

**MARK W. ZEMANSKY**, president of the Association of Physics Teachers, is a professor of physics at the City College of New York.



**WILLIAM S. WEBB**, vice president of the Association of Physics Teachers, is head of the department of physics at the University of Kentucky.



**R. F. PATON**, secretary of the Association of Physics Teachers, is associate professor of physics at the University of Illinois.



**PAUL E. KLOPSTEG**, treasurer of the Association of Physics Teachers, is director of research at the Technological Institute of Northwestern University.



**THOMAS H. OSGOOD**, editor of the *American Journal of Physics* for the Association of Physics Teachers, heads the department of physics and astronomy at Michigan State College.



**D**URING the twenty-one years that have passed since the American Association of Physics Teachers was first organized, there has been a constantly increasing demand for the services of physicists qualified to do research in university, government, and industrial laboratories, and thus a corresponding increase in the need for qualified teachers of physics to train students. The importance of high teaching standards in the physics field as a basic condition for the training of physicists of the calibre required in modern research has nowhere been recognized more fully than within the physics teachers' own professional organization.

The youngest of the Founder Societies of the American Institute of Physics, the American Association of Physics Teachers was formed on December 29, 1930, in Cleveland, Ohio, during the course of a luncheon meeting attended by twenty-two physicists who had been called together by Paul E. Klopsteg, then of the Central Scientific Company, and by William S. Webb of the University of Kentucky. Officers were elected at the time of this meeting to serve a one-year term, and shortly thereafter a provisional constitution and by-laws were adopted. Although several flourishing professional societies of physicists already existed when the new association was founded, all were concerned primarily with the specialized problems of research rather than with the more general problems encountered in the teaching of physics. It was felt, therefore, that an association devoted particularly to advancing the art of physics teaching could perform a service for the whole of the physics profession by fulfilling a need not satisfied by any of the existing scientific societies.

The Association's membership has from the beginning been drawn almost entirely from the memberships of the other professional physics societies, and this overlapping quality has led inevitably to close relationships between the Association and these other organizations. Although it did not formally participate in the initial organization of the American Institute of Physics in 1931, the Association was invited early in the following year to become one of the five Founder Societies of the Institute. The American Association of Physics Teachers has played an active part in the work of the Institute of Physics, and about one-fifth of the physicists belonging to the AIP are members of the Association. The present membership of the Association has reached a total of approximately thirty-one hundred.

# the American Association of PHYSICS TEACHERS

Membership in the Association is available to anyone who is a teacher of physics in an institution of college grade, whose interest in education is primarily in physics of college and university grade, and to such others who may, in the opinion of the Association's executive committee, contribute materially through Membership to the advancement of physics teaching. Since 1933, Membership has been open to secondary school teachers who have professional qualifications equivalent to those required by teachers of college physics. In 1938, by the creation of a Junior Membership category, the Association made it possible for college students to participate in the activities of the organization. Junior Membership is open to any college or university student whose major interest is physics. A third category provides for the election, from time to time, of Honorary Members. Only Members are permitted to vote and to hold office.

As provided in its by-laws, the Association holds an Annual Meeting, usually in the winter, and other general meetings during the year are arranged by the executive committee. Regional Chapters, of which there are now twelve, arrange and hold their own meetings. The regional sections of the American Association of Physics Teachers are the Western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Oregon, Chicago, Chesapeake, Indiana, Colorado and Wyoming, Illinois, Philadelphia, Southern California, Wisconsin, and Appalachian Chapters.

The official journal of the Association is the *American Journal of Physics*, edited by Thomas H. Osgood, dean of science at Michigan State College, and is published for the Association (except during June, July, and August) by the American Institute of Physics. In 1932, at a meeting held in Atlantic City, the executive committee was of the opinion that early publication of a journal was essential to the success of the Association. Duane Roller, then on the faculty of the University of Oklahoma, was named editor of the proposed journal. The first issue of *The American Physics Teacher* appeared in 1933 and was originally a quarterly publication. Early in 1940 its name was changed to the *American Journal of Physics*. The journal is intended to provide material for improving all aspects of physics education, including the instruction of physics majors and of those students who study physics as part of a liberal arts curriculum. Its published material is intended generally

to promote a better understanding of the role of physics as an integral part of modern culture.

One of the chief contributions made to the teaching profession by the American Association of Physics Teachers has been the work of its numerous committees. These have for the most part been established to investigate specialized aspects of physics education, or of its relationship with other areas in education or society generally; in some cases, however, committees have been established jointly with other organizations in order to make cooperative studies in regions of mutual interest, an example being the joint committee of the AAPT and of the American Standards Association which was established in 1937 to consider letter symbols for physics. A large number of the committees have published the results of their studies in the form of reports which have appeared in the *American Journal of Physics*. The Association has cooperated closely with government agencies and with other scientific organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society of Electrical Engineers, the American Council on Education, and the National Science Teachers Association. A report on the readjustments of physics teaching to the needs of wartime was prepared by one of the Association's special committees for the U. S. Office of Education during World War II.

Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the American Association of Physics Teachers has been able to make an annual award for notable contributions to the teaching of physics. A posthumous presentation of the first award was made in 1936 to the late W. S. Franklin of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The award was in the form of bronze memorial tablets placed in the physics laboratories of Lehigh University and MIT. In later years the annual award has consisted of a medal, known as the Oersted Medal of the American Association of Physics Teachers, and a certificate of award. The Oersted Medal for 1950 was presented to the late John W. Hornbeck, head of the Kalamazoo College physics department, during the Association's meeting in New York City last February.

Communications to the Society should be addressed to the Secretary, Professor R. F. Paton, Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.