LETTERS

Negro physicists—a reply to Branson

It is unfortunate that there probably are not enough black physicists to do a meaningful study of their life in physics. Because our numbers are limited, personal testaments are about the only way to get a clue as to how we fare. At certain points, my impressions of the black man in physics are quite different from those of Herman Branson (PHYSICS TODAY, September, page 70).

On the question of, let us say, closing the color gap in physics, I could not agree more with Branson. In order that effective progress be made, much money and hard work on the part of us dedicated to this cause are needed. Effective racial integration of all American schools would help immensely.

However, I feel that the alleged liberality of the American scientist, including physicists, is a myth. One wonders what Branson means when he says, "There is no racism in science. . . ." Does he mean that a black man with a PhD in physics from an outstanding American university has the same opportunities, on the average, as a white man with the same qualifications? From my personal experience, I would have to say no. A good deal of the fault does not lie directly on the hands of the physicists, because questions of hiring, firing and salary are too often in the hands of people who have only a rudimentary training in science. Nevertheless you will quite often find, in the cases where black physicists have been discriminated against, the decisions were made on all levels by people with considerable training in physics.

It is true that the employment opportunities for black people in physics have increased tremendously since the Kennedy era. But I would think that this has been due to the emerging political power of the American black people, especially on a national level, and subsequent governmental pressures on industry and universities with government supported projects, and not to a diminution of racism on the part of scientists in America.

Branson's statement, "But in general, scientists (and especially physicists) are among the most liberal people to be found anywhere. Now this was not true some years ago," is unbelievable. Does he really think that during his lifetime the feelings that the white man has for the black man have changed appreciably and vice versa?

One wonders if Branson has thought of what happens to the black physicist after he has secured one of those "high paying industrial jobs" and been placed at a desk near the door where the federal inspectors enter. If he thinks that because he is a physicist he will not find the same racial discrimination that others of his race find in all other disciplines in America, I am afraid that he will be greatly disappointed.

Branson has painted a dangerously rosy picture of the black man in physics. I would like strongly to take issue with this view.

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Priority in energy trapping

I was very interested to read the article "Frequency Control Developments" by Arthur D. Ballato and Robert V. McKnight in the August PHYSICS TODAY. This is by far the most comprehensive review of the American work on energy trapping that I have seen and it confirms statements made to me in a private communication last June from W. H. Horton, vice president of Piezo Technology Inc., to the effect that no reference to my own work has been made in America.

The first work on energy trapping was done at the Marconi Co. in 1946 and anticipates William Shockley by some years. My first (internal) report

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