

EDITORIAL

Physics Today has been shooting arrows into the air for some eighteen months now and the time has come to find out where they land.

Almost twelve thousand of the more than fourteen thousand copies printed each month are mailed to regular members of the American Institute of Physics who have been receiving it whether they want to or not. The scheme was based on the desire to furnish all physicists with a useful general-interest magazine and to furnish other readers with a useful physics magazine. Nonmember subscribers have been renewing at a rate of ninety percent. Has Physics Today made its mark with members?

It was estimated that by 1951 the magazine would be able to make its own way, having attracted a sufficient number of advertisers and outside subscribers to pay for the cost of distributing the magazine to the membership. This presupposed utmost economy of production and a shoestring budget exceedingly brave in the face of the enormous funds usually required to launch a monthly magazine, and a rapid increase in advertisers and outside subscribers.

The number of members in the Institute has increased by almost one-third since we first began publishing in May of last year; the cost of printing has gone up; and the number of advertisers and subscribers has grown more slowly than we had hoped. The big increase in numbers has thus been on the wrong side of the ledger and the deficit which the magazine incurs (although it pro-rates to be less, per member, than the existing subscription price) is still too large for the Institute to underwrite indefinitely.

Members were therefore notified a few days ago of the decision of the Executive Committee to discontinue the free distribution of Physics Today and offer it to members of the Institute at \$4.00 per year, beginning in January, 1950, and at the same time to raise the price of nonmember subscriptions to \$5.00.

This move will put Physics Today to test and the percentage of members who elect to subscribe will tell us where our arrows have landed. If a member feels that Physics Today has made its place as a nontechnical magazine limited to one science, his individual subscription and support is desired. We do not contemplate a basic change in our approach. On the supposition that there are always more people outside a specialty than there are in it, our authors will continue to write for people outside their own fields. On the supposition that there are more people off the grapevine than on it, we will continue to present news and views and notes and reviews. Physics Today will continue to explore the secondary and peripheral areas of physics which do not have a normal outlet in existing journals.

We trust that the support will be vigorous because we believe that a periodical in which physics and the things about it are put in a language which others can use for better understanding is a good thing to have on hand—especially now that the honeymoon of the physicists with the general public is over, its end marked, unfortunately, by a kind of quarrel and air of recrimination which leaves everyone the worse for wear. It is the unhappy fact that the confusion in the public mind about secrecy and security and secrecy and science has not been resolved. Whatever erosion of this difficulty is accomplished in the future, the one attack which should be pressed constantly is the education of nonscientists to an understanding of the problem.

We hope that the regular members of the American Institute of Physics feel that Physics Today is a help in the important effort of physicists to reach out to their more distant colleagues in physics, to their colleagues in other sciences, and to the general public with news and discussion of what is going on in physics, today.

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