

mine whether some of the AIP journals, most particularly *PHYSICS TODAY*, should be opened up to debate on issues such as Vietnam and the like. It seems to me that it would be a great mistake for the American Institute of Physics, or the member societies, to be involved in such controversial matters unless they are tied very immediately to the profession of physics itself. To use our journals for very general discussion and debate means that they will lose their essentially professional character. Still further, the journals will fall into the hands of politically or socially oriented editors who will inevitably use them to support their own special viewpoints on matters far outside of the field of physics.

Every physicist is a citizen and has countless avenues outside his professional journals for expressing social and political views not immediately related to his profession. If his views have special merit, he will reach a far wider audience and hence be much more effective by using the broader media for presenting and supporting his opinions.

I wish to emphasize that I see no reason why *PHYSICS TODAY* could not be used for comments on social or economic issues immediately related to our profession. On the other hand, such activities should be exceedingly well conceived if they are to have special meaning. By and large, one should strive toward something like the level approached in *Nature*. It is not easy to find editors who are capable of initiating and sustaining good analysis of this type. It is better to shun such areas than to enter into them badly.

FREDRICK SEITZ
National Academy of Sciences

Against a free ride

I oppose what for brevity I will call the "Schwartz amendment" to the constitution of the American Physical Society. The society has lived, thrived and done immeasurable service to physics under constitutions that limit its object to the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics. Even more germane to the situation is the text of the articles of incorporation,

which reads: "The object and purpose of the Society is, and shall be, to promote the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics, to publish a periodical and other publications for that purpose, and to do such other things as may be conducive to the said purpose." Adoption of the Schwartz amendment could result in plebiscites or referenda on issues that could not be construed as conducive to that purpose. Such a plebiscite could endanger the tax-free status of the society. Each plebiscite would cost the society an amount that has been conservatively estimated at \$2000 under present conditions, an estimate sure to rise with postage costs and printing costs. This brings me to my final point. George Pegram used to say that the printed membership list of the society is a public document. Apparently anybody, be he a member or even a nonmember of the society, can carry out a plebiscite of the society on any issue, provided that he use the latest printed membership list, and himself do all the work and pay all the cost of his plebiscite. Presumably the society could not prevent such a private enterprise if it would, and I doubt whether the council would prevent such an enterprise if it could. The responsibility of the society would in no wise be engaged. Seen in this light, the Schwartz amendment appears not as a scheme for making possible something that is now impossible but as a device for making APS, at its own risks and perils, pay for enterprises that their proponents could and should pay for. Not for such an aim should the traditional purpose of the society be altered.

KARL K. DARROW
Secretary Emeritus
American Physical Society

Ignorance and pressure groups

I would like to congratulate *PHYSICS TODAY* for limiting itself to its proper function to discuss physics, physicists, and nothing else. I also want to congratulate you for a thoughtful and even-handed editorial on the subject.

This is a subject to which I have been forced to give much thought. It may be justified, therefore, if I express in a brief manner my thoughts to you.

One may justify the discussion of

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