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ago, is to say, in effect, that the role of science in society differs little from the role of mediaeval English. This reversal can lead to a third-order dilution of science support.

Science is, in fact, relevant to national goals and national problems quite apart from its cultural and educational value. It is as relevant to distributed national goals, such as regional economic development, as it is to our centered national goals, such as the conquest of space.

It is probably true that science must gain a broader political base if it is to win, or deserve, continued preferential support. But might this base not be on the ability of science to find answers to regional problems? Need we abandon the concepts of excellence and relevance for the idea of the pork barrel?

Fear within the present crisis seems to have revived a host of ghosts previously laid to rest by the logic of scientists. We should perhaps, even in crises, have less fear of what might be bad for the scientist and give more thought to what science might be good for the nation, such as regionally relevant research.

WILLIAM N. ELLIS

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Lubricating communication

You have asked in an editorial how we, the physics community, can help lubricate the channels of communication about what we are doing to the tax-paying public. I surmise you did not expect to be overwhelmed with "gee-whiz" ideas.

In Houston, we are trying. The science committee of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Houston Chapter of the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers jointly prepare a publication, *Science and Engineering in Houston*. I have enclosed a copy for you to look at.

Each issue will contain one or more articles on how physics contributes to the community. Fortunately for me, I am the writer of these contributions. The pay is bad, nothing, but it is a change to do something about a problem instead of bellyaching. I have recently written about the number of American Physical Society members in the Houston area—164. I am preparing an article about a hospital with a

physics department—M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute.

Please don't construe this as personal horn tooting. I would like to see physicists accepted as contributing members of society instead of longhairs operating maelstroms down which flow tax dollars. Perhaps this is one way we can inform, educate, propagandize—call it what you will.

FRED LEE WILSON

On canceling a meeting

The issue of canceling or transferring the 1970 American Physical Society meeting scheduled for Chicago has arisen because, according to the judgment of many members (including myself), the conduct of the city administration in Chicago on the occasion of the Democratic convention deserves censure. Although practical considerations forbid such an action by the society in the present case, it is pertinent to ask whether it would ever be appropriate to remove a meeting from a city as a gesture of displeasure at the city administration.

Of course transferral of a meeting away from a given city would always be justified by any actions of municipal authorities that interfere with the activities of APS members as physicists or that threaten to imperil the safe and efficient conduct of a meeting. An analogous principle is illustrated by APS's long precedent of avoiding cities in which its members are likely to suffer inconvenience from racial discrimination in accommodations. But where no issues specific to physicists or APS activities are involved, one may well question both the ethics and the efficacy of censuring a city administration by a blow that is felt economically only by hotels and restaurants and intellectually primarily by physicists living close to the city in question. It is sometimes argued that if you hurt the hotels, they will put pressure on the city officials. But such pressure is not likely to be strong unless the hotels are indeed hurt economically. (Often they would be glad enough to substitute a salesmen's convention for a physicists'.) And it seems to me that it is morally wrong to violate a contract or even an informal agreement, thereby inflicting economic injury on the hotels if these are only innocent bystanders to the reprehensible actions of the city government.

There remains the question of trying to influence public opinion by making

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it widely known that APS is avoiding a certain city. Here no significant economic blow at hotels need be involved. However, the appropriateness and efficacy of this more modest measure can be questioned because it requires making decisions more than two years in advance of the meeting in question, and a lot can change in two years. More important, though, such a measure involves using the APS organization as a weapon on issues that, however important they may be otherwise, do not directly concern the objectives for which APS was set up. (Article II of the APS Constitution states: "The object of the Society shall be the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics.") The recent debate over the proposed Schwartz amendment revolved largely about the appropriateness of using the APS organization for a wider class of purposes. Though the vote on this amendment involved some other issues, it is probably safe to conclude from this vote that the majority of APS members prefer to limit the society's activities fairly closely to its constitutionally stated objective.

CONYERS HERRING

Bell Telephone Laboratories

It was a pleasure to see how scientists project their cool, dispassionate spirit of unbiased inquiry into events beyond their professional sphere (November letters).

I suggest we go one step further and schedule meetings only in cities that have been given a clean bill of health by the Yahoos (oops, I mean Yuppies, of course).

This may well disqualify every city with a police department, but then, we can always hold meetings in our ivory towers.

JAMES N. CARIDES

Bell Telephone Laboratories

This letter is in rebuttal to the November letters from persons resident in certain of our great cities other than Chicago to the effect that it is incumbent upon the American Physical Society to punish Chicago by withholding favors. Chicago will not really miss us; that fact is an index of the sad mess of our cities generally: Automobile expositions and boat shows will continue to be held; the mills will grind; the abattoirs groan on.

The Students for a Democratic So-

ciety find some lack of humanity in our established order; so they strive to tear down the great city universities—seats of the few really humane, civilized activities that exist in the cities—simply because universities are a susceptible point. The persons I rebut employ similar reasoning, seeking to subtract the APS meetings from Chicago (and from southern cities according to established practice).

Should our self-image be that of judges or perhaps that of missionaries in an alien land? Study dispassionately prior to passion. The history is that socioeconomic forces have assembled, in our cities, populations and living conditions of such character that one must seriously fear for the continuance of *any* satisfactory civilized existence as we would have it.

As for my (initially) most liberal New Yorker friends, I have seen their coloration on these issues flash across the spectrum from red to blue as their personal interests become threatened, the issues less theoretical. Property values, assault on the street, quality and safety of schooling for the children. . . . I grew up in Little Rock, which they ridiculed,—macabre irony. The most violent upheavals would come later and elsewhere. Chicago is not the worst.

WALTER L. FAUST

University of Southern California

An unemployment crisis

A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* (6 Nov.) describing increasing unemployment among physicists and others due to the current tapering off of the space program illustrates what appears to me to be a growing crisis in our profession. Most of us are already aware of the main ingredients of this crisis—that employment opportunities for fresh PhD's have been declining for years, that experienced men are being laid off because of cutbacks in government programs and funding and that *chronic* unemployment is beginning to crop up among certain categories of middle-aged physicists.

In the light of all this, it is remarkable that one can read your publication month after month and find not only no mention of these problems but, on the contrary and in embarrassing imitation of the mass media, edi-

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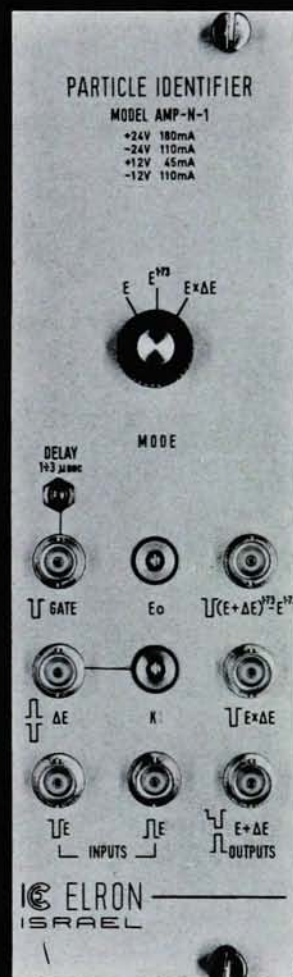
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