

editorial

Physics on the airwaves

Any discussion of the outlook for Federal support of research or the need for a sound national science policy invariably reaches the conclusion that much more effort should be made to educate the public about the far reaching importance of research in our national life. A very promising approach to public education has just gotten under way at the American Institute of Physics. The Public Relations Division has prepared a series of four-and-a-half-minute radio programs that discuss topics in physical science of interest to the general public. In each instance the program uses the recorded voice of a scientist actually involved in research on the subject. The first edition of the series, which is called "Science Report," has been packaged in the form of a phonograph disc containing ten programs discussing two topics each and has been sent to 300 public radio stations throughout the 50 states plus Puerto Rico.

The topics on the first disc cover an extremely wide range of interests—from a description of a solar-power satellite and explanations of the nature and properties of lightning and cosmic rays to why karate is effective, how the knuckleball works and what makes catsup flow the way it does.

The goal of these programs is *not* to teach people physics and astronomy but simply to arouse interest in the ways physical scientists work to understand things and foster an appreciation of the broad involvement of physicists and other scientists in topics of direct interest to the man in the street.

The success of Science Report in attracting the attention of the public can be best gauged at this point by the response of the radio stations to the first edition. At least 200 stations are estimated to be broadcasting the programs at this time. 75 stations have already requested the second edition of Science Report, which will be making its appearance in about two months. AIP is considering selecting a few

hundred of the 7000 commercial radio stations to add to the mailing list for this second disc in addition to the public stations.

Our readers can help ensure the success of Science Report in two ways. First, listen for the programs and if you like them let your radio station know. Encourage your neighborhood friends to do the same. If you would like to play the records at home or for classes, copies can be obtained by sending your check (@ \$5 per record payable to AIP) to the Public Relations Division, American Institute of Physics, 335 E. 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10017. The second way physicists can help is to suggest topics for new programs. Send any ideas you have to the Public Relations Division at the above address.

One cannot help but react with pride and pleasure on hearing one of the spot programs followed by the AIP credit and special theme music. I am sure that all physicists will be eager to support this new approach by the physics community to public education and will look forward to enjoying the programs with the rest of the population for many years to come.

Harold L. Davis