

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATIONS IN
POSTWAR PLANNING

"EDUCATIONAL foundations can best justify their existence today by assuming the risks involved in financing new and uncertain projects which may contribute to better education in the postwar world." Such is the opinion of Harold S. Sloan, director of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, as set forth in a recent article in *After the War*, a bulletin published by the Institute on Postwar Reconstruction at New York University. Mr. Sloan says, in part:

Looking ahead to the postwar educational world, nothing seems more certain than change. But intelligent change means research and experimentation. Old ways need to be rooted out and re-examined; new ideas have to be developed and promising innovations tested. Such work is costly—too costly, many times, to be charged against income

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from private endowments or from appropriations from public funds.

This is where foundations fit in. They absorb the cost risks of new and uncertain projects. Successful results are free for all to use who will; failures are forgotten, but in any event administrative budgets remain unimpaired. Indeed, I, for one, do not know how foundations today can justify their existence better than on the grounds of being risk-taking institutions.

Mr. Sloan estimates that there are between 300 and 400 endowed foundations in this country making grants to institutions in every conceivable field of human endeavor that pay out annually about forty million dollars. He adds:

I hope that every cent of this money is risked—intelligently of course, but boldly. That is what we are trying to do with our small contribution, and for my part, I do not know of a better way to assure progress.

Mr. Sloan reports that projects sponsored by the Sloan Foundation were using every known medium of modern communication, including radio, recordings, motion pictures, printed pamphlets, and the spoken word, to devise new and better ways to disseminate economic knowledge both in formal and in adult education.

Among projects sponsored by the Sloan Foundation are the Chicago Round Table, the Public Affairs pamphlets, the New York University Film Library, and several projects in educational techniques.