Author of Status Seeker Speaks

Packard: 'Scientist's Status Up'

By David H. R. White, '62

Vance Packard, who spoke in Kresge, Tuesday, on "The Status Seekers," is a robust, balding man with a wide smile, warm personality and, judging from the way his last two books have sold, lots of money.

He spoke Tuesday on the topic of his last book, The Status Seekers. All of us being potential status seekers, Kraus was filled. Status seeking is the quest for the "right" things, the things which identify one with the highest possible social status. Our democratic society, Mr. Packard says, is multi-layered with axing currents of conformity running through the layers. To rise to a higher plane, status seekers must possess the correct status symbols, which range from sit-down mowers to the "right" girl's school. (Wellesley is about the "rightest"). The artificiality and ridiculousness of this wearing and wasteful pursuit for status was the subject of Mr. Packard's talk.

After his speech, which seemed to meet with great approval from his audience, I managed to trap Mr. Packard and, being a status seeker, questioned him on the status of the engineer and scientist.

"Engineers and scientists seem to have rapidly gained status," Mr. Packard said. "However, salaries do not follow status. I personally feel they deserve more recognition and certainly hope they get it."

If we don't receive higher salaries for our improved status, we get many side benefits. The scientist and engineer becomes socially acceptable, and may even marry a debutante. The other social strata have increased respect for us, which can take such tangible forms as easier credit and admittance to country clubs. The engineer-scientist can be the hero of a book or play, and becomes a desirable mate.

All agree that status seeking is terrible, but it's great to have status.

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