Nobel Laureates Meet

At the end of June, the Bavarian town of Lindau on its island in Lake Constance hosted for the 38th time the annual gathering of Nobel Laureates. Chemistry, medicine and physics taking it in turn, this was the 13th time the physicists had their say. Started in 1951 by Count Lennart Bernadotte, the aim initially was to help renew links between post-war Germany and international science and, above all, to provide a forum where those at the beginning of their careers could listen to and meet informally the great scientists. Over the years, 250 Nobel Laureates from all over the world have accepted the invitation to Lindau, many of them repeatedly, so that, to date, the grand total exceeds 640. The success of the venture is evident from the growing number of young participants, which this year topped 600 from 49 countries. Having brought the Lindau meetings through difficult years to its present renown, Count Bernadotte has handed over the presidency to his wife, Countess Sonja, already long experienced in organizing the event.

The 16 lectures covered a wide spectrum, as did the age span and range of experience of the speakers. Those active in the revolutionary days of modern physics, like Mott and Lamb (attending for the 10th time) provided historical glimpses of the men who first formulated the fundamental ideas of today. More philosophical were Chandrasekhar on relativity and Josephson meditating on mind and reality, whereas Giaever, a physicist firmly wedded to biology, was prepared to assert that physics and chemistry are sufficient to explain life processes. Bloembergen recognized the strong driving force of politics in science and technology with particular reference to directed energy weapons. There were nevertheless talks on physics as such: Fitch on the possible existence of unknown and far weaker forces; Schawlow on atoms, molecules and laser light; Schwinger on spin coherence and van der Meer on accelerators. Hewish suggested that the study of high energy phenomena in the depths of space nevertheless could be the ideal way of testing GUT's, provided instruments and experimenters show the right resolution.

Mössbauer who talked on neutrinos, is no longer the sole German Nobel physicist, which he was for many years and as a result carried the major load of responding to the young academics. He could share it this year with Binnig, of microscope fame, who found not only evolution but the world at large to be a fractal in time and space, Bednorz who with Müller held out the promises of superconductivity and von Klitzing who, tongue in cheek — gave the astrological significance of the dates of his birth and successful measurement of the quantum Hall effect. Physics and good humour made a happy mixture as was clear from the enthusiasm all around.

Simon Newman

Physics and Mathematics

The Chairman of the **EPS Advisory Committee on Physics Education** invites proposals for contributions to a Study Conference that is being organised by the Polish Physical Society in northern Poland in April 1989 on the subject: interactions between physics and mathematics in physics education. Prospective contributors should get in touch with:

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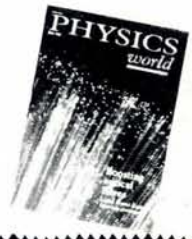

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