

## letters

the ERA and have actively supported it. However, the recent action of the council is even more unjust than this because the APS is in reality suppressing some members of the scientific community because of their political views or the views of people in their area. It should be remembered that the APS has actively opposed such suppression by governments in other countries.

In conclusion, I would strongly urge the council of the APS to reconsider the decision not to schedule general and divisional meetings in states that have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.

ANN LAURIE CONN  
Auburn University  
Auburn, Alabama

1/19/79

I wish to express my pleasure at the pro-ERA resolution passed by the APS council this past 18 November. The shallowness of the stand taken by W. Mollering, James Potzick and Benny J. Hill in their recent letters opposing the APS participation in the boycott of unratified states astounds me. If sexist conditions in human society prevent fe-

males from studying physics and later pursuing careers in science, does this not work counter to The American Physical Society's purpose of advancing and diffusing the knowledge of physics? I find the suggestion that "the pursuit of physics should cut across all such questions" to be as dangerous to humanity as it is personally offensive to me. To become a physicist should not entail the resignation of social responsibility.

JAMES A. SLAVIN  
University of California  
Los Angeles, California

5/17/79

I am writing this letter with a deep sense of outrage at the recent vote of the APS Council to boycott states that have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. I am very much in favor of having more women in physics, but I feel even more strongly that it is not appropriate for an organization whose goal is the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics to become embroiled in this intensely political matter.

I believe that my views are shared by the vast majority of APS members, and I believe, as distasteful as it may be, that we should make our views felt in a more

concrete way, by a council recall movement if it proves to be necessary.

FRED JEFFERS  
Spin Physics, Inc.  
San Diego, California

5/18/79

I have always derived a certain degree of satisfaction from helping the APS in its pursuit of advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics through regular voluntary increases in my APS membership dues. When this support, however, suddenly becomes in effect a disguised political contribution, there is no longer any justification for its continuance.

Consequently, as long as the recently passed pro-ERA resolution remains in force, I shall refrain from making any voluntary contributions to the APS.

MILO MACHACEK  
Goleta, California

5/18/79

I was pleased to read in the January issue that the APS has passed a pro-ERA resolution. In the same issue are three letters from men decrying any attempts to pass such a resolution. None claims that there is no discrimination against women, so I conclude all three men recognize the existence of this problem. Tell me,

## Summary of APS action on ERA

The American Physical Society Panel on Public Affairs (POPA) recommended that Council pass the following resolution on the ERA:

"The Council of The American Physical Society supports the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment as one step in increasing equal opportunity for women in our society, including helping to increase the presently low proportion of women physicists. The American Physical Society will intensify its activities to assist and to encourage women to study physics and to enter physics as a career. The various elements of the Society are asked to be guided by this important goal in the future planning of meetings and activities."

An alternative resolution debated by POPA, but not endorsed by a majority, would have prohibited sectional as well as divisional and general meetings of the Society and non-ERA states. POPA also prepared the following summary of the ERA arguments both for and against the ERA resolution (names of POPA members supporting each position are listed after each statement):

### FOR THE RESOLUTION

#### Appropriateness as an action of APS:

- ▶ It could be the most effective way to make public our concern over the inequities suffered by women under existing law.
- ▶ These inequities are a legitimate APS concern in that they can hamper the careers of women in physics and limit access to the study of physics by women.
- ▶ Federal courts have held that the basis for legal relief provided by ERA is not mandated

by the constitution as it stands.

- ▶ Meetings scheduled in non-ERA states do not provide for the legitimate professional needs of those APS members who feel they cannot, in good conscience, attend such meetings.

- ▶ A significant number of scientific and educational societies now adhere to this policy.

#### Effectiveness in support of ERA:

- ▶ Many cities have recently expanded convention facilities out of a strong belief in their potential benefits, giving actions of this type a visibility out of proportion to their direct economic impact.

- ▶ Because conventions must be scheduled years in advance, actions effecting meetings even beyond the ERA deadline have immediate impact.

- ▶ The media apparently perceive a nationwide "tide of sentiment" against ERA, an impression that actions of this type may help to dispel.

- ▶ The place of physics near the top of the list of predominantly male disciplines lends added significance to any such action on our part.

#### Potential impact on APS itself:

- ▶ It is public knowledge that this issue has been put before the Council, so that a decision either way will be interpreted as a statement of policy.

- ▶ Since similar groups (especially the AAAS) have endorsed this policy, and since their small numbers reflect (in part) past discrimination, it would be appropriate to give their views special weight.

- ▶ Endorsement of this action by a heavily male scientific and educational society will

be widely interpreted as a signal of our genuine commitment to enhancing the role of women in physics.

Bernard R. Cooper, Paul Craig,  
Vernon J. Ehlers, Vera Kistiakowsky,  
Robert H. March, Thomas H. Moss,  
Members of POPA

### AGAINST THE RESOLUTION

This statement has been prepared by those POPA members who refused to support an APS boycott of states that have failed to ratify the ERA. We strongly support passage of the ERA. However, a boycott by the APS has some potentially deleterious effects on the APS itself, for reasons elaborated below. Weighing these deleterious effects on the APS itself against the comparatively small impact of a boycott by the APS, we conclude that support of an APS boycott would be inadvisable.

#### Potentially deleterious effects on the APS

- ▶ The boycott would have a seriously adverse effect on one particular segment of the APS, namely the Southeast Section, which would have no place in its region to hold its own sectional meetings. This section feels the boycott is unfair to its members. Indeed, their Chairman has written: "Should the boycott be pursued, we would be forced to see what legal relief we could obtain."

- ▶ Many APS members regard the boycott as an inappropriate APS activity which, if undertaken, would weaken their confidence in the society's leadership.

- The boycott conflicts with the stated objective of the APS (see APS Constitution, Article II), namely "the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics"

Moellering, Potzick and Hill, would you have taken no stand against the treatment of Jews in Germany or blacks in the South just because these were "divisive social issues," "unrelated issues," "emotional issues?" Some of your colleagues would have been those Jews or blacks and some of them now are women, women who are still subject to situations ranging from economic discrimination to sexual harassment.

If the citizens of a state refuse to back a simple statement of equality before the law regardless of sex (the protection extends to males as well), the APS is justified in exerting whatever financial and moral pressure it can bring to bear, small as that effort may be in the scheme of things, to effect change.

Until half of all physicists entering the profession are female, we will know that true equality has not been achieved.

GERALDINE KARPEL

El Camino College

Via Torrance, California

1/18/79

I support women's rights, oppose ERA, and oppose the APS council's recent political boycott action, which prohibits the scheduling of APS meetings in states that

have refused to ratify the ERA.

Women should have equality in many areas, including employment opportunities, opportunities to get a mortgage or start a business, educational opportunities and so on. They should continue to have superiority or privileged status in certain areas, such as exemption from military service, protection from rapists, child custody laws, divorce alimony, and so on. They should continue to have unequal treatment in certain areas which are not the proper domain for government interference, such as higher life-insurance premiums (because women live longer), lower auto insurance (if they drive more safely), higher medical insurance (for pregnancy coverage), and so on.

We should hold physics opportunities open to women but not expect large numbers to join physics, since their preferences lie in other areas. According to the American Council on Education, vol. XXVII, no. 36, women graduating from high school have higher grade-point averages in English, social studies, foreign languages and biological sciences, while men excel in math and physical sciences. The SAT scores in mathematical areas average 494 for men, 444 for women. In ten years the average has declined by 20

ics." A boycott will impede, not advance, this diffusion.

● The boycott is regarded as a purely political action, contrary to the society's long-established policy of staying aloof from politics.

● Even if the APS should not always avoid political actions, this particular boycott appears to be an interference with democratic processes within the United States; such an interference is repugnant to many APS members.

● The boycott would be divisive, in that those members opposing the boycott do not feel it is the sort of action they contemplated when they joined the APS or voted for the society's officers.

► Many members have strong sentiments on a very large variety of issues, for example, retirement age, criteria for employment and educational opportunity (the Bakke case), right to abortion, and so on. Approval of the ERA boycott would mean that supporters of other issues would feel justified in proposing action favoring their particular causes, thus laying the society open to continued diverse debate.

► There may be retaliation against the APS and its membership by boycotted states. Indeed, one state legislature has already refused to approve funds for travel to meetings of organizations participating in the ERA boycott. Before closing, we wish to clarify our willingness to support activities like those undertaken by POPA's Subcommittee on the International Freedom of Scientists, although we have refused to support the ERA boycott. As we weigh the pros and cons, we feel that our support of the dissident scientists abroad is almost their sole resource, does advance

the knowledge of physics, and is so thoroughly backed by the APS membership that there is no possibility of divisive effects. Furthermore, we feel that the action recommended to council by POPA, namely the adoption of the Toll-Gerjuoy motion, will make it plain that APS refusal to support the ERA boycott is neither a rejection of the ERA nor an unwillingness to consider seriously the views of the ERA proponents within the APS.

Elizabeth U. Baranger,

Harvey Brooks, Bernard L. Cohen,

Herman Feshbach, Richard L. Garwin,

Edward Gerjuoy,

John S. Toll, Gunther K. Wertheim

Members of POPA

The ERA resolution passed by the APS Council in November differs from the resolution recommended by POPA and reads as follows:

"Whereas the Council of The American Physical Society supports the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment as one step in increasing equal opportunity for women in our society, including helping to increase the presently low proportion of women physicists;

"Whereas The American Physical Society will intensify its activities to assist and encourage women to study physics and to enter physics as a career:

"Be it therefore resolved that until the present Equal Rights Amendment is ratified, or the present period for the ratification lapses, whichever occurs first, the APS schedule general and divisional meetings, beyond those already scheduled, only in states which have ratified (and not rescinded—should Congress permit rescission) the Equal Rights Amendment."

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