

controversy generated by the Guest Comments of Keyworth and Marshak, it has become imperative that this issue be submitted to a vote of the members of The American Physical Society, as suggested by Keyworth.

► It seems to me noteworthy that in the face of severe budget cuts, Keyworth has been able to persuade the White House to provide generous support for basic research. Frank Press also has had kind words to say about Keyworth's success within the Reagan administration. It is a pity that any scientist should use ungentlemanly language in expressing his disagreement with someone who has done much for the scientific community in these difficult times.

► Since Lincoln Wolfenstein has taken it upon himself to comment on the scientific contributions of Keyworth, I should mention that shortly before Marshak left the City University of New York, a top administrator at that institution asked me to evaluate Marshak's scientific contributions. I told him that Marshak is very influential and has published extensively, but that he has never made any really great contribution to physics.

► Jay Orear has alluded to the fact that Ronald Reagan used to be an actor. But, he has neglected to mention that the Russians have chosen as their leader the former head of their secret police. I am also wondering whether for the nation Orear would prefer the procedure followed by The American Physical Society, and thus have a nominating committee of ten individuals, who will then nominate two "worthy" candidates for the Presidency of the US.

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9/83

Let minority be heard

I agree with Richard Peppin (September, page 12). It is important that all individuals and all organizations are willing and able to take stands upon important problems—if they are involved, can make intelligent decisions and have the facts necessary to make those decisions. Certainly, the APS ought to qualify in most of these areas.

There is a terrible problem, however, on how the APS is handling this need and obligation to speak out. (This problem is obvious, as one can see from the nature of the letters to the editors being received.) This problem existed with the APS position on the ERA, on creationism, on women and now on the nuclear problem. (It even exists in many areas of physics, but this would only confuse the present issue.) It always seems okay to those who are on

the same side as APS, and it always seems wrong to those who are on the opposite side. This is the problem! APS has not learned how to be fair to those who might be on the opposite side.

What does it take to be fair? All it really takes is to be kind and to let that kindness show. Be more than fair. Seek their opinion as to what might be fair in their eyes, and go even one step beyond. There is nothing lost by such acts. If you are right, it actually makes your own position stronger.

As a minimum, voting ought to be required on every formal position. If it is important enough for APS to take a stand, then it is important enough for everyone to have a say in it. Of course, voting can be made unfair by the preparations allowed for the voting and on how the questions are worded. Again, the real solution is to show great kindness. Another consideration is to always publish every letter to the editors. Would this really be impossible? How terrible it is to have one in power make the decision as to when and where the minority is heard. If you really are going to take positions, then you must be responsible. The APS has not been responsible and will never be responsible until the feelings of the minority are properly heard and considered.

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I strongly support the letter of Richard Peppin on controversial issues. If The American Physical Society states a stand on these issues it should be clearly stated that it is by poll of the membership, the preferable way, or by majority of the council, or whatever group decided on the stand.

Imagine the response of Orear and others if the Society had come out in full support of President Reagan and George Keyworth.

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9/83

Materials Research Society

The President-elect of APS, Mildred Dresselhaus, has issued a very cordial welcome to the Materials Research Society as a new affiliate of AIP (October, page 144). She has correctly identified many of the possible advantages to such new societies and to AIP. Permit me, however, as a founder of MRS to point to some possible dangers of such affiliations to the health of American sciences and technology. It is to the great credit of the physics community that, as Fred Seitz put it,

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