

of art, literature, and so on.

I propose this idea as something positive that we can do now.

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6/83

Curtailing freedom in APS?

In my forty years of membership in The American Physical Society, I have come to prize as my single most important privilege of membership the right to address my colleagues from the podium of the Society in a ten-minute contributed paper, with no substantial restriction other than time. The fact that the privilege is about to be snatched away should be of utmost concern to the membership.

Under the proposed revision of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society published in the April 1983 number of the Society's Bulletin, the exercise of the right to present a contributed paper, defined in Article XI, Section 2 of the Bylaws, as an unrestricted right, will become subject to the discretion of the executive secretary in a number of ways, most disturbingly in that he will have discretion as to whether the presentation will be oral, or in a low-visibility poster session.

The proposed language states that he will make a "reasonable effort to satisfy an expressed preference." What this "reasonable effort" will be can be gauged from the following. In mid-March, I was told by form letter that my contributed papers to the Baltimore Spring Meeting would be assigned to a poster session. Not only was this a usurpation of power in defiance of the Constitution and Bylaws as they are now written, but repeated telephone calls of protest produced no response from the executive secretary.

What is being proposed, therefore, is the legitimization of powers already improperly exercised. This new, proposed curtailment of the privileges of membership will not even come directly to a vote of the membership, since it is embodied in changes in Bylaws, and only the proposed changes in the Constitution are slated for a vote this coming September. But we are not completely without a voice. The April 1983 Bulletin tells us on page 610 that the revised Bylaws will take effect "if the revisions of the Constitution are approved by the membership."

The message is clear. If you want to retain your present most valuable privilege of membership in APS, the privilege of addressing it on a topic of your choice from the podium of the Society, the proposed changes in the Constitution will have to be defeated. None of those changes has anywhere near the consequences for the interests of the members that is embodied in the curtailment of the rights of members to present papers. By all means vote against the proposed constitutional changes this September.

The Forum on Physics and Society already has a *de facto* gag rule that effectively censors all or almost all views opposing those of the ruling junta of the Forum. The proposed change in the rules of the Society as a whole is therefore an extension of a dangerously oppressive tendency already openly at work in our Society, which now threatens to curtail the last outlet for free expression within it. A vote against the proposed constitutional changes is a must this September.

LAWRENCE CRANBERG

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5/83

APS COMMENTS: Lawrence Cranberg's letter seeks to create the impression that vital privileges of APS members are in danger of being taken away, and that the only way to prevent this catastrophe is to undo the thoughtful,

careful and conscientious work of the APS Council by defeating the proposed revision of the Constitution and bylaws of the Society. Conservatively stated, Cranberg's charges are misleading.

Let us examine the facts.

Article XI Section 2 of both the old and the new bylaws, which Cranberg regards as defining an unrestricted right to present contributed papers, has for many years stated clearly that "an individual may present *only one* contributed paper during the regular program of a meeting." All his complaints and, indeed, the proposed changes to this section of the bylaws, deal with situations involving multiple abstracts by the same first author.

The fact is that in spite of serious shortages of time and space for presentation of contributed papers at APS meetings, the Society has managed to keep intact its democratic tradition of accepting all contributed papers. In spite of its one-paper-per-author rule it has thus far accommodated multiple papers by the same first author. To do this, it has been necessary to use supplementary programs and, more recently, poster sessions. Poster sessions are excellent space savers, preferred by many authors, who regard them to be completely equivalent to podium sessions.

There have been few serious problems with respect to those authors who respect the rules and submit only one abstract. I suspect that if Cranberg had limited his contribution to the April 1983 meeting to one abstract, this letter might not have been necessary. Be that as it may, those authors who submit multiple abstracts in the future may expect these to be included in poster sessions when space is limited. The APS Council has considered this matter carefully and has delegated the responsibility to the executive secretary for achieving the most equitable possible resolution of these program problems at meetings. His authority derives legitimately from the APS Council, which is the governing body of the Society, elected by the membership.

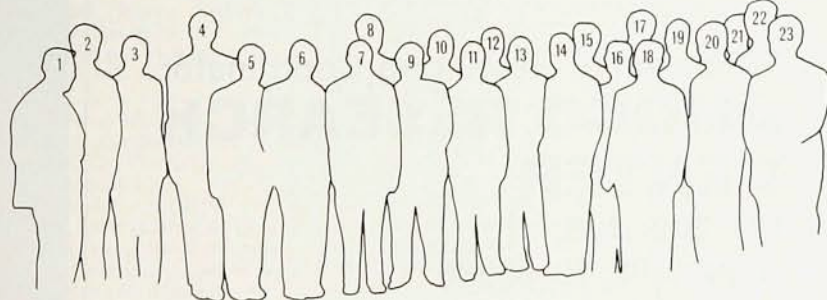
In his final paragraph, Cranberg turns his attention to the Forum on Physics and Society. By studying this paragraph the readers can decide for themselves the merit of the charges. I am not aware of any Forum gag-rule policy.

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APS Treasurer and member of the APS
Committee on Constitution and Bylaws
The American Physical Society

7/83

New York



Participants at first Shelter Island conference: 1 I. I. Rabi, 2 Linus Pauling, 3 John Van Vleck, 4 Willis Lamb, 5 Gregory Breit, 6 MacInnes, 7 Karl Darrow, 8 George Uhlenbeck, 9 Julian Schwinger, 10 Edward Teller, 11 Bruno Rossi, 12 Arnold Nordsieck, 13 John van Neumann, 14 John Wheeler, 15 Hans Bethe, 16 Robert Serber, 17 Robert Marshak, 18 Abraham Pais, 19 Robert Oppenheimer, 20 David Bohm, 21 Richard Feynman, 22 Victor Weisskopf, 23 Herman Feshbach.

Correction

June, page 101—the zip code in the address given for Harry Hull should read 33570. □