

Physics Today and the Institute

BEGINNING WITH THIS ISSUE the American Institute of Physics will send *Physics Today* to its entire membership. This includes all who are members of the Institute automatically because they are members of the American Physical Society, Optical Society of America, Acoustical Society of America, American Association of Physics Teachers, or Society of Rheology, as well as associate members of the AIP and members of Student Sections. This service will be rendered without adding in any way to the financial burdens of the Societies or their members. The achievement of general circulation at no extra cost has been made possible by the Institute's successful efforts to increase outside income, largely advertising and circulation income of the Institute-owned journals.

Most members will realize that this is not the first attempt to develop a medium of communication to all members of the Institute. It is, therefore, desirable to review why the Institute perseveres in this enterprise. The answer lies in the reasons why the Institute exists.

In today's world any occupation—especially any profession—inevitably takes on the qualities of an organization or enterprise. Even if, for example, there were no American Chemical Society, people would say "the chemists do this", or "we owe this to the chemists", or even "the chemists are responsible for that", etc. The community of interests and objectives both brings about and gives significance to the self-organization of scientists. Such associations are particularly appropriate in twentieth century society, for science is its distinguishing cultural phenomenon. Just as religious foundations nurtured and characterized the middle ages, and as guilds of artists and craftsmen signaled the spirit of the renaissance, scientific associations stimulate our present day society and in a sense interpret and represent its outstanding cultural accomplishments. Thus there is the American Chemical Society, thus in 1931 we formed the American Institute of Physics, and now recently there have appeared the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the American Geological Institute.

Such organizations are formed to grasp opportunities and accept responsibilities which are inherent in the very concept of entity. We *are*, so we must *do* and *behave*.

We, in particular as physicists, *do* the things we think will benefit physics and enhance its value to the human race. Thus we strive to find more means to publish the ever-increasing results of research, we improve the economy and efficiency of publication, we carry on placement work, we render numerous clerical, legal, and other services to our Member Societies, we organize symposia, sponsor books, stimulate college students, cooperate in efforts to improve secondary education, inform government and public in fields of our competence as a guide to sound public policies, help with interna-

tional exchanges and communication, and initiate numerous special and serviceable projects. The Institute has had a measure of success, both financial and otherwise, in carrying out its part of the concerted actions of physics.

We *behave*—well, like decent, responsible citizens. When the Institute is asked for information, it tries to give it. When other scientific bodies look for our cooperation in some common problem (e.g. some aspect of manpower) we give the matter careful consideration and are not backward in accepting our share of any task. We foster professional standards. When asked, we assist the government in formulating manpower and defense policies, or in carrying on fellowship programs, human resource surveys, and so on. We constantly compare notes with other Institutes and associations on operating methods, policies, and the realization of the broad objectives of science.

In short, it is through the American Institute of Physics that physicists, in the name of the science itself, take such actions and meet such responsibilities. This they could not long do successfully without a consciousness of entity and a considerable degree of unity. *Physics Today*, through information and discussion in its pages, can help materially in building an essential foundation for effective community interest and action. A group as large as ours—some 15,000—driven ever to greater specialization by the way physics has developed, needs all the help it can get from *Physics Today* to maintain unity and combine strength in advancing commonly held objectives.

The Institute cannot usefully be an enterprise in itself—like a publishing house or a letter shop. It must rather be an instrument available for use by physicists, by their elected representatives, and by their committees and conferences. Personal participation by physicists in the work of the Institute is the very life blood of the organization. Such participation can arise only out of personal interest, and *Physics Today* is offered for the use of physicists in circulating information throughout the profession and in making known whatever individual points of view they may wish to make known. The articles, the professional news, and the advertisements should all conduce to the objectives of the Institute and all of its members are warmly invited to contribute to its columns and to stimulate its quality and coverage. The value of *Physics Today*, as a property of the Institute and its members, is related on the one hand to the number of physicists it reaches, and on the other to the nature of its contents. The first of these considerations has been met by the Institute in again providing general circulation of *Physics Today* to all members; the second will be satisfied largely to the extent that physicists support and make use of the journal as a medium for the advancement of their science and for the information of their profession.