

## Funds Go Up for a Change

One indicator of a nation's scientific health is the magnitude of the government's allocation of funds for science. After a long period of stagnation, particularly for basic science, the situation in the United Kingdom has suddenly improved remarkably (*details on page 87*).

Although the new government—elected in 1997—had included a commitment to increased funding for science in its pre-election canvassing, it was a welcome surprise when it actually came about. Of particular interest is the allocation of £600 million (900 million euros), over 3 years, to form a Joint Infrastructure Fund, designed to help improve the research infrastructure in Britain's universities. The word "infrastructure" is being interpreted in a broad way and will cover not only buildings and major equipment but also large telescopes. Bids are currently being peer-reviewed and it will be interesting to see how physics fares.

In the UK some of us use the following magic formula to lobby the government for funding. Firstly, keep up the pressure on the government. We have a pressure group called Save British Science which has worked hard to explain to politicians the needs of science. The wealthier countries can now argue: if Britain can provide its scientists with more money, surely we can? We used this argument repeatedly, taking the United States, Japan, *etc.*, as our reference points.

Secondly, work hard to improve the public understanding of science. It is vital to get the public on your side. In the UK, about a million members of the public attend a variety of events each year during a national science week.

Thirdly, keep stressing the value of physics in underpinning biology in its many forms. Unless you are absolutely convinced that you have a chance of discovering a new form of matter or a new force, at least consider changing your research to something with relevance to the human condition. I am a keen supporter of CERN and ESA, but if we are to keep research alive in some of our impoverished countries other areas of physics are going to need more support.

Fourthly, ensure that an ethos develops in schools whereby the subject of physics is regarded as an excellent training for many professions—not just for research.

Lastly, ensure that a source of funding for science exists outside of government. In the UK we benefited from the philanthropic aims of the Wellcome Trust, which appears to have given impetus to the government. Appreciation of science by industry (and their trust funds) is an essential ingredient, but often difficult to conjure up. It would be instructive to have your thoughts on whether our experience could cross cultural and political borders, and lead to improved funding in other countries. **Sir Arnold Wolfendale—President, European Physical Society**

## Disunited States

In mid-March the American Physical Society held its Centennial Meeting in Atlanta. A record-breaking 11 000 physicists shared the teeming termite mound that is the Georgia World Congress Center with more than twice that number of dentists.

The APS has 40 000 members, while the EPS numbers 75 000. Does this mean that we have the potential to gather in 20 000 participants for a special event? The comparison is questionable—scaling theory may not apply—but provocative.

The American meeting was an occasion for retrospect and nostalgia. There were many reminders of Europe's dominant role in early modern physics. Our most recent achievements, especially those of CERN, are worthy of justifiable pride. But many sectors of our research community still lack the coherence of the United States. In a stimulating discussion on electronic publishing this became transparent when Ian Butterworth of Imperial College, London described the lamentable new directive by the European Parliament on copyright. Its stringency will serve the media corporations, and leave little room for the liberal principle of "fair use" which still moderates such law in the US (*see page 70*).

How has this come about, with hardly a whisper from the academic/research community? Because, says Butterworth, the many learned professional societies of Europe hardly noticed what was going on. Our lack of an effective unified voice is becoming embarrassing. Someone said we were "asleep at the switch". Alas, most of us do not even know where the switch is. By the way, I grant permission to anyone who wants to copy this editorial. **Denis Weaire—Dublin**

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**Managing Editor** Toby Chapman  
*eneditor@univ-mulhouse.fr*  
**Layout Artist** Véronique Paillard

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**the liquids special issue begins page 71**  
*The guest editor for this issue was Luciano Reatto, and all feature articles were refereed by the EPS Liquids Board*

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**Address** EPS, 34 rue Marc Seguin,

BP 2136, F-68060 Mulhouse Cedex, France

*phone* +33 389 32 94 40

*fax* +33 389 32 94 49

**Website** [epswww.epfl.ch](http://epswww.epfl.ch)

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**The Liquids Section of the Condensed Matter Division** covers experimental and theoretical activities in the area of liquids—including a large part of what is called soft matter. Simple liquids represent the core of our section, but a large part of the activity of the section is in the field of complex liquids such as microemulsions, colloidal systems, and liquid crystals.

The main organizational activity of our

section is a triennial international conference. Liquid Matter 4 will be held this year from 3 to 7 July in Granada, Spain. The first conference was in Lyon (France) in 1990 and subsequent ones were held in Florence (Italy) and Norwich (United Kingdom). This series of conferences has already established itself as the most important event of general character in the area of liquids on a worldwide level and attracts more than 500 participants.