

they felt certain it was important, since they were not considered important enough to be let in on it. There were, of course, a few skeptics and doubters. But they gave in when they were reminded that the head of the State Science Institute was Dr. Robert Stadler—whose judgment and integrity they could not doubt."

Dr. Stadler was looking down at his fingernails.

The sudden screech of the microphone jerked the crowd into an instantaneous attentiveness; people seemed to be a second's worth of self-control away from panic. An announcer, with a voice like a machine gun spitting smiles, barked cheerily that they were now to witness the radio broadcast that would break the news of the great discovery to the whole nation. Then, with a glance at his watch, his script and the signaling arm of Wesley Mouch, he yelled into the sparkling snake-head of the microphone—into the living rooms, the offices, the studies, the nurseries of the country. "Ladies and gentlemen! Project X!"

Dr. Ferris leaned toward Dr. Stadler--through the staccato hoofbeats of the announcer's voice galloping across the continent with a description of the new invention--and said in the tone of a casual remark. "It is vitally important that there be no criticism of the Project in the country at this precarious time," then added semi-accidentally, as a semi-joke, "that there be no criticism of anything at any time."

"...and the nation's political, cultural, intellectual and moral leaders," the announcer was yelling into the microphone. "who have witnessed this great event, as your representatives and in your name, will now tell you their views of it in person!"

Mr. Thompson was the first to mount the wooden steps to the platform of the microphone. He snapped his way through a brief speech, hailing a new era and declaring--in the belligerent tone of a challenge to unidentified enemies--that science belonged to the people and that every man on the face of the globe had a right to a share of the advantages created by technological progress.

Wesley Mouch came next. He spoke about social planning and the necessity of unanimous rallying in support of the planners. He spoke about discipline, unity, austerity and the patriotic duty of bearing temporary hardships. "We have mobilized the best brains of the country to work for your welfare. This great invention was the product of the genius of a man whose devotion to the cause of humanity is not to be questioned, a man acknowledged by all as the greatest mind of the century--Dr. Robert Stadler!"

"What?" gasped Dr. Stadler, whirling toward Ferris.

Dr. Ferris looked at him with a glance of patient mildness.

"He didn't ask my permission to say that!" Dr. Stadler half-snapped, half-whispered.

Dr. Ferris spread out his hands in a gesture of reproachful helplessness. "Now you see, Dr. Stadler, how unfortunate it is if you allow yourself to be disturbed by political matters, which you have always considered unworthy of your attention and knowledge. You see, it is not Mr. Mouch's function to ask permissions."

The figure now slouching against the sky on the speakers' plat-

form, coiling itself about the microphone, talking in the bored, contemptuous tone of an off-color story, was Dr. Simon Pritchett. He was declaring that the new invention was an instrument of social welfare, which guaranteed general prosperity, and that anyone who doubted this self-evident fact was an enemy of society, to be treated accordingly. "This invention, the product of Dr. Robert Stadler, the pre-eminent lover of freedom--"

Dr. Ferris opened a briefcase, produced some pages of neatly typed copy and turned to Dr. Stadler. "You are to be the climax of the broadcast," he said. "You will speak last, at the end of the hour." He extended the pages. "Here's the speech you'll make." His eyes said the rest: they said that his choice of words had not been accidental.

Dr. Stadler took the pages, but held them between the tips of two straight fingers, as one might hold a scrap of waste paper about to be tossed aside. "I haven't asked you to appoint yourself as my ghost writer," he said. The sarcasm of the voice gave Ferris his clue: this was not a moment for sarcasm.

"I couldn't have allowed your invaluable time to be taken up by the writing of radio speeches," said Dr. Ferris. "I felt certain that you would appreciate it." He said it in a tone of spurious politeness intended to be recognized as spurious, the tone of tossing to a beggar the alms of face-saving.

Dr. Stadler's answer disturbed him: Dr. Stadler did not choose to answer or to glance down at the manuscript.

"Lack of faith," a beefy speaker was snarling on the platform, in the tone of a street brawl, "lack of faith is the only thing we got to fear! If we have faith in the plans of our leaders, why, the plans will work and we'll all have prosperity and ease and plenty. It's the fellows who go around doubting and destroying our morale, it's they who're keeping us in shortages and misery. But we're not going to let them do it much longer, we're here to protect the people—and if any of those doubting smarties come around, believe you me, we'll take care of them!"

"It would be unfortunate," said Dr. Ferris in a soft voice, "to arouse popular resentment against the State Science Institute at an explosive time like the present. There's a great deal of dissatisfaction and unrest in the country—and if people should misunderstand the nature of the new invention, they're liable to vent their rage on all scientists. Scientists have never been popular with the masses."

"Peace," a tall, willowy woman was sighing into the microphone, "this invention is a great, new instrument of peace. It will protect us from the aggressive designs of selfish enemies, it will allow us to breathe freely and to learn to love our fellow men." She had a bony face with a mouth embittered at cocktail parties, and wore a flowing pale blue gown, suggesting the concert garment of a harpist. "It may well be considered as that miracle which was thought impossible in history—the dream of the ages—the final synthesis of science and love!"

Dr. Stadler looked at the faces in the grandstands. They were sitting quietly now, they were listening, but their eyes had an ebbing