

What We Are Not Against

In the wake of the campaign and vote on the Schwartz amendment, we hope that some muddy waters have become clearer to physicists (including ourselves). The proposal to have the American Physical Society pass resolutions on "any matter of concern," the letter debate in our columns and the oral debate in Chicago brought to the surface considerable turbulence that apparently has been bothering many for some time. We of *PHYSICS TODAY* and the American Institute of Physics are concerned peripherally; only APS is directly involved. But we are learning while others learn, and we feel the whole controversy has thrown considerable light into the shadows. Perhaps the troubled waters look a bit smoother than before.

A few misconceptions remain, it appears, and some of them are about *PHYSICS TODAY*. In the hope of greater clarity, we would like to try to remove some of them.

In the first place, we are frequently quoted as having taken a stand against the Schwartz amendment. The misconception arises because our rejection of the original Schwartz letter put the whole matter in motion. From that time on, to the extent that we were able, we treated proponents and opponents equally. Our December editorial expressed opinions against, but alongside them it expressed opinions for. We allowed proponents and opponents to inspect the draft of the editorial and modified it to include all the arguments they suggested. In handling the flood of letters initiated by our invitation and that of APS, we treated the sides in the same manner, generally allowing the proponents of change to tell their story first when we had to make a choice of order. If we had a bias and it showed, it showed despite our best efforts.

A second misconception is that *PHYSICS TODAY* is against involvement and in favor of physics that is isolated from the problems that beset our world. We hope that anyone who thumbs through even our precampaign pages may find items to convince him otherwise:

A Negro's view of the black man in physics, an Indian institute as an example of developed nations trying to help the developing, a story on pollution and crime, an editorial called "To Keep the Poor from Getting Poorer."

Let us say now that we are heartily in favor of physicists who want to find out what is wrong and set about correcting it. At the risk of playing devil's advocate, we express hearty sympathy with the undergraduate who turns aside from a physics major (and his father who leaves the physics faculty) because he feels a major in sociology or a job with the Peace Corps will help more poor and hungry people. And in all situations we feel that the physicist as individual and citizen (when *PHYSICS TODAY* is not his medium) should be involved and concerned and contributing toward justice and happiness.

We try to further such causes, but we do so with two distinct reservations. One is that we feel *PHYSICS TODAY* speaks mainly *to* the physicists not *for* them and only incidentally *from* them. In all our editorial judgments we keep firmly to our knowledge that our audience is professional physicists. If outsiders can gain something from what we write and print, so much the better. But we do not address ourselves to the outsiders. The second reservation is that we do not believe it is just or right or useful to take advantage of the "halo effect." If the physicist has gained unusual respect and influence by solving the problem of parity conservation, we are proud and happy. But we do not think that from this platform he should convince others and himself that he, more than the next man, has brains enough to see the facts and heart enough to understand their portent when facts and portent are not related to physics. Modesty is a useful virtue when it preserves the effectiveness of the modest man.

The campaign has strengthened our conviction that the physicist is concerned and wants to be involved. Within our limitations, we hope to help him to be so.

—R. Hobart Ellis Jr