



EPS in Grenoble

Visiting one of the most important scientific centres of Europe and surely one of the most attractive, Council met in Grenoble on 26/27 March following meetings of the Advisory Committees on — Applied Physics and Physics in Industry, Publications, Physics Education, and Physics and Society as well as the Executive Committee.

Grenoble's modern scientific image began to be formed in 1956 when the French atomic energy commission established there a research centre (CEN-G) with as first director, the Nobel Prize winner in physics, Professor Louis Néel. His vigour and enthusiasm exerted a strong influence on the subsequent expansion of scientific research in Grenoble across a broad front, and the city is now the home of many scientific institutions as well as a big university complex.

Of particular interest because of its international status is the Institut Max von Laue — Paul Langevin (ILL) founded in 1967 by France and the Federal Republic of Germany and joined by the UK in 1973. The principal research tool is a 57 MW(th) high flux reactor generating a large number of neutron beams with different characteristics. About 20% of the research conducted there relates to nuclear and particle physics, the remainder stretches over the whole field of condensed matter, atomic physics and into chemistry and biology. In a second stage of development, new provisions are being made in collaboration with the European Molecular Biology Laboratory for an extension of the research at the physics-biology interface.

The most recent international organization centred in Grenoble is IRAM, the Franco-German institute for research in radioastronomy in the millimetre range. Founded in 1979, it has a 3-dish interferometer under construction on a plateau above Grenoble and a 30m telescope planned for a site south of Granada in Spain.

Another Franco-German collaboration is in high magnetic field research following an agreement in 1972 between the MPG and SNCI (a laboratory of the CNRS). In addition to existing high field facilities, a new 30 T hybrid magnet is under construction and should be completed by 1983.

Grenoble is thus no stranger to international groups and the opportunity was taken to emphasize the role of EPS by holding a joint meeting with the local branch of the French Physical Society at which, after presentations on Grenoble and the work of EPS, a paper on "Incommensurate Crystals: a New Dimension in Solid State Physics" was given by A. Janner of Nijmegen University, one of the out-going delegates to Council of the I.O.M.s.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

In a broad review of the activities of the Society over the past year, the President drew attention to the effort that had gone into the preparations for the 5th General Conference in Istanbul which promised to be at a very high scientific level. He also surveyed the work of the Advisory Committees, noting the steady work that went on, and which formed the essential complement to that of the Divisions.

He was less happy when considering the state of the Society's finances (q.v.) and the reactions that came from the members to enquiries and communications from the Society's officers. It was both costly and time consuming if so many national societies, and others, had to be contacted by telephone to persuade them to reply to correspondence; Council delegates were urged to use their influence to bring about an improvement. A greater identification of delegates with the activities of EPS would be of great benefit to the physics community in a number of areas.

Finance

Although delegates were clearly more interested in discussing physics and new initiatives, the delicate state of the Society's finances could not go unremarked. The 1981 budget foresees an overall deficit of Sw.Frs. 20.000. — despite a withdrawal of a similar sum from the Special Development Fund. Moreover a major effort had been made on *Europhysics Conference Abstracts* by the Editors, with the full support of the Divisions which had agreed to forego the subsidy implicit in the old price per copy charged. The result was that this account had moved back into the black. (Again it might be noted that just a small effort by Council members could make this publication a useful source of revenue for the Society.) At the same time it had to be recognized that the Secretariat was overloaded and could not continue indefinitely without more experienced secretarial help.

Delegates accepted the principle that the unit fee must be adjusted in line with inflation in Switzerland to compensate rising costs. The rate had been for many years amongst the lowest in Europe but is currently running at about 6%/a; the two years since the last increase meant that the comparative purchasing power overall had gone down by about 15%. If six months notice had to be given of a proposed increase, Council would not be able to consider the question until March 1982 and the increase could not become effective until 1983, by which time the Society's deficit would be serious. In the light of this, Council decided, as reported in the previous issue of *Europhysics News*, to reduce the minimum period of notice to three months, so that Council could vote on a

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change in unit fee in Istanbul. The official proposal of the Executive Committee is presented on page 12.

Evidently, there are other means for increasing revenue, — increased circulation of *ECA* as already noted, increased circulation of the *European Journal of Physics*, to shorten the time to its becoming an earner instead of a spender, and increased membership of the Society — notably 4C members and Associate Members. Council was disappointed to learn that it had still not proved possible to open an account in the USSR but the out-going Vice-President assured the meeting that the Academy would be pursuing the matter.

Scientific Freedom

The President reported on developments in the past year concerning the EPS and the scientific freedom of physicists. A number of representations and protests had been received from members about restrictions imposed on individuals in the USSR, preventing them from carrying out their scientific work. He reminded the meeting of the discussion in Budapest on Sakharov and of the statement made at that time on behalf of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, which was reported in the April 1980 issue of *Europhysics News*. A number of members had asserted that the assurances in that statement about Sakharov's working conditions were no longer being respected, and letters of protest had also been received by the President concerning the treatment of Vladimir Kislík and of Victor Brailovsky and his scientific associates. He had written several letters to the Academy via the Vice-President bringing attention to these protests and seeking a clarification of the position; no satisfactory reply had been received.

The Executive Committee had asked the Advisory Committee on Physics and Society to look into the problem and they had drawn attention to the two committees which had been constituted under ICSU to monitor:

- (1) restrictions on the freedom of circulation of scientists
- (2) restrictions on the freedom to carry out scientific work

It was suggested that a collaboration or at least a contact with the ICSU committees might be an appropriate course of action for the EPS.

In the lengthy discussion which followed, a number of delegates emphasized the special problems of the EPS, as a Society including among its members a large number of national societies with different traditions and attitudes. It was agreed that any eventual actions should be both strictly non-partisan and carefully considered, to ensure that they resulted in an improvement rather than a deterioration of the situation. It was concluded that the Executive Committee should form a sub-commit-

tee to study the question, assemble evidence and draw up a list of actions which might be taken by EPS. Contact should be made with the ICSU committees, but the Society was not necessarily bound by the ICSU rules and procedures.

Finally it was emphatically agreed that all members of EPS, including national societies, should feel themselves obliged to reply to letters written by the President in the name of the Society.

Divisions

One of the pleasing aspects of the Grenoble meeting was the strong participation from the Divisions and it is evident that there is now a real identification between the Divisions and Sections and the Society itself. This is made clear in a variety of ways, but not least in the full support now given to *ECA*, in which all EPS Conferences (producing abstracts) feature, and also in the acceptance of the conference levy for the young physicists fund which, as a result, is in a satisfactory state, just when it is needed to support students going to Istanbul.

Reports were presented to Council from all the Divisions, and the vitality of the programmes described was a source of considerable satisfaction to the delegates.

New Initiatives

E.R. Dobbs, the retiring Chairman of the Publications Committee, after summarizing the activities of the Committee over the previous four years, during which time a complete review of the journals carrying the Europhysics label had been undertaken and the *European Journal of Physics* launched, revealed to Council a new and exciting proposal for a European letters journal.

Both the French and Italian Physical Societies had independently presented proposals for the establishment of an EPS-controlled letters journal to take the place of, respectively, *Journal de Physique: Lettres*, and *Il Nuovo Cimento: Letters*. The two Societies had immediately seen the advantages of a joint approach and The Institute of Physics had also expressed a wish to participate.

One had therefore already assembled, the basic elements required of a new journal, according to the principles elaborated in the studies on the rationalization of European publications in physics; notably:

1. Scientific control by EPS
2. Reduction in the number of existing journals
3. Cooperation between publishers

and, very important, at this stage, no financial charge on the Society.

Considerable enthusiasm was expressed by Council members for the idea and it was thought particularly useful that, as the two journals mentioned had readerships drawn mainly from the condensed matter field, in

the first case, and from particle physics in the second, they should combine their readerships to give a strong initial base on which to build. At the same time, it was emphasized that a new publication should be seen to be of the highest quality and, on the scientific side, widely representative of the best of physics in Europe.

One of the first tasks of G. Eilenberger, the new Chairman of the Publications Committee will be to conduct a study of all aspects of the venture — the need, the market, the modality — and to consult the various sectors of the community which will be affected. A sub-group has been formed to pursue this with all speed.

A new initiative also on the part of the Physics Education Committee. Having completed its survey of physics teaching at the secondary school level in Europe, the results of which will be discussed at the special Symposium in Istanbul (and for which contributions should be submitted to the Chairman by 31 May) the Committee is launching a new investigation of tertiary education in physics. Tertiary covers the phase after secondary, whatever the form this might take. To start with, a mapping will be made of the present situation in different countries and a standard questionnaire has been prepared to give a basic structure to the diverse information that will be assembled and then analysed.

People

Four members of the Executive Committee were due to resign, having completed their maximum period in office: the Vice-President, S. Kapitza fresh from a presentation in Paris where he had received the UNESCO 1981 Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science (Kapitza's presence will however still be felt as he will be concerned with the organization of the Seminar on major European projects in physics that will be associated with the meeting of Council in Leningrad next March); P. Radványi who as Chairman of the Conference Committee and then as full member had been attending meetings of the Executive since 1973 and had never missed a meeting — an outstanding record of service indeed; W. Martienssen, former Vice-President and Z. Wilhelmi also well known for the work they have done for the Society over the past five years. The names of the members of the new Executive Committee were published in the April issue.

Council also debated the question of Fellows of the Society, and after considering the criteria by which new Fellows might be selected, came to the conclusion that it was not a category that need be enlarged for the time being. On the other hand, there was warm support for the proposal that the Society should offer Honorary Membership to P.A.M. Dirac and P.L. Kapitza for their outstanding contributions to European physics.