the system will not work as advertised. Should not the pages of PHYSICS TODAY be open to knowledgeable physicists who are deeply concerned about such issues? Certainly there is a lot of physics in how high-altitude nuclear explosions can be used to blanket out long-range radar. This one technical point that has so far not been openly discussed could possibly be the death blow to the proposed thin ABM system. An open discussion among independent scientists as well as the "establishment scientists" will better prepare us for exposing this hoax, if it is a hoax.

Not only should PHYSICS TODAY help us fulfill our responsibilities to society, but the APS should be providing for one or two sessions or symposia per meeting on science and society. The AAAS and its publication *Science* are way ahead of us. This year's annual meeting of the AAAS will have two sessions on the ABM issue among others of political interest. *Science* has had lively letters to the editor on chemical and biological warfare and the role of the scientist in the Vietnam conflict. Now that science has so swiftly spread to almost every corner of our society, I would recommend a similar editorial policy for PHYSICS TODAY.

The original APS constitution was fine for the age in which it was written. But since then the atomic age, the space age and the computer age have exploded upon us. Do we not have a duty to our benefactors, the tax-payers, to at least keep up with the times?

JAY OREAR
Cornell University
Chairman, Federation of American Scientists

To meet our obligations

I strongly support the proposed amendment to the constitution of the American Physical Society that would allow the membership of the society to express themselves on public issues.

As physicists we are all very much aware of the impact of physics on public policy and vice versa. On the one hand, discoveries in physics dramatically affect national and international events. Perhaps the most obvious examples have been in the field of nuclear physics, but we may also point to other advances such as in solid-state physics that have made the new generation of computers possible.

On the other hand, the physics community is directly affected by public policy. A large fraction of all research in physics is paid for by government funds. Additional government expenditures, such as for the war in Vietnam, divert funds and decrease productivity as well as eliminate jobs.

In addition to the mutual impact of physics and public policy, it is important to give some consideration to the human aspect of the proposed amendment.

Traditionally physicists tended to be isolated from public affairs. Since World War II, this "image" has dramatically changed. In fact, as a professional group, physicists are now among the most outspoken. This is especially true in academic environments.

Today physicists have become sufficiently concerned with public affairs that many are running for public office—from local positions to Congress (see "Physicists and the Elections," PHYSICS TODAY, November 1966, page 61).

I believe that the proposed amendment will help us as physicists to meet our obligations to society by enabling us to speak as a body and to use our influence directly to influence public policy.

I. RICHARD LAPIDUS
Stevens Institute of Technology

Direct, personal participation

I would like to support the amendment to the constitution of the American Physical Society proposed by Charles Schwartz of the physics department of the University of California at Berkeley. Today the great issues of society, both domestic and foreign, are increasingly concerned with and influenced by modern science and technology. Indeed the influence of science and technology on public policy is becoming so great that in my view it is insufficient simply to discuss and advise on public issues. As much as such actions by scientists are needed, I believe we must go even

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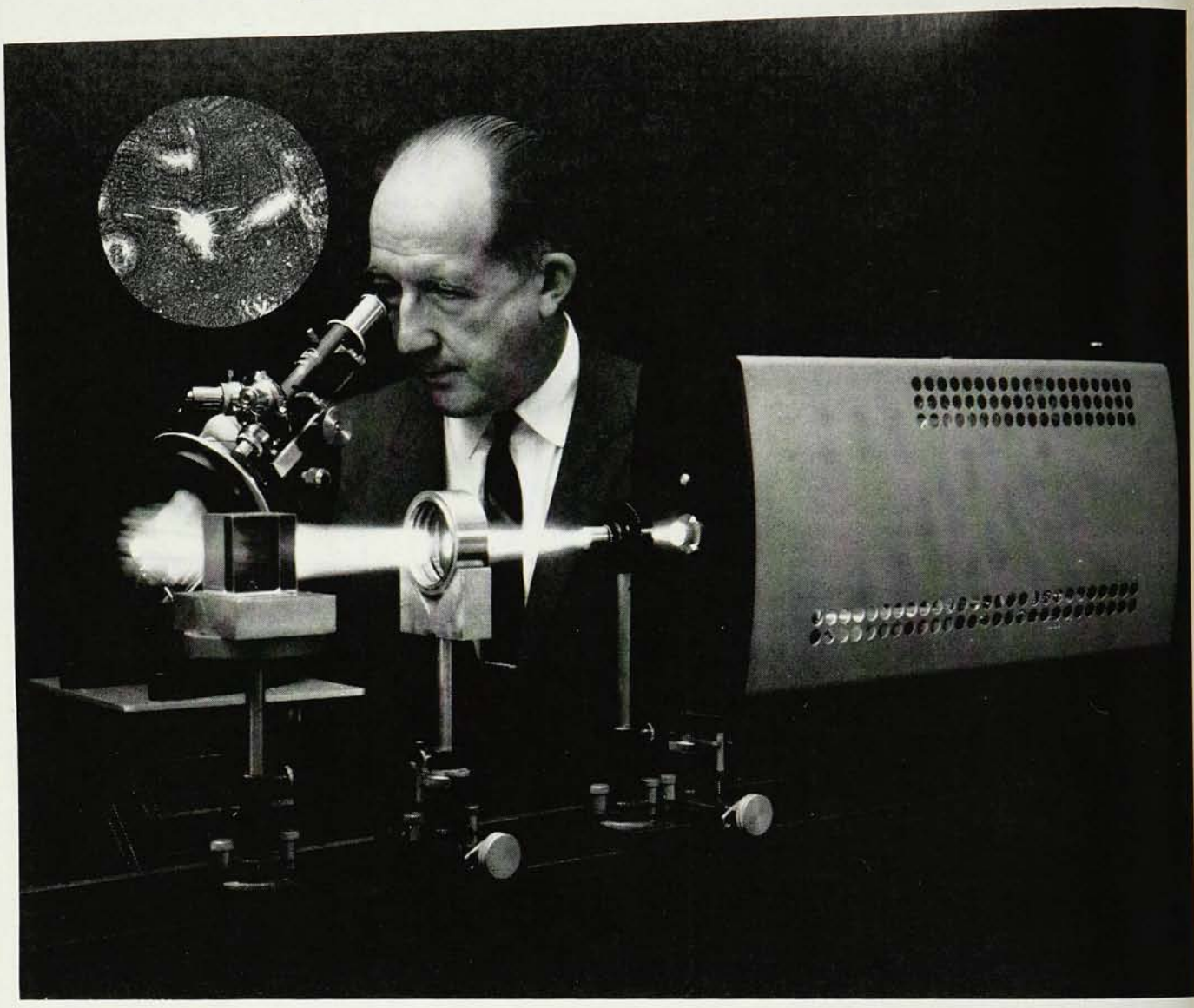

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further and personally participate in the actual formulation and conduct of public policy. I, therefore, support Schwartz's proposal, not only as a desirable end in itself, but because it constitutes a step in the broader and to my mind even more pressing area of direct participation in public affairs.

GEORGE C. SPONSLER
Bethesda, Maryland

Understanding implications

That the membership of the American Physical Society should concern themselves as individuals with the many troubling public issues of the day (such as our policy in Vietnam, civil rights, etc.) is mandatory. The only question that arises is whether APS is the proper vehicle through which they as a group should express this concern.

The new prestige that science has acquired since 1945 has made it an inevitable factor in decision-making at many levels of government. The level of public support for research derives from this new prestige and will determine the rapidity of the advances that can be made in many basic fields. This makes it both inevitable and desirable that physicists speaking through APS express their concern as to the social and political implications of their work.

In addition to the proposed amendment to the APS constitution, whose adoption I most heartily urge, it may be proper to redefine the object and purpose of the society as given in the Articles of Incorporation to read: "the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics, and the understanding of its social and political implications."

MILTON DANK
Space Sciences Laboratory
General Electric Company

Safeguarded voices

Broadening the aims of the American Physical Society to include discussions of public issues will, to use a mixed metaphor, force the society to walk a tightrope between the horns of a dilemma. That is, while the attempt to gain a consensus of the membership is most commendable, there are serious difficulties that must be overcome if the society can continue to function efficiently.

The most extreme argument against the proposal is that the organization may be reduced to a debating society, overwhelmed by verbiage on complex, emotion-laden issues. Cliques to support this-or-that stand on an issue may form and disrupt the orderly workings of the society.

Clearly, safeguards are needed to prevent such eventualities. Strict enforcement of rules of procedure at meetings will help to maintain order. Adequate airing of diverse viewpoints in the *Bulletin* or PHYSICS TODAY prior to meetings may reduce excessive discussion at the meetings. In fact, requiring a proponent to write his views on paper for all members to read and judge may be a powerful way of preventing interminable oral debates at meetings. Also, it would appear that more than a simple majority (perhaps two thirds) of those voting should be required before a given viewpoint is reputed to be that of the society as a whole.

I, for one, believe that, if such safeguards can be effectively implemented, the society and the entire scientific community can profit from discussions of public issues. With such discussions greater interest in the workings of the society might be generated among members. But of greatest import is the fact that in many areas of concern to scientists, there has been no effective voice, as decried in the pages of *Science* during the past several months, to represent the viewpoints of American scientists in a forceful, cohesive manner. At least some of the problems affecting American science, especially with respect to its relations with the federal government, could be ameliorated if scientific organizations were accurately aware of the opinions of their members. Given such information, the American Physical Society could truly represent its members and advance the interests as well as the knowledge of physics.

RICHARD L. HAHN
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Journals in other hands

I am interested that a vote or poll is in the process of being taken to deter-