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
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Journal of the Royal Institute of Chemistry. September

Abstract

EDITORIAL

NATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE CHEMIST

The purpose of National Service is to ensure that, in the event of war, this country would be in a position to call on a large reserve of trained men to meet any emergency. It cannot be expected, therefore, that many of those who have specialised in a particular field will be able to make effective use of that knowledge during the period of their service. It is not our intention to consider here whether or not it is in the long-term interest of the nation for professional chemists to spend two years in this way, in view of the fact that most of them would be employed in work of national importance other than in the services should war come upon us. At present, however, chemists are not exempt from National Service, and it therefore seems advisable for them to know how their special knowledge can best be used in the country's service during this interruption to their chosen career. In any event, National Service may be regarded as an education in itself, providing a common meeting-ground for men from all walks of life, the opportunity to think about the future and to find out more of one's capabilities and weaknesses, and frequently a chance to build up a strong healthy constitution, which perhaps outweigh the disadvantages.

In those departments of service activity where the applications of scientific knowledge are vital, continuity in research and development projects is essential, and such work must therefore be established as a permanent feature of the national effort. The Ministry of Supply and the Admiralty are responsible for the production and testing of equipment required by H.M. Forces in general, and they therefore control most of the research and development involved in such work. It is true that technical officers from the Forces are employed by the Ministry and other public bodies, but normally these are regular officers. The opportunities for National Servicemen in the numerous directorates and research establishments are negligible, for their period of service is too short to enable them to make any substantial contributions. The position is somewhat better for the physicist, who may be seconded during his service to one of the research establishments.

Assuming that a period of National Service must to a great extent interrupt a chosen career in a specialist field, it is nevertheless in the interests both of the services and the servicemen themselves that, after preliminary training in general duties has been completed, their time shall be spent in such a way as to use their special knowledge to the best advantage.

It is not our purpose to discuss whether the obligation to carry out National Service should be met before or after professional training, but rather to point out the kinds of employment in which a National Serviceman who is a trained or intending professional chemist may be most usefully engaged if and when they are offered to him. In this connection, however, it is worth while remembering that, though all men are regarded as potential officers, if they are in medical grade I, those with science qualifications receive special consideration, particularly for the technical

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