Has science outlived its use?

By Margaret Brandeau

Science, "as we know it, has outlived its usefulness," says Everett Mendelson, Director of the History of Science at Harvard University. In a speech to the Cambridge Forum on Wednesday night, Mendelson said, "The scientist's science is too narrow, too narrowly based, too narrowly conducted, too narrowly held.

Mendelson believes that science should be brought closer to the public, concentrating on problems which concern the bulk of the people. "As our lights begin to dim, our room get colder," said Mendelson, "it becomes apparent that there is a crisis of science and technology today.

Because of what Mendelson terms "anti-intellectualism" in the Nixon administration, science has suffered enormous budget cuts. In a military-industrial society complex has also suffered in public esteem because of its role in the war in Southeast Asia. "The war in Vietnam was disowned by 97% of the American population. Science and technology were seen as a part of that war."

Science has also been criticized as a big spender. For example, says Mendelson, the project to land a man on the moon was conducted at great cost, wasting both energy and human resources.

The problems of pollution, population, and energy have also caused people to point an accusing finger at science, says Mendelson. As public concern over these issues grew in the last decade, science and advanced technology were slow in answering.

"Science is seen now, no longer as the solution, but as part of the problem."

Mendelson noted that in the last decade there has been a steady decline in enrollment in the natural, and physical sciences and in engineering. The problem, he feels, lies in the relationship of important, expert knowledge and the people who are going to be affected by that knowledge. "I would say that what is needed is to, in the best sense of the word, politicize science."

Science, says Mendelson, must convivially examine developed in America to be composed almost exclusively of white, middle class males. He believes that if science is to respond to the problems of society, it must practice "conceptions of inclusiveness"; it must try to include members of all segments of society.

In relation to our problems, says Mendelson, does not lie in more technology. This work for a bit of time, but the "longer term solution is fundamentally a social one."

"I would hope that we begin to look for social solutions, but not just for America, but for the world."

News Analysis

Humanities at MIT: new requirements?

By Mike McNeece

The faculty of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHS) has been working for several months on designing a new requirement in the Humanities and social sciences, without coming to a clear consensus.

Reports have been issued, memoranda exchanged, and meetings held between various parts of the faculty of the School and its six departments (Humanities, Political Herrs, and Technology, Philosophy, Foreign Languages and Literatures, and Psychology), but all were left to determine, concrete definition of opinion within the faculty on the questions involved.

At last, with pressures mounting (from the need to plan for next year's courses and from a new requirement in time to have it published in the 1974-75 catalogue), the School Council composed of the six department heads and the Dean and Associate Dean of the School — last week decided to poll the faculty for an expression of view. (Please turn to page 5.)