

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.

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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."

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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.

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Journals in other hands

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

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