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but was often silenced by violent means, the universities in Argentina reached their lowest academic standards and their poorest level of teaching.

I earnestly hope that PHYSICS TODAY's questionnaire to leading physics teachers is just the beginning of an exchange of ideas about the whole science of teaching, which, to my belief, has been too much neglected.

Angel M. R. Ferrari
Tennelec Instrument Co., Inc.
Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Reply from Arons

In a brief interview it is difficult to introduce all the qualifications that are needed to ensure wide understanding of what one is saying. In asserting that a sound educational institution, with high academic standards, can not possibly operate as a democracy, I was using "democracy" in a very literal sense—referring to a situation in which students would actually have a voice and a role in decision-making and government in *academic* matters.

A student's connection with an educational institution is a *voluntary* association, not a forced one. Implied in this association is a willingness on the part of the student to submit himself to a kind of discipline: that which resides not only in the learning process but also in the criticism and evaluation of his work by more experi-

enced scholars. That many students will eventually surpass the attainments of their teachers is one of the glories of the process and does not negate my contention. Most students need this criticism and evaluation in their formative years, and a formal student voice in academic matters inevitably undermines the levels and standards of this process. Under such circumstances, high standards of demand and performance simply can not be maintained. Mr. Ferrari acknowledges this impossibility by reference to his own experiences.

I would be the last person to contend that student opinions should not be heard, and I would be horrified at any activity being put down with violence. I believe strongly that students not only should be heard but should have a high level of participating *responsibility* in the government of nonacademic aspects of a university. When it comes to academic matters, however, I believe that although students should be able to express opinions to their hearts' content, they should be excluded from decision-making processes. This mode of operation is not democratic, and I categorized it accordingly. I assure you that I had no more intention of attacking or disparaging democracy than of attacking motherhood.

Arnold Arons
Amherst College

The metric system

The points made in your editorial "Meters for America" (PHYSICS TODAY, Feb. 1966, page 120) were well taken. I believe that a good presentation of the International System of Units (SI) would serve a useful purpose if included in PHYSICS TODAY.

As you point out, "the change isn't always easy. . . ." Now backing up to the second of your suggestions, that "the millimicron is better than the angstrom": the nanometer has replaced the millimicron.

I. R. Neilson
Loma Linda University

I applaud your editorial "Meters for America." I could not help being

amused that in the same issue of PHYSICS TODAY, on page 62, we have a 1250-pound solar observatory that is flying 21,600 miles; on page 65 we have a 65-ton electromagnet enclosing 30-inch dees; and on page 67 the solar wind varies from .67 up to 2 million miles per hour, with probes measuring 35 by 37 inches weighing 140 pounds being orbited into a band 40 million miles wide. Half a dozen more examples on the same page show that it is really going to be difficult for nonengineering types to make a complete conversion.

John V. Kline
Colorado School of Mines