

APS ISSUES STATEMENTS ON SSC, SPACE STATION AND SOVIET ANTI-SEMITISM

Against the backdrop of an October 1990 Federal budget agreement that bars the shifting of government funds among domestic, foreign and defense programs, the council of The American Physical Society approved at its January meeting two resolutions concerning funding for the Superconducting Super Collider and the proposed manned space station. In the SSC statement, the council concludes that while the facility should be built in a timely fashion, "the funding required to achieve this goal must not be at the expense of the broadly based scientific research program of the

US." The statement on the space station questions claims that NASA has made about its potential contributions to the physical sciences, which the agency has used as a justification for this enormously expensive project.

The council also passed a third resolution, which condemns anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. (For the full texts of these statements, see the accompanying box.)

The statements on the SSC and the space station represent "the first time APS has come to grips with the issue of prioritization of Federal support for physics research," says APS Execu-

tive Secretary N. Richard Werthamer. "In much of the past, this wasn't necessary, because Federal support was growing rapidly. The most critical element driving the council to this statement was the budget agreement."

The SSC statement is significant in that it represents "the first time the Physics Planning Committee has come out with a resolution that really responds to its charge, to prepare a balanced plan for physics," says Eugen Merzbacher, chair of the committee and a past president of APS.

In developing the SSC statement,

Statements from The American Physical Society

The following statements were passed by the council of The American Physical Society at its meeting in January.

On the SSC

To assure that the United States can educate an adequate supply of professional scientists and to provide the scientific underpinnings for a sound technological foundation, it is imperative that scientific research be broadly based. The rising cost of front-line research and the creation of promising new fields of physics has, during the last decade, rendered inadequate the support for broadly based physics research. Reversing this trend and strengthening the support for individual investigators must have the highest priority; it is essential to the scientific and technological future of the nation.

A vigorous research program is comprised of both a broad base and major research facilities, like the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). The SSC will probe fundamental questions about the nature of matter and allow the US to remain at the forefront of elementary-particle physics. The SSC should be built in a timely fashion; but the funding required to achieve this goal must not be at the expense of the broadly based scientific research program of the US.

On the Manned Space Station

The council of The American Physical Society is concerned that there remains widespread public and governmental misunderstanding of the justification for the manned space station. After a review of the experimental program proposed for the space station, the council is

issuing the following statement:

It is the view of the council of The American Physical Society that scientific justification is lacking for a permanently manned space station in Earth orbit. We are concerned that the potential contributions of a manned space station to the physical sciences have been greatly overstated and that many of the scientific objectives currently planned for the space station could be accomplished more effectively and at a much lower cost on Earth, on unmanned robotic platforms or on the shuttle.

The United States needs a vigorous space science program, but such a program can be implemented for the foreseeable future without the proposed manned space station.

On Anti-Semitism in the USSR

The council of The American Physical Society expresses its deep concern over the apparent upsurge of anti-Semitism in the USSR, and in particular its impact on the freedom of scientists to pursue their work in the Soviet Union. Information received from sources and colleagues within the USSR indicates that Jewish scientists and Jews in general are being targeted, intimidated and beaten by members of reactionary organizations.

▷ APS condemns harassment of scientists based on their religious beliefs or ethnic origins;

▷ We call upon the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the scientific societies within the USSR to join us in condemning such acts; and

▷ We ask that the governments of the Soviet Union and the republics take steps to protect all their citizens from harassment and persecution based on religious beliefs or ethnic origins.