right to privacy must take precedence over the scientist's need for information, and it recommends establishment of a special governmental group, including private citizens, to set up the means for continuing protection of this right.

The Committee points out that our society is now

lacking in careers, parallel to those in engineering, aimed specifically at the application of behavioral and social science. It recommends, therefore, the establishment of graduate schools of applied behavioral sciences, cutting across existing social science specialties, to provide high level research and training programs oriented toward the solution of social problems. In addition to the social sciences, these schools would include such fields as law, engineering, and architecture.

The Committee expresses concern that the current restrictions on federal funds for science could cause the breaking up of research teams that have slowly learned to work efficiently together. Emphasizing the need for preventing such disruption, it recommends a minimum budget growth for the social sciences of 12 per cent annually, compared to the 20 per cent growth of recent years. However, if the enlarged role recommended in the report is to be met, additional funding of approximately \$100 million a year will be required. The total federal funding of behavioral and social science research and development was \$297 million in 1967, the latest year for which figures are available.

The report is one of a series prepared by the National Academy of Sciences surveying the status, opportunities, and needs of the various sciences. Its intent is not a drastic or dramatic redirection of basic social science research, but a strengthening of trends toward research on a larger scale and of increased pertinence to social problems and public policy.

Members of the central planning committee, who were responsible for the report, are Ernest R. Hilgard (Chairman), Professor of Psychology, Stanford University; Henry W. Riecken (Co-Chairman), President, Social Science Research Council; Kenneth E. Clark, University of Rochester; James A. Davis, Dartmouth College; Fred R. Eggan, University of Chicago; Heinz Eulau, Stanford University; Charles A. Ferguson, Stanford University; John L. Fischer, Tulane University of Louisiana; David A. Hamburg, Stanford University; Carl Kaysen, Institute for Advanced Study; William H. Kruskal, University of Chicago; David S. Landes, Harvard University; James G. March, University of California, Irvine; George A. Miller, Rockefeller University; Carl Pfaffmann, Rockefeller University; Neil J. Smelser, University of California, Berkeley; Allan H. Smith, Washington State University; Robert M. Solow, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Edward Taaffe, Ohio State University; Charles Tilly, University of Michigan; and Stephen Viederman (Executive Officer), National Academy of Sciences.