

Closing the EPS Ranks

A meeting of the Associate Members of EPS took place in conjunction with a meeting of ACAPPI (the Advisory Committee for Applied Physics and Physics in Industry) in Geneva on 11 November. The President and members of the Executive Committee, the Finance Committee and the Advisory Committees on *EN* and Physics & Society were also present.

To set the mood, an introductory talk was given by Ch. Tavel, author of *The Third Industrial Age*, on the theme "The Economic Mutation: Its effect on research strategy". Professor Tavel does not consider that the world is simply passing through a temporary recession from which it will presently recover but that fundamental changes are taking place. Without attempting to be exhaustive in his analysis he identified five headings upon which he then enlarged. These were unemployment, the impact on and of developing countries, inflation, protectionism and production capacity.

Under none of these did he see the need for applied research receding, even though he foresaw a flattening of the growth curve in the standard of living and a continuing depression of the job market through the introduction of new technology and, in particular, microprocessors. Indeed he called for a change from "defensive" to "offensive" research strategies to combat the saturation of markets and to satisfy the customer's demand for higher quality and longer lasting products. In brief, Professor Tavel foresaw a continuing economic situation that was difficult and one which could only be coped with through the development of more technology.

This meeting with the Associate Members was in the nature of an exploratory meeting to find out how there could be closer contact between the Society and the Associate Members. These are by no means a homogeneous group; four different types of organisation could be distinguished: large national and international laboratories; big self-reliant corporations; small specialist companies; publishers. Their interests and their problems were likely therefore to be divergent. On the other hand, some problems were common and, as the President stressed, echoing an old theme of ACAPPI, there is only one physics whether this be done in a university or an industrial environment. The work of the Divisions in EPS stretched, in consequence, across the whole field and whilst in any given conference there might be differences in emphasis, the overlap between fundamental and applied physics in such areas as condensed matter physics was almost complete.

Topics of general concern that were identified included the education of physi-

cists and the job market that would be open to them. It was accepted that the matching between the two, notably at the Ph.D. level was not always very happy and the EPS was an excellent forum for assessing the difficulties, comparing experiences in different countries, and recommending changes. Similarly in the transfer of technology between universities and industry there was much to be learned from the experience of others. It was surprisingly difficult to establish certain dialogues nationally and often an international input was very helpful. It was of increasing importance that there should be a reasonable homogeneity of standards in Europe and indeed that many aspects of science policy be tackled at a European level. By bringing together academy and industry, the voice of European physicists could be made more authoritative when speaking to governments, and more persuasive when speaking to the public. A welcome development was the probable extension of the Associate Membership to include organisations from eastern Europe so that a truly European framework could be established.

All accepted that the Associate Members need to be personally identified and the consensus feeling was that two persons — a senior administrator, and a practising researcher should be nominated as the regular contact points with the Society. A lively debate then ensued on the exact form that representation in the Society should take and to what extent the Associate Members should be tied to ACAPPI. Not everyone saw immediately the advantages of being represented in Council and tended to concentrate on the problems of electing representatives. This clearly is the first subject for further consultation and it was unanimously agreed that some form of annual meeting should be inaugurated.

National Societies

The new President of the **Austrian Physical Society** is Professor H. Paul of the Institute for Experimental Physics at the University of Linz.

The new President of the **Danish Physical Society** is Professor P. Gregers Hansen of the Physics Institute at the University of Aarhus.

Eur. J. Phys.

EPS Members are invited to submit contributions to the *European Journal of Physics* on their own teaching experience or philosophical thoughts that they wish to share with their colleagues. No. 2 of Vol. 3 has recently appeared and the Editorial Board would now like to raise the frequency of publication.

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