

letters

- Can conventional weapons break the addiction to nuclear war?
- Long-range solutions to the arms race
- Mechanisms for terminating nuclear war
- Civil defense
- International physics community and arms control
- Nuclear proliferation
- Survey of national attitudes on nuclear war and related questions

Please try to get your replies to me by 15 September 1982. Shortly after that date the study groups will be constituted and will begin work.

LEO SARTORI

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The members of the ad hoc committee on arms-control studies of the APS Forum on Physics and Society are: Leo Sartori, chairman (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), B. R. Cooper (West Virginia University), L. C. Hebel (Xerox Palo Alto Research Center), M. Sakitt (Brookhaven National Laboratory), A. Saperstein (Wayne State University), D. Schroeder (University of North Carolina) and P. Zimmerman (Louisiana State University).

Letters protested

This is to protest most vehemently the printing of gross politically motivated letters in such a most excellent scientific publication as *PHYSICS TODAY*. The pollution of scientific purity by such political diatribes as that of Lincoln Wolfenstein (April, page 95) is not only infuriating but most destructive, because other readers whose budgets are in danger may actually "buy" the minority arguments he advances. To call Reagan's program "anti-intellectual" is a preposterous smear tactic that has no place whatever in a scientific journal and is insulting to the great majority of physicists who realize fully that the greatest anti-intellectual threat to this nation is the mentality that believes throwing bread and circuses to the indolent masses while our security vanishes, is constructive national action.

WILLIAM B. ELMER

6/82 Andover, Massachusetts

What letters to publish?

Several readers have recently expressed their concern about the content and forum for letters in *PHYSICS TODAY*. Specifically, objections have been raised for printing letters which do not deal exclusively with "pure" physics, but rather social, moral, political and other anthropological questions.

I am happy to report that my research efforts have resulted in a fantastic breakthrough which I promise will solve this problem once and for all. However, before I reveal my solution, I would like to share with you several reasons why I think the lively rhetorical smorgasbord should continue in the letters in *PHYSICS TODAY*.

To begin with, physics is too serious a matter to be left to physicists. Ever since the nuclear genie escaped from the atomic pile bottle inside the Chicago stadium, the genie began to spin a web of fibers of social, political and moral responsibility. The price of new knowledge and discoveries is the shared responsibility for its consequences. We must listen to and share all reasonable views concerning all aspects dealing with physics. The physical condition of our planet and the mental state of our people require it.

Another reason I would like to discuss has to do with compassion and decency. There are many persecuted scientists in communist countries who look forward to reading letters to the editor as a major source of hope and strength to help them get through their daily rigors of painful desperation. Surely, if we, as scientists, have a *fundamental commitment to contribute to society*, then there can be no greater contribution we can make than to fulfill our responsibility to alleviate human suffering.

Another reason I think we ought to continue is reader interest. I am willing to bet \$100.00 with any reader (the money will go to a charity or some educational purpose) that if we took a survey on the subject of letter writing, a majority of readers would prefer the current forum.

Oh yes! And now my solution. Anyone who doesn't like a subject in a letter, don't read it. Skip it!

ALLAN KIRON

6/82 Washington, D.C.

Unemployment: a new solution

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