

the Chinese Physical Society, guarantee free access to the conference for all bona fide scientists wishing to attend as well as free entry to and exit from China." I hope that these statements will clear up some of the concerns caused by the news report in *PHYSICS TODAY*.

During the past year a number of international conferences sponsored by various international organizations and by CAST and its affiliated societies have taken place in China. These conferences have been very successful. The number of participants from the US and Europe, including Chinese students now living abroad, has increased markedly compared with 1989 and 1990. All these successes are due to the efforts of CAST and Chinese local organizing committees, which made sure that the ICSU and IUPAP policies as specified in the 1990 general report of IUPAP were fully honored and followed.

For details on obtaining travel documents for ICPS-21 please contact Lily Wang, Meeting Manager, ICPS-21/crcs, Friendship Hotel, Beijing 100086, China; fax 086-1-8316091. We shall make all possible efforts to ensure that the visits to China of all participants will be fruitful and successful.

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2/92

Scientists' Postal Paucity

Jerry Fields (October, page 150) wrote about a campaign to have the 100th anniversary of the birth of Arthur Compton honored on a US postage stamp. Compton's birth is certainly a worthy subject, and letters to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Board are justified. I am mailing my letter today.

It is, however, very unlikely that the board will honor Compton or any other American scientist. Scientists and science do not appear to be "politically correct" subjects for stamps. As associate editor of *Astrofax*, a newsletter on stamps issued by the Astronomy Study Unit of the American Topical Association, I see many stamps honoring astronomers and astronomy, but they are all issued by foreign nations. One impressive set was the recent issue of four stamps honoring England's great observatories. Only one American observatory has ever appeared on a US stamp—Palomar in 1948, on a stamp issued for political purposes.

Working from memory, I can count only three astronomers who have ever appeared on a US stamp. Benjamin Banneker, surveyor of the District of Columbia and almanac maker, appeared on a 1980 stamp in the black heritage series. Samuel P. Langley was honored on a 1988 stamp. Langley worked primarily on solar research during 20 years at Allegheny Observatory, where he was director. He invented the bolometer. He became secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in 1887 and founded the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in 1890. We might expect the stamp to mention Langley's contributions to astronomy and science, but in fact it refers to him as an aviation pioneer, in reference to his two attempts in 1903 to build a piloted airplane. (Both crashed.) The third person on my informal list is George Washington, surveyor.

The advisory board reflects our government's and our society's values, and science is low on that list. A few hundred letters to the board will have little effect, but a concerted, planned campaign by AIP, a plan that enlists the aid of important senators and educators in government, might eventually result in an issue of stamps honoring American science and scientists. Given the importance of educating young people in science and math, such an issue might be worth the effort.

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10/91

A Journal for Unorthodox Thought?

In the past year or so I have seen editorials and articles in a number of prominent scientific journals lamenting the difficulty that scientists with revolutionary ideas have in publishing their works, and extolling the efforts of these scientists. Yet these journals themselves represent a conservative editorial tradition, loath to publish nonstandard works.

This is not the simple hypocrisy that it might seem to an outsider; it is representative of the genuine difficulty in dealing with new ways of thinking whose acceptance would come at the expense of scientific doctrine—doctrine that reviewers and editors have invested years becoming comfortable with. Even scientists who have themselves been successful in advancing revolutionary scientific ideas are bound to find it difficult to question those very ideas in favor of newer, perhaps more

revolutionary proposals.

Nevertheless, the pursuit of science demands that the scientific community develop ways of objectively evaluating new and nonstandard ideas. It seems clear that the current journals, however well intentioned, cannot accommodate such ideas. Not only do the editors and reviewers suffer from the conservative tendencies just described, but the readers are likewise afflicted. If a traditionally conservative journal were to start accepting radical papers, it would certainly incur the animosity of its readership.

Therefore I propose that The American Physical Society sponsor a new journal of nonstandard models with an intent to promote a new generation of theoretical physics. Submissions should be restricted to papers that are mathematically rigorous and violate no fundamental law. Challenges to accepted dogma should be earnestly solicited and critically but fairly evaluated.

To be sure, such a journal would receive its share of crackpot papers, silly ideas and outlandish claims. These can quickly and easily be culled for obvious violations of physical laws. Such a journal would also, I believe, receive a fair number of respectable and intriguing submissions. Some of these may be right; some may be wrong. It is my opinion that the benefit of providing a forum for bright, enlightening and revolutionary ideas well justifies the cost of culling out the inevitable dribble. Therefore I call for the APS to take action on the lofty words of respected editors and formally establish such a forum.

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9/91

That Greco-Serbian Classic, *Antigone*

Come off it, Drasko Jovanovic (February 1991, page 11)!

"Kad Bog hoće nekog da uništi, prvo mu pamet oduzme": "Old Serbian proverb" indeed! "Quem Jupiter vult perdere, dementat prius" ("He whom Jupiter wishes to destroy, he first makes mad") first appeared in 1660 in a book by James Duport. It is a translation of a comment in Greek on the *Antigone* of Sophocles. Medieval Serbian kings, as vassals of the Byzantine emperor, were well educated in the Greek classics.

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