

ed to about 0.03 of CO<sub>2</sub>'s rate of increase. This is not to say that we should ignore the rising level of CO<sub>2</sub>. It is, however, pretty clear that the real greenhouse effect is less torrid than the one the dominant culture promotes.

## Reference

1. Natl. Acad. Sci., *Changing Climate: Report of the Carbon Dioxide Assessment Committee*, Natl. Acad. P., Washington, D. C. (1983).

JOCELYN TOMKIN  
3/92 University of Texas, Austin

## Naysaying the Neutron Scattering Society

The news story announcing the establishment of the Neutron Scattering Society of America (June, page 73) raises a number of questions, and further information furnished on request by members of the NSSA steering committee raises more questions.

The first question concerns the significance of the words "neutron scattering." The information furnished thus far indicates that the interests of the steering committee are confined to the use of coherent neutron scattering techniques as a tool of materials studies, and that therefore the neutron scattering that will be of interest is confined to the lowest end of the neutron energy spectrum. The neutron energy spectrum above that lowest end, often referred to as fast-neutron physics, falls outside the announced interests of NSSA. "Coherent Neutron Scattering Society of America" or "American Society for Neutron Diffraction Studies" would thus be a more accurate name.

A second question concerns the impact that the new society might have on neutron studies generally and on physics generally. Will it encourage formation of other spin-off groups promoting their special interests—for example, an American Society for Fast-Neutron Physics? Will the science of physics as a whole be enriched, or will we be witnessing a further stage in what Jack Wilson has called "the Balkanization of physics,"<sup>1</sup> with more intensive concentration on relatively narrow specialties and subspecialties?

A third question concerns what the NSSA founders refer to as the society's "national" perspective. This seems to run counter to the emergence of international physics as a forum of The American Physical Society.

A fourth question concerns the role of NSSA as a lobbying agency seeking

to influence Congressional funding in favor of its special interests, and the further politicalization of the American scientific community.

These questions should concern not just prospective members of NSSA but all members of The American Physical Society. As one who strongly opposed the APS constitutional changes of 1966 (see my letter in PHYSICS TODAY, September 1966, page 10), which changed the society from one unified in the pursuit of physics as an integrated discipline to a federation of specialists, NSSA seems to me to be another step in the wrong direction. I urge that NSSA reconsider not only its name but its organizational form and apply to APS for admission as a topical group. It also should recognize that the tax-exempt status of APS bars it from political activity, and that includes lobbying Congress for special funds.

## Reference

1. AAPT Announcer 19(1), 20 (1989).

LAWRENCE CRANBERG  
6/92 Austin, Texas

THE SECRETARY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NEUTRON SCATTERING SOCIETY OF AMERICA REPLY: At its inaugural meeting in January 1992, NSSA identified the following goals:

- ▷ To identify and bring together the neutron scattering community of the US
- ▷ To identify the needs of the neutron scattering community, including future requirements for instrumentation and sources, and to represent those needs to the neutron facilities and funding agencies
- ▷ To stimulate, promote and broaden the use of neutron scattering in science and technology
- ▷ To carry out educational activities that support the above goals.

Fundamentally, the scientists and engineers who use neutron scattering in their research come from a wide range of fields, from structural biology through polymer films to weld testing in engineering practice. Indeed, the group stretches well beyond physics, incorporating, for example, pharmacology, biology, chemistry and engineering. The aim of NSSA is to bring this diverse group together based on the common use of neutron scattering as a research tool. It is not at all to promote the Balkanization of physics.

NSSA members are primarily interested in thermal-neutron scattering because thermal neutrons have the same wavelength and energy, approximately, as matter at room

temperature. This makes thermal neutrons ideal for studying a wide range of materials. Lawrence Cranberg is apparently interested in fast-neutron scattering. Fast-neutron scattering is certainly interesting, and we hope that Cranberg will join NSSA and develop this field.

By a "national" perspective we meant that we hope to include everyone in the country who uses neutron scattering. Certainly, in terms of both science and the use of facilities, NSSA takes an international perspective.

NSSA has no plans to be a lobbying agency, either to Congress or to other political bodies. However, under the second goal above, we do intend to identify the needs of the neutron scattering community and represent these to national laboratories and funding agencies when appropriate. As an example, NSSA recently presented a brief on behalf of the community to a panel on neutron sources set up by the basic energy sciences advisory committee of the Department of Energy. The brief was based on solicited views from members.

Finally, we would enjoy a close relationship with The American Physical Society, but it does not seem appropriate for us to become a topical group of APS.

JILL TREWHELLA  
Secretary, NSSA  
Los Alamos National Laboratory  
Los Alamos, New Mexico  
HENRY R. GLYDE  
Chairman, NSSA  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware

9/92

## Westerners Should Go to China Meetings

With reference to the news story "Beijing Meeting Remains on Track—amid Continued Concern" (May 1992, page 55), I would like to give my opinion, as a Chinese national who has been studying and working in the US, on whether Western scientists should go to conferences in China. I think that as long as the conferences do not carry strong political overtones, Western scientists should participate in them as they normally would, for two reasons.

First, unlike the Soviet scientist-dissidents who called for boycotts by Western scientists as a gesture of disapproval of human rights conditions in the Soviet Union, most scientists in China welcome the relatively rare opportunities to interact with their foreign counterparts at conferences. True, there are Chinese scien-

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