save basic research from fading into oblivion.

MIKLOS SZILAGYI
CHRISTOPHER ZELL
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

9/90

April Cartoon: Joking at Women's Expense?

I am writing in immediate response to your April issue. I was deeply offended by the cartoon on page 48, which very obviously discriminates against women. It depicts a woman and an older man, both dressed in scientific garb, standing beside a chalkboard with mathematical equations written on it. The caption had the woman saying to the man, "It's an excellent proof, but it lacks warmth and feeling."

I am a female physics undergraduate student at Virginia Tech. I subscribe to PHYSICS TODAY through my university's chapter of the Society of Physics Students, of which I am a board member. I am continually having to prove myself academically and intellectually to the overwhelmingly male students around me, since, in general, I am viewed less seriously. I am disgusted at how few women study physics and am outraged by the fact that PHYSICS TODAY magazine is in no way helping to encourage women to pursue this field. In my viewpoint the cartoon is making fun of women by taking the same position that so many male scientists take: that women are emotionally minded and mathematically inferior. The lack of women in science is a major issue in this country, and I feel that magazines such as yours should motivate women to study physics rather than discourage them.

BONNIE JOHNSON
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia

4/90

I discovered an ironic juxtaposition in the April issue. On page 66 Jean Kumagai reviewed an AIP report entitled "Who Takes Science?" The report points out that social barriers appear to keep female high school students from enrolling in physics courses. A cartoon by Sidney Harris on page 48 shows a female, presumably a scientist, contemplating an equation on a blackboard and complaining that "It's an excellent proof, but it lacks warmth and feeling." The irony lies of course in the fact that this cartoon is symptomatic of the social barriers bemoaned in the report.

Please don't misunderstand me: I enjoy the cartoons by Harris, and find them very useful in explaining science to nonscientists. But if we portray females as emphasizing "warmth and feeling" over scientific quality, then we should not be surprised when they opt out of "cold and unfeeling" physics. My daughter is representative of the consequence: She is not studying physics—instead she is majoring in biology in order to help save the dolphins.

DIETRICH SCHROEER
University of North Carolina
4/90 *at Chapel Hill*

HARRIS REPLIES: It's certainly easy to criticize the part of a cartoon one doesn't want to like while overlooking the part one agrees with. Apparently some people are unhappy about the fact that the woman scientist in the cartoon can evaluate an equation and also see hidden meanings in it (that's supposed to be the funny part), while they prefer to ignore the fact that the man depicted is apparently unsure of his work and has asked her opinion. Can you imagine if the man were talking to the woman? There would be an equally tiny uproar stating that women not only are highly competent in math but have greater pyschological insight than men do, yet men are always depicted as the insightful ones in a cartoon.

Some months ago a cartoon of mine in these pages (April 1989, page 11) showed one mathematician punching another while saying: "You want proof? I'll give you proof!" Where are the letters saying that this was a disgrace to mathematicians, since they never settle disputes with punches to the nose? They sure don't, but in cartoons they do. Was that cartoon funny? Would it be funny regardless of the sex of the participants? Would it be funny if they were shown having some racial or religious characteristics? Should the readers of magazines vote to select the safest character depictions in cartoons?

SIDNEY HARRIS
7/90 *New Haven, Connecticut*

Soviet Jewry's Plight Under *Perestroika*

I applaud PHYSICS TODAY's efforts (March 1990, page 52) to highlight the plight of Soviet Jews within the jaws of *perestroika*. Unfortunately, there is a long history of xenophobia within Eastern Europe, and during times of political and economic turmoil anti-Semitism raises its ugly head. Though there are never two periods of history that are the same, the template of religious bigotry remains intact, even after the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel. The rise in neo-Nazism and ultranationalism across Eastern Europe not only is frightening but also is a significant setback for the integration of Europe and the development of trans-European governance. Ethnic and racial bigotry is at odds with the growing political pluralism in Eastern Europe.

I fear that Soviet Jews will be adrift in a hostile and changing Eastern Europe. Western countries have not opened their doors to the persecuted; unfortunately the United States has recently lowered quotas on emigration from "liberalized" Eastern Europe. Fortunately, Israel exists and is a haven for Jews. Without Israel, Jews would have no "home" and would be adrift like the ship St. Louis, which wandered the world in 1939 without finding a safe harbor, and eventually returned its passengers to Nazi Germany and a certain death. However, it is not prudent to ignore the political ramifications of settling immigrants on the West Bank, as these may further restrict the movement of Jews from the Soviet Union.

PHYSICS TODAY has given a clarion call to the scientific community to take notice of rising ethnic enmity in the Soviet Union. I hope that as individuals, as scientists and as a scientific community we act on this information by demanding that ethnic and racial diversity be held sacred on both sides of the crumbling iron curtain.

STEVEN L. FORMAN
University of Colorado
4/90 *at Boulder*

Help Erin Find a Place in CERN

In the May 1990 issue (page 74) it is claimed that if Finland joins CERN, this will make "all the nations normally considered part of Western Europe part of CERN." I would like to point out that the Republic of Ireland is not a member state of CERN and has not yet applied to join, although the small high-energy physics community in this country has prepared a proposal to the government stating that Ireland should apply to join and thereby complete the Western European composition of CERN.

Physicists with Irish connections or backgrounds who wish to support us in this endeavor can do so by writing to the Prime Minister or the Minister of Science, Dail Eireann, Leinster House, Dublin, or to me.

HENRY W. K. HOPKINS
Committee for Irish Membership of CERN
Department of Physics
Dublin Institute of Technology
Kevin Street College
Kevin Street
7/90 *Dublin 8, Ireland*

Argentina: Female Physicists, Fiscal Fix

During May and June 1990 I spent four weeks visiting the department of physics at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

There has been considerable talk in the US regarding the lamentable proportion of women in science. Although I could get data on the physics department only, it was apparent that the Argentinians have inducted large numbers of women into scientific professions. Of the 196 physics faculty members at UBA, no less than 67 are female. Of these, 10 hold professorial appointments, 43 are instructors, and 14 are undergraduate instructors. Up to 1989, the physics department had granted 1127 *Licenciatura* degrees (roughly equivalent to our MS), 460 of them to women.

What enables this level of female accomplishment? The answer I was given: day care. Day care was provided on the campus, with charges based on the number of hours per week, the number of children and the mother's salary. US colleagues interested in obtaining more information may contact Licenciada Maria Teresa Garea, Departamento de Física, Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales, Ciudad Universitaria, Pabellón 1, 1428 Buenos Aires.

Another interesting observation I made is that in spite of Herculean burdens, the faculty members are generally devoted to their educational and research activities. Government support is meager; industrial support is almost nonexistent. (To clarify the role of the present civilian government, I must add that military spending this year is about 0.69% of the GNP.) The monthly salary of a full professor, US $180–200, is probably enough to provide housing and food for a family of five, but not adequate clothing. The physics library of UBA, the largest institution in the country,