

editorial

Not all physics news is bad

There are radio stations, according to my morning newspaper, that have begun reporting only the bright side of things on their newscasts. They explore each breaking news event for a silver lining to emphasize and ignore what most people would regard to be the really significant points. I was appalled to learn that these new self-proclaimed "good news" stations are turning out to be huge commercial successes, just as their backers had hoped.

What if *physics today* were to adopt such a policy? I started mentally rewriting this issue's headlines—page 17, "World safe for 50 years from ice age due to dust pollution"—or on page 40, "96.1% of all US physicists still have jobs." But on more serious reflection, perhaps it does pay every once in a while to remind ourselves that things are not totally bleak.

What is some of the good news for physicists this month? Well, on page 69 we report that Congress has approved the full \$622 million the Administration had requested for NSF. Even in this year of anti-science attitudes and extreme financial pinch, neither branch of Congress felt moved to cut back on support for this basic-science agency. In fact the Senate had wanted to add another \$33 million.

As part of his new economic policy President Nixon is proposing a tax credit for industry for R&D activities. This step should help over the next few years to make industry a more important source of support for physics research.

On page 69 we are happy to report that arrangements are being worked out for a worldwide physics information system that will put the working physicist in touch with the primary literature at computer-tape speed. Physics will be the first discipline to have the advantages of such a worldwide system.

Looking at the international scene, we can note that the unfaltering Government support of the Batavia accelerator practically guarantees the US continued leadership in the frontier discipline of elementary-particle physics. At this writing, NAL's newly constructed accelerator is on the verge of realizing its rightful position as the world's highest energy accelerator, a position it will enjoy for many years to come.

Finally taking the broadest possible view it is encouraging to remember that the US has more than one third of the physicists in the world, that US physicists publish more than 50% of world's significant physics literature and are supported by a budget that, even taking into the account the recent devaluation of the dollar, is larger than all the rest of the physics budgets of the Western world combined.

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