

Council approves modest enlargement of headquarters staff

From its early days The American Physical Society has operated according to the philosophy that it would be managed best by active physicists. Its presidents and other officers were (and are) dedicated volunteers, as were (and are) committee chairpersons and members. Even as the Society grew, its administrative "bureaucracy" at its headquarters was maintained at the lowest possible level. One happy result of this frugality was exceptionally low membership dues. A troublesome side effect has been imperfect efficiency in handling the myriad of requests that arrive at APS headquarters every day.

In recent years the depth and scope of APS activities has increased dramatically. There are now many more projects, committees, prizes, groups and so on than ever before. Moreover, the Society's one-year APS Presidents, who formerly relied on special assistants located at their home sites to help them discharge their APS duties, have begun to look to the APS headquarters for daily assistance.

In recognition of all these trends, the APS Council, during its January 1984 meeting in San Antonio, Texas, authorized a modest enlargement of the headquarters staff. Although the Council still feels it desirable to rely on the innovativeness and dedication of volunteers drawn from the ranks of professional physicists to manage the Society, it recognizes that a larger headquarters staff has become necessary. This dichotomy between professionalism and bureaucracy has been recognized by a number of APS past presidents. Norman F. Ramsey, the 1978 APS President, stated in his retiring address (PHYSICS TODAY, April 1979, page 25), "I am convinced not only that such voluntary management is the least costly but also that it makes the Society most responsive to the needs and desires of its members." The following year, retiring APS President Lewis M. Branscomb wrote (PHYSICS TODAY, April 1979, page 24) "...if there are no members who want something badly enough to do it themselves, perhaps the thing is not worth doing."

During its early years, the APS headquarters site was indistinguish-

able from a Columbia University professor's office. Headquarters was a voluntary one-professional operation, augmented by whatever administrative assistance could be provided by a part-time secretary. The motivation behind this activity was dedication to the Society's principles. When the American Institute of Physics was formed in 1931, its charter was very broad and remarkably similar to that of APS. Originally, AIP concentrated on servicing its member societies (APS

and its sister societies), principally by printing and distributing physics journals. AIP developed a large administrative staff, and its ability to render a variety of services at cost relieved the individual societies of the necessity to enlarge their own bureaucracies. Nevertheless, the pressures to grow a self-sufficient APS headquarters organization increased. These pressures were responsible for Council's San Antonio decision to increase the size of the APS headquarters.

Successor to Burton as APS treasurer

Joseph A. Burton has been APS Treasurer for the past fifteen years and will reach the age of 70 in August 1984. He has requested that the APS Council grant him retirement from the position of Treasurer at an early appropriate date following the choice of his successor. At the 29 January meeting of Council it was agreed that the position of Treasurer might best be filled by an active, practicing physicist, with previous managerial experience, who would serve as Treasurer on a part-time basis. APS President Mildred Dresselhaus has appointed a search committee to find such a successor for Burton. Anyone who wishes to propose a physicist to serve as treasurer should contact the Search Committee Chairman, Morrel H. Cohen, Exxon Research and Engineering Co., P.O. Box 45, Linden, New Jersey 07036.



BURTON

Industrial task force is formed

APS Council, at its November 1983 meeting, expressed concern over data that show that young APS members pursuing certain career paths, particularly those associated with industrial R&D organizations, tend to drop their APS memberships after a relatively short time, and to join other professional societies. In an effort to determine why APS apparently fails to satisfy the

technical needs of an important segment of its membership, Council established a special task force under the chairmanship of E. C. McIrvine, Xerox Corporation, P.O. Box 1600, Stamford, Connecticut 06904, to investigate the problem and propose a solution. Readers are encouraged to provide input bearing on this complex problem to McIrvine. □