

president's column

The Good News

Recently, the Government in the United Kingdom announced, in a "Comprehensive Spending Review", an increase in funding for science research (see *editorial*). The details are as follows. Over the years 1999 to 2000, 2000 to 2001 and 2001 to 2002, the increases in real terms will be 7.3%, 12.7% and 14.8%, the last-mentioned corresponding to a total of £1658 million (2500 million euros). In addition, the Wellcome Trust (a charity funded by a multinational pharmaceutical company) will contribute a further £400 million (600 million euros) over the 3-year period.

Some of the funds are ear-marked for specific purposes—eg £100 million (£150 million euros) for a new x-ray synchrotron radiation source at Daresbury—and there is a bias towards biological research—eg £300 million (450 million euros) from the Wellcome Trust for specifically "medical" science areas—but there is, of course, a considerable amount of physics in these activities.

If the Government's statements on the purposes of what they call the "Science and Engineering Base" (SEB) are considered, then applied, as distinct from pure, physics will no doubt be favoured; this is inevitable, and some would say desirable.

Other, rather long-winded, statements by the Government refer to internationally competitive research which will add to the authority of the UK in negotiations with other countries which have a scientific or technological dimension. This research has a clear fundamental component.

The Government is aware of the role of the SEB in producing highly-trained people and considers that a major strength of UK science lies in PhD studentships in universities, not only by providing key people for the future but also by virtue of the research that they do.

A continuing problem in the UK, and elsewhere, too, has been the low rate of exploitation of research. The existing schemes which attempt to forge links between industry and universities are being improved. Present, and new, schemes provide funds not only for joint research and development but also for the construction of prototypes, preparation of business plans, legal costs and so on. No-one with a good idea for "a better mousetrap" should be starved of funds.

Mentioning mousetraps, there is interesting cheese in the trap; evidence of industrial funding for work entitles the researcher to the chance of money from a Realising Our Potential Award, which is for purely speculative research and provides a profound incentive to academics. The scheme started in 1994 and £109 million (160 million euros) in all has been disbursed so far. After a slow start, physics is doing rather well. **Sir Arnold Wolfendale**



During the annual EPS Council meeting Martin Peters (shown left during a wine-tasting trip) was made an Honorary Member of the Society. The following is taken from his citation: Several pioneering contributions to our understanding of the behaviour of conduction electrons in metals are due to Martin Peters. In the early sixties he used and further developed paramagnetic resonance techniques. In the seventies he contributed to the development of computational condensed matter physics. In the eighties he developed a powerful technique for positron annihilation studies, based on two high-density proportional chambers detecting the 2D angular correlations. During the last decade, this technique enabled Peter and his collaborators to perform seminal studies on conduction electrons in novel materials, like high-temperature superconductors and heavy-Fermion systems.

Secretary General's Report

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THE EPS COUNCIL ELECTED the following persons as members of the Executive Committee: Sir Arnold Wolfendale (President), Denis Weaire (Vice-President) Peter Reinecker (Treasurer), Ana Maria Eiro (Vice-Treasurer), Christophe Rossel (Secretary), Denis Jérôme (Vice-Secretary), Giorgio Benedek, Tim Hickson, Rudolph Klein, Per-Anker Lindgard, Ryszard Sosnowski.

The Executive Committee and the Council expressed their warmest thanks to the outgoing members Jean Philippe Ansermet, Pieter Brussaard and John Lewis.

COUNCIL 1999 THE EPS COUNCIL MEETING WAS held in Mulhouse in France, 9 to 10 April 1999. The Secretary General would like to express special thanks to Christine Bastian and Toby Chapman for their hard work in making this Council meeting a success.

The President and Secretary stressed that the EPS is entering into a more active phase. Christine Bastian has made significant contributions in developing conference services for EPS Divisions, and Toby Chapman has made considerable improvements to Europhysics News. Projects to improve communications with members are continuing and the 1999 Budget includes provision for a new full-time staff member to provide assistance in this area. The Treasurer provided a detailed report of the financial situation of the EPS showing a net positive balance of over 100 000 euros for the end of 1998. The 1999 Budget approved by Council also showed a net increase of 20 per cent in expenditure on EPS

activities in the coming year.

In 1998, the EPS Committees were very active in areas such as student exchange, East-West relations, scientific communication and publication, and conferences. All Divisions and Groups also showed significant activity in organizing conferences, renewing boards, and proposing new EPS prizes.

In 1999, the EPS will be engaging in a number of specific activities designed to raise its profile, while at the same time targeting issues of common importance to all European physicists. The EPS is participating in the video series *Bridges to Physics* designed to highlight the connections between physics research and its applications. The Nuclear Physics Division is engaged in another public awareness initiative which will produce a travelling exposition, a book, and a series of videos explaining the usefulness of nuclear physics beyond power generation. Finally, the EPS Forum on Education is organizing a seminar called *Securing the Future of Physics* (2 to 5 September 1999, Malvern, United Kingdom) that will look at approaches throughout Europe to physics education and the public understanding of science.

EUROPHYSICS LETTERS EPL IS ONE OF EUROPE'S leading letters journals, published under the scientific responsibility of the EPS. To ensure the continued excellence of the papers published in the journal, the EPS is seeking dedicated physicists from all fields who are willing to act as co-editors. The Divisions, Groups and Members of the EPS are invited to provide names of suitable candidates to David Lee.

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