IUPAP elects officers, creates Commission on Astrophysics

The International Union of Pure and Applied Physics has chosen new officers and commission members for the years 1985–87, established a new commission—bringing the total number to 19—and welcomed the People's Republic of China as a full member country. Meeting in Trieste last October, the IUPAP General Assembly voted to establish a new Commission on Astrophysics, despite objections from people connected with the Cosmic Physics Commission. The General Assembly elected John Larkin Kerwin as first vice-president for 1985–87. Meanwhile, D. Allan Bromley has taken office as president for the current three-year term.

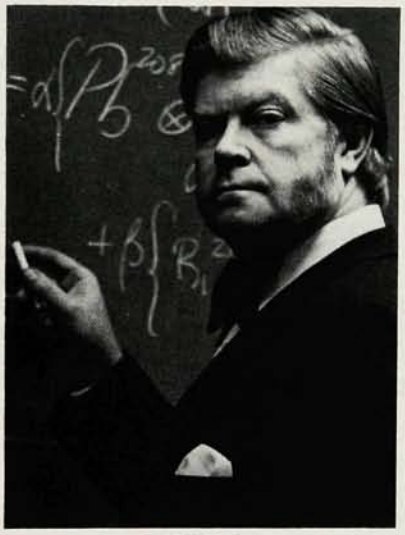
Bromley, a nuclear physicist, has been a professor at Yale since 1961 and director of the A. W. Wright Nuclear

IUPAP president Bromley worries about "isolation" of US physicists

In an interview with PHYSICS TODAY, Bromley expressed grave concern about what he sees as a growing tendency for the United States to isolate itself from the world's physics community. Bromley believes that the United States still has the strongest physics enterprise overall; but at a time when other countries are making major strides in particular subfields, he feels that US physicists should be trying all the harder to stay in close touch, and instead, "unfortunately, just the opposite is happening." Bromley says that it is harder now for Americans to get travel money to go to Europe than it is for Europeans in several countries to come to the United States. As a result, he observes, US physics is increasingly under-represented at the international conferences where lifelong professional relationships are established and where physicists first become aware of frontier developments.

US–European exchanges have fallen dramatically, Bromley says, especially at the postdoc level. One reason for the decline is a greater concern on the part of postdocs as to whether they will be in the running for the best jobs in their home countries if they are applying from the opposite side of the Atlantic, Bromley thinks. Also, Bromley believes that industry and universities in Europe as well as the United States no longer put as high value on foreign study and work experience as they did in the years immediately after World War II. A third factor, in Bromley's view, is a reversal of US and European salary expectations. Fifteen years ago, he says, when Europeans came to the United States with funding from their home countries, it usually was necessary for the host institution to augment their pay. Now the situation is just the opposite, Bromley observes.

The issues raised by the US withdrawal from UNESCO are of especially grave concern now that the Reagan administration has proposed to cut funding for many of



BROMLEY

the international programs that are connected with UNESCO (see page 59). Bromley thinks the great majority of US scientists agree that there were good reasons for the US withdrawal, but he feels that Americans now are somewhat vulnerable, and he hopes that a basis will be found for an early US return to the organization. Also, "being outside UNESCO, we limit the force of our argument for change," he says. Bromley is especially concerned that the United States find a way, as long as it is outside UNESCO, to continue support for the International Council of Scientific Unions, which has developed what he sees as a particularly valuable statement on the free circulation of scientists, and methods of assuring its effective implementation, both in and between countries. In addition, of course, ICSU manages many major international scientific programs, in which the United States traditionally has been a very active partner—the International Geological Correlation Program, the United Nations Environmental Program, the Committee on Water Research, the International Biosciences Network, and so on.

Bromley is hopeful that multilateral and bilateral arrangements will be developed, especially with Germany, to help reverse the decline in exchanges. Bromley does not believe that IUPAP, with a budget of around $100 000 and a mission that is geared, at least at present, primarily to the organization of international conferences, can do a very great deal to secure more travel money or better salaries for US physicists. But he expects IUPAP will do what it can to stimulate the development of bilateral exchange programs.

Bromley takes special note of the work done by IUPAP's Commission on Education in Physics, which he says "has been very successful in promoting international communication about physics education and in developing materials for use in physics education." Bromley also alludes to important work done by the Commission on Publications, which is trying to figure out "how we are to handle the ever-growing flood of physics data," and the work of the Commission on Physics for Development.

As IUPAP president, Bromley would like to focus more on the "applied" part of the name. He is considering the establishment of closer contacts with industrial physicists and industrial organizations. He considers the AIP Corporate Associates program as a very successful model that would be worthy of emulation at the international level.

Later this year, the IUPAP Executive Committee is scheduled to consider whether to establish new international commissions on applied topics or whether to try to establish substantially greater applied activity and presence in the existing subdisciplinary commissions. Bromley would welcome suggestions from any member of the international physics community. —WS

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