News and views

Physics in Engineering Education

THE National Science Foundation has granted the American Institute of Physics the sum of $13 600 to support a study and evaluation of the role of physics in engineering education. A committee to make the study has been appointed by the Institute as follows:

E. Hutchisson, Case Institute of Technology, (Chairman)
Raymond Seeger, National Science Foundation, (Secretary)
Lyle B. Borst, New York University
J. W. Buchta, University of Minnesota
Dudley Chambers, General Electric Company
Hugh Dryden, National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics
Harvey Fletcher, Brigham Young University
W. V. Houston, Rice Institute
J. A. Hutcheson, Westinghouse Electric Corporation
R. B. Lindsay, Brown University
Donald H. Loughridge, Northwestern University
H. V. Neher, California Institute of Technology
Lloyd P. Smith, Cornell University
J. A. Stratton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
William W. Watson, Yale University
Marsh W. White, Pennsylvania State University

The role of physics in engineering education has continually been under discussion. Recently such discussion has been intensified and has received the attention of a committee of the American Society for Engineering Education. That committee was asked to determine "the pattern or patterns that engineering education should take to keep pace with the rapid developments in science and technology, and to educate men who will be competent to serve the needs of and provide the leadership for the engineering profession over the next quarter-century." It has now prepared and circulated an interim report including recommendations.

Another committee, sponsored by the American Association of Physics Teachers, has also considered this subject and wishes to develop well-founded views to exchange with the ASEE committee. The present AIP activity was undertaken at the request of the AAPT because it was believed that the interest and resources of the entire organization of physicists should be mobilized behind this enterprise.

A meeting of the AIP Committee was held at Gould House of New York University on January 31 and February 1. As a result of a program adopted at this meeting, visits will be made to a number of institutions having engineering schools to determine the actual present role of physics in the engineering curricula and the objectives in the minds of those who teach it. The information and opinions gathered in this way will be digested and interpreted by the Committee and its staff, and then presented in a report with recommendations. An opportunity to present an interim report will come at the joint ASEE–AAPT meeting June 20–24 at Pennsylvania State University.

NAS to Study Loyalty Problem

ADVICE has been sought by the Administration from the National Academy of Sciences on the formulation of Government policy dealing with the relations between questions of loyalty and the awarding of grants and contracts in support of unclassified research. In an exchange of letters between Presidential Assistant Sherman Adams and Academy President Detlev W. Bronk made public on February 8th, the White House asked for and received assurance that the Academy will form a committee to look into the matter.

Mr. Adams noted that there has been "a very small number of occasions" when questions have arisen regarding the loyalty of individuals whose work is in connection with Government grants or contracts to private institutions for the support of unclassified scientific research. "When these cases come to the attention of the Government agency administering the program," he wrote, "a problem arises in their handling inasmuch as it does not involve security but concerns an area outside established Government-wide security procedures for its employees. It is of concern to all Government agencies which support or sponsor such unclassified research. It is of tremendous importance in the handling of this problem, to avoid misunderstandings between scientists and the Government which might impair the cordial relationships which are so vital to the national welfare, misunderstandings which could lead to a loss of valuable benefits from research. It is equally important that people outside the scientific community understand the nature of the problem, and that their confidence in the Government's handling of this important phase of the public trust be maintained. No one will question the fundamental principle that only those who are loyal to our Government should be beneficiaries of Government grants-in-aid or contracts. . . . At the same time the Government must take every precaution to guard against harming unjustly any member of the community. Toward this end we are constantly seeking to improve our procedures and at the present time are evaluating various proposals for so doing.

"It seems to us that these questions relating to loyalty can best be resloved if scientists, through a representative group such as the National Academy of Sciences, can counsel with the Government on its policy in this matter. . . . "

Dr. Bronk, in his reply, agreed that it would be "desirable for me to appoint a committee of scientists