

Controversy Warms as APS Sets Public-Issue Session

The council of the American Physical Society has decided to schedule a discussion of society involvement in public issues during the Chicago meeting. The session will take place as part of the APS business meeting on 30 Jan. (PHYSICS TODAY, November page 81. Further discussion of the matter appears in the editorial of this issue on page 128. The PHYSICS TODAY "Letters" department will, in the coming months, include exchanges of views on the subject.)

The issue was broached last July by Charles Schwartz of Berkeley who proposed to APS, through APS president Charles Townes, a new APS constitutional amendment designed to allow society members to initiate a vote "on any matter of concern to the society." The subject was treated by the APS executive committee on 11 Sept. when it was agreed that announcement of the issue should appear in the November *Bulletin of The American Physical Society*. At a later date, the entire society will have an opportunity to vote (by mail) on the amendment, whose adoption "shall require the affirmative votes of not fewer than two thirds of the members voting."

Meanwhile PHYSICS TODAY has received several communications expressing varying points of view on the matter. Those in favor of the amendment argue that the days of string and sealing wax are over, that physicists, because they are so deeply involved in the body politic and because many political judgements are based on technical knowledge, should discuss and advise on public policy and help to formulate it. Those opposed maintain that physicists as physicists should stick to physics, that there are other societies and other publications wherein to voice one's sentiments and that introduction of social issues would destroy the fabric of APS.

Among the several opposing viewpoints is that of Eugene Wigner of Princeton. Wigner notes, "It is my

opinion that the Physical Society should stick to physics. I believe it would be a corruption of democracy if all societies should participate in the discussion of political matters, no matter for what purpose they were formed. Naturally anybody can express his views privately, but I do not think political questions are valid subjects for discussion at our meetings."

Agreeing with Wigner is Robert Pound of Harvard. "In general I prefer the Physical Society not to take any stand in favor of discussing public issues. I think such a stand will tend to confuse its role as a strictly scholarly organization. This question has come up many times before, and it was strong just after World War II when issues such as the future of the AEC were matters of concern. I agreed then that the APS should not take a stand on these issues."

Contrary sentiments, however, are expressed by Jay Orear of Cornell, chairman of the Federation of American Scientists, and also by Schwartz. Orear asserts that scientists have a duty to communicate truth to all who need it. In our present burgeoning technology, he maintains, many political decisions are partly formed by

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1968 appropriations for the AEC, NSF, NASA and NBS have won final congressional approval.

The Atomic Energy Commission received \$2.54 billion, which is about \$270 million more than last year but about \$110 million less than the AEC requested. Congress also approved \$7.33 million for the 200-GeV accelerator, which is now being designed to allow for possible higher energies of 400-500 GeV.

The National Science Foundation was allotted \$495 million, which, with the \$21 million expected to be recovered from project Mohole, allows the foundation \$36 million more than last year but \$10 million less than its 1968 request.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration got \$4.59 billion but no funds specifically for the Mars Voyager probe and only \$10 million for its university program.

The National Bureau of Standards was appropriated \$31.75 million for its operating budget (\$6.79 million less than requested) and only \$240 000 for plant and facilities.

scientific considerations. The original APS constitution, he argues, was fine for the age in which it was written but not for the space and atomic age of today. PHYSICS TODAY should help physicists fulfill their responsibilities to society; the APS should provide for one or two sessions at its meetings on science and society. Schwartz argues that physics is today firmly tied to government and business and that it is a national asset. Consequently, physicists have an obligation to seek and speak out the truth wherever it is found. Furthermore, he maintains, when sufficiently important questions arise, the entire APS membership should decide the path to follow.

Research Funds and Prospect Of Republican Victory in '68

A PHYSICS TODAY survey of ranking House Republican science committee-men and staff members indicates that a possible Republican victory at the polls in 1968 will not appreciably alter the trends toward tighter research budgets and emphases on practical goals started under the Democrats. Furthermore any change of administration, they add, would probably acceler-