



KISTIAKOWSKY

► to provide a ready mechanism to help physics graduate students in crisis situations.

The Fermi conference resolved that the Committee on Minorities should implement this program.

How does Spight feel about the present status of minorities in physics? "The problems are complex and it is difficult to find ways of moving forward," he told us. "There is some reluctance on the part of the APS council to take stands that are activist. We recognize that to some extent, there is support by APS, but at the same time there is a conservatism and a basic ignorance as to the severity of the overall situation." He continued, "There appears to be an attitude these days that the situation is in hand, but we on the committee don't see it that way."

Neither does Kistiakowsky, who delivered a paper on women's issues at the Washington APS meeting. Although lack of data prevented her from discussing minorities in detail at the conference, she did comment, "My impression is . . . that the progress with respect to minority physicists is substantially less than that achieved with respect to women."

Women and affirmative action. Some of the women's progress, she notes, is the result of affirmative action, which has been with us for a number of years. Kistiakowsky said, "... in spite of voluminous paperwork and phony searches for 'qualified' candidates, affirmative action is, on balance, a good and necessary process." She has followed changes in women's employment, and since the 1971 study of the APS Committee on Women in Physics, she has found only a small increase in the percentage of women on physics and astronomy faculties (2.8% in 1971-72; 3.1% in 1974-75). This growth is largely due to increased representation in a

shrinking assistant professor pool and, Kistiakowsky feels, to affirmative action. Of interest is the rise from 0.8% to 2.1% of women assistant professors or higher at the "top ten" physics PhD-granting universities. However, the numbers involved are small—240 women in all faculty positions at colleges and universities and 14 in the "top ten." The picture is somewhat better in a subset of the 240 group—institutions granting bachelor's degrees only, where 5.2% of the faculty are women.

The proportion of women unemployed or seeking employment remains high; a 1973 NRC study shows 7% of women but only 1.8% of men are in this situation. For employed women, salaries remain lower: The best situation is in industry and government (women received 9% lower pay) and the worst is in non-profit institutions (23% less).

Despite the slow progress, Kistiakowsky is encouraged by several signs, including a 15% rise, from 1972 to 1973, in the number of women receiving doctorates: "The causes for this must partly be increased confidence and career orientation of young women, as well as greater peer and professor support for their aspirations, but I am sure that it also reflects a perception of opening doors and wider opportunity due to affirmative action."

San Francisco session. Panelists discussed the specific problems that women encounter as professional physicists at a special session at the December San Francisco Conference on Magnetism and Magnetic Materials. Four of the seven panelists have experienced severe "double-job" problems—either the difficulty of finding suitable positions for both spouses in the same area, or combining home responsibilities with the rigors of professional life. The panel, organized by Jill Bonner (Brookhaven) felt that part-time working options could be helpful here. One panelist felt a lack of women graduate students and faculty to act as role-models and to give professional advice; another felt that women must continually prove themselves and are assumed incompetent until they demonstrate otherwise.

In these times of job difficulties, the effects of tight employment reach beyond the minority and women groups. But the numbers and percentages justify the further concern that Spight, Kistiakowsky and others feel for the status of these two groups in the physics profession.

—RAS

White House science adviser on the way?

A White House office of science and technology is a step closer to reality. President Ford has announced his intention to submit a bill to Congress that

would establish such an advisory apparatus—the first since the Office of Science and Technology was disbanded on 1 July 1973—as a permanent part of the executive structure.

Although details of the bill have not been released, the proposed office is expected to have a single adviser, supported by a staff of 10 to 15 and an annual budget of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Hearings on the bill began last month.

NAS announces freer access to documents

The public will have freer access to behind-the-scenes documents related to National Academy of Sciences studies. This is the result of a new policy that directs the National Research Council to develop guidelines that will make available, upon completion of a study, the minutes of the study committee and virtually all the information used by the committee during its deliberations. This includes copies of external documents used by the committee, reports from panels, subcommittees and consultants, and comments received subsequent to report publication. Classified and personnel information will, however, continue to be kept confidential by the academy.

New foundation continues work on A-bomb victims

The newly formed Radiation Effects Research Foundation has replaced the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission which monitored the medical histories of those surviving the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Japan has chartered the foundation and will share equally its \$8 million first-year costs with the US. Each country will have five members on the board of directors. Hisao Yamashita, professor of medicine at Keio University, has been named foundation president and chairman of the board of directors.

The Foundation will continue ABCC's studies of 110 000 Japanese, including biennial medical check-ups of 20 000 volunteers. Much of what is known about radiation's effects on Man has been derived from these studies. RERF will continue to make its findings available to scientists of all nations.

US participation will be supervised by the Energy Research and Development Administration and, through a contract with ERDA, the National Academy of Sciences. Japanese involvement in the studies has increased steadily since ABCC's establishment in 1947, when the facilities, funding and staff were almost entirely American. In 1973 Japan began to contribute to the program's funding.