

letters

three of them who were troubled by their work," then maybe I have been too kind.

I would like to turn briefly away from these letters and address the closer set of criticisms that I received from my colleagues when I gave this talk several months ago. While I cannot fully represent their views, the main thrust was as follows: Given that there are serious worries about the nuclear arms race, still it is best for physicists to continue doing what they have been doing for decades past; the country will need well-trained people and some of these may be able to have a constructive influence on the government, to help avoid ill-conceived weapons programs and to devise good arms-control proposals.

My own opinion is that if these pollyanna views were ever valid in the past, the success of the Reagan reelection campaign has made them clearly obsolete. Serious arms control is not on the national agenda, but a reckless arms buildup is given top priority. This is not a time for complacency or escapism, when the terrible danger faces us all. All physicists—especially those in academic positions, to whom my piece was primarily addressed—have a large responsibility in this present struggle between the runaway militarism of our present government and the diffuse movement for peace and nuclear sanity. I wish I would hear from more of you.

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11/84

Faculty unions

I found myself partially agreeing with both sides in the debate of whether faculty unionization has a good or bad net influence on university quality. Having recently departed from the faculty of a unionized university, my conclusion is that it depends on the institution and on the forces that control it. The faculty at my university had become unionized before my arrival, and therefore I cannot evaluate the appropriateness of that decision based on the existing conditions. Apparently the faculty felt that it was losing its voice in university affairs and that the usual channels, such as the faculty senate, were insufficient. I found this very credible because, during my five years there, the state government was seriously eroding the university budget while the university administration and board of regents were acting more as an arm of the government than as independent representatives of university interests. It was left to the faculty,

through the union, to stand up for quality in higher education—meaning especially, but not solely, improved faculty salaries. The union was the only faculty organization whose voice was meaningful, because only it had any meaningful power to back up its statements.

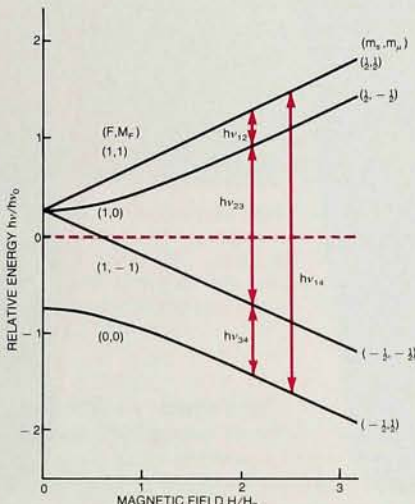
It is true, however, that the union was more concerned with holding the line for the general faculty than in rewarding or promoting the more productive professors or academic programs. It was indeed a force for mediocrity, as detractors of unions have claimed. However, mediocrity seemed to be a praiseworthy goal in the face of actions by the administration and state government. The lesson I took from the experience was that faculty unions are inappropriate in a well-run university in which the governing powers understand and are sympathetic to the goals of higher education and research. At universities where mediocrity is a standard below which the faculty is trying not to fall, unions certainly can be a force for good.

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Corrections

December, page 44—In the article entitled "Muon spin relaxation," by Robert H. Heffner and Donald D. Fleming, figure 6 was printed incorrectly; the correct diagram appears below.



January, page 9—In the Guest Comment "Remembering Peter Debye in Munich," by Paul P. Ewald, the last sentence in the second paragraph of the second column should read: Besides, the long summer vacation came, and this was the end of my endeavor.

page 124—In Donald Lyons's letter on degeneracy in perturbation, the second summation should also be performed over all t greater than g .

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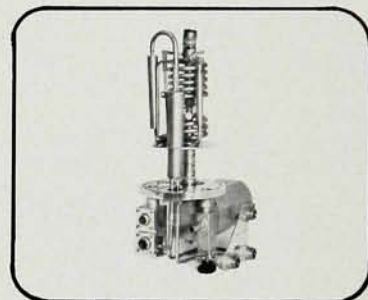
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