

On Atom-Smashing

IN YOUR ISSUE of November 23rd, the editorial "Global Budgeting for Science" by Mr. Lear discussed the future American program in high-energy physics, suggested a cooperative international project, and included the statement: "The physicists who are selfishly concerned say, 'This is one area of research in which we really are ahead of the Russians. We've got to stay ahead for the sake of American prestige.'" I would like to point out to you that Mr. Lear is four years out-of-date with his proposals and is misinformed about the motives of the physicists involved. In the past I have read Mr. Lear's articles with great interest and have learned much from him, but I fear that

"On every other point than t"

His learning is untainted, O!

But here's a theme with which he is Entirely unacquainted, O!" and I don't think he should be writing editorials on this subject.

First, a comment about the motives of high-energy physicists. For some time it has been established that the atomic nucleus consists of protons and neutrons and probably a variety of elusive particles known as mesons. High-energy physicists are presently engaged primarily in studying the properties and structure of the proton and the neutron and of the varieties of strange particles which appear in collisions between the so-called fundamental particles. This is a major frontier of science and its exploration is motivated by the same curiosity which has produced the important discoveries of the past. Americans and Russians, as well as Western Europeans, all are making progress in this field. We are cooperating with one another and are equally delighted to learn of new discoveries, wherever they are made. The results of experiments using large particle accelerators (the "electronic guns" of Mr. Lear's editorial) are exchanged freely and discussed at international meetings held sometimes in the United States, sometimes in the Soviet Union, and sometimes in Western Europe. It is of interest that the synchrotron, the most modern accelerator type, was invented almost simultaneously in the Soviet Union and the United States.

Mr. Lear's suggestions of an international center for high-energy physics has been discussed unofficially in the halls of science, and at official levels of the American and Soviet governments since 1959. In November of 1959, Mr. J. A. McCone, who was then the Chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, and Mr. V. S. Emelianov, who was the Chairman of the State Committee for Utilization of Atomic Energy of the U.S.S.R., signed a "Memorandum Agreement for Cooperation Between the U.S. and the USSR" in the field of the utilization of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The agreement provided for exchanges of personnel and information and for an examination of the feasibility of engaging in joint projects. It specifically re-

ferred to "the design and construction of an accelerator of large and novel type".

This possibility was discussed informally during 1960 and, in September of 1960, an officially arranged meeting between U.S. and Soviet physicists was held at the American Institute of Physics in New York City. At this meeting it was proposed that study groups should be set up in the United States and the Soviet Union to explore further the feasibility and desirability of accelerators for energies above 300 billion volts. Study groups were organized in both countries and prepared design studies for accelerators of energies as high as 1000 billion volts. Exchanges of opinion between the groups were delayed for some time but we have now had many discussions with Soviet physicists, particularly during the latest International Accelerator Conference which was held last August at Dubna, near Moscow. The International Atomic Energy Agency has been aware of all of these developments and has offered its assistance in any way possible.

Probably the main reason that a cooperative project on a large and expensive accelerator has not been started is that there is a division of opinion among physicists, both in America and in the Soviet Union, on the question as to the wisdom and practicability of cooperation on a major construction project. It is generally agreed that this would be a worthy step in the direction of international cooperation, but it is not agreed that this is a sensible way to get a large accelerator built within our lifetimes. It seems to many of us that the differences between the economic systems in-

volved will raise so many administrative problems that construction of the big accelerator must be preceded by many years of difficult negotiations.

While this discussion about international efforts has been in progress, it has been necessary for the Administration to make plans for the American program in high-energy physics. Projects initiated now will not be completed in less than a decade, and the future program of discovery in this field during the next twenty years will largely be determined by decisions made now. About every two years the Administration has assembled a panel of the wisest people it could find to make recommendations for future plans. The latest of these panels was organized last fall and spent its weekends for six months working on the question of our future program in high-energy physics. The chairman of the panel was Professor Norman Ramsey of Harvard, a universally respected physicist with a wide range of experience in science and administration. The panel included ten members, among whom were the President of the National Academy of Sciences and three Nobel Prize winners. The conclusions of this panel are the ones rather flippantly summarized by Mr. Lear.

Large quantities of money are involved, and the recommendations of the panel have been discussed very thoroughly and carefully by the scientific community. Since the money must eventually be provided by legislation passed by the Congress, and since projects of the size discussed will necessarily have an important impact on the regions where they are located, the Con-



"Buck Rogers didn't bore me when I was a boy."

gressional interest in these questions seems to me to be quite legitimate. It seems to me also that public interest in the high-energy-physics program should be encouraged. People like Mr. Lear should be providing the public with the necessary information. I hope only that before he makes further public statements he will inform himself more thoroughly. The historical events that I have outlined are all available in the public record.

JOHN P. BLEWETT,
(Deputy Chairman,
Accelerator Department,
Brookhaven National Laboratory).
Bellport, L.I.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Another letter along lines similar to this one has been received from Dr. Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center of Stanford University. Since Brookhaven and Stanford are among the foremost beneficiaries of government spending for atom-smashing research, it is not surprising that scientists at those two institutions should defend such spending. It is natural, too, that the writers of these letters should applaud the judgment of the "wisest men" who made up the Ramsey report panel, for the Ramsey report approved government spending for a new atom-smasher in the Midwest only if such a subsidy did not interfere with subsidies already planned for Brookhaven and Stanford.

Not everyone knowledgeable in nuclear physics agrees that atom-smashing guns deserve the top priority claimed for them by the gunners. For example, a paper published recently by Dr. Alvin Weinberg, of the Atomic Energy Commission center at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, argues that when atom-gunning is judged by its "relevance to the sciences in which it is embedded, relevance to human affairs, and relevance to technology," it "rates poorly" in comparison with other research work calling for support by the people's money. Only if the atom-smashing guns "could be made a vehicle for international cooperation" would this "terribly expensive" form of nuclear experimentation "become a virtue," in Dr. Weinberg's opinion. And a new book written by Kenneth Ford of Brandeis University ("The World of Elementary Particles"—Blaisdell), says in its opening chapter:

"We have learned a great deal about the elementary particles [of the atomic nucleus] in recent years. . . . But, in the ways that matter most to the scientist, we know very little. There is no over-all theory accounting for the whys of the particle: why there are as many as there are (and there is good reason to believe they have not all been discovered yet); why they have the masses they do; why they are born, live, interact, and die as they do (most of them have a life span of less than one-millionth of a second).

So far as the timeliness of SR reporting is concerned, it may be pointed out that no claim was made here that the idea of international cooperation in atom-smashing was new. The statement published in these pages was that the cooperation had not yet been achieved, and should be, if necessary with the help of a shove from Congressman

Carl Elliot's select committee of the U. S. House of Representatives.

The serious question remains: Did SR's science editor misrepresent the motives of American atom-smashing gunners in pressing for government subsidy for their work? The following is a quotation from page three of the Ramsey report, which was favorably cited in the letters from Brookhaven and Stanford:

The scientists of the United States, native and foreign-born, have led the world in high energy physics. Over the last decade, most of the major inventions and discoveries in high energy physics have been made in U. S. laboratories. Several of these have been recognized by the award of the Nobel prize.

High energy physics is a very active field of research in all technically advanced countries and is expected to remain so. Despite the excellent contributions from Western Europe, and despite the fact that the "record" in particle energy has switched back and forth among the U. S., the USSR, and Western Europe, the United States has maintained its leadership in high energy research.

The success of our program in discoveries, in contributions to technology, and in stimulating education has been based primarily on the willingness of the U. S. Government to support a broad range of activities. These include the construction and operation of accelerators of many different characteristics, and also the support of extensive high energy physics programs using such accelerators. We believe that, apart from the intrinsic scientific interest of the proposed future program, it is essential that the United States maintain its leading position in an area of research which ranks among our most prominent scientific undertakings.

Atoms-for-Peace

YOUR ISSUE of September 7th carried an editorial by Mr. John Lear in which he made the statement that President Eisenhower's effort to turn the atom toward peace was "thwarted by the reluctance of his Atomic Energy Commission chairman, Lewis Strauss."

Regardless of political differences between us, I believe that you wish the pages of *Saturday Review* to be factual. Mr. Lear's statement is not.

President Eisenhower's concept of Atoms-for-Peace, as announced on December 8, 1953, was worked out in detail with my help—my enthusiastic help. As soon as I became Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, I advocated amendment of the McMahon Act to remove the throttling hand of Government monopoly so that the peaceful development of atomic energy might be encouraged. This was accomplished in 1954 by the Cole-Hickenlooper amendment which I helped to draw, and I am certain that Senator Hickenlooper and former Congressman Cole will confirm the fact of my position on this point.

Furthermore, the program known as Sherwood—a search for means to control, for peaceful uses, the energy produced in the thermonuclear reaction—had languished for adequate support until August 1953. During the first month of my term as Chairman, the Commission endorsed my proposal to support it generously (increasing the appropriation more than ten-fold), and it has been vigorously pursued ever since.

It is a matter of record also that I sought from the Congress and obtained increased appropriations for nuclear research for peaceful purposes in each year of my incumbency.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, now in its sixth year, was conceived and, incidentally, named by me, and the first International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy in 1955 and the second in 1958 were proposed by me in 1954 in an address to the World Affairs Council of Los Angeles on April 19th of that year.

The following references support the statements made above:

"Mandate for Change" by Eisenhower, page 251 ff.

"Eisenhower—The Inside Story" by Donovan, page 185 ff.

AEC 17th Semiannual Report, page VII ff.

AEC 18th Semiannual Report, page 5 ff.

AEC 19th Semiannual Report, page 3 ff.

International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy.

AEC 20th Semiannual Report, page XIV ff.

AEC 21st Semiannual Report, page XIX ff and 12 ff.

Major Activities—AEC Programs, July to December 1956, pages IX, X, XIX, 11 thru 23.

Major Activities—AEC Programs, January to June 1957, pages XII, 12 thru 29.

AEC Progress in the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, 1957. This volume contains 261 pages of detailed description of peaceful activities of the AEC under my chairmanship.

Research on Power from Fusion and other Major Activities in the Atomic Energy Program 1958. This was my final report to the Congress and was mainly devoted to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

LEWIS L. STRAUSS.

Washington, D.C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: John Lear's reference was to President Eisenhower's program for the actual physical giving of nuclear fuel to other countries for peaceful purposes. The reference was based on interviews with Mr. Strauss himself and with a number of other individuals involved in genesis of Atoms-for-Peace, including President Eisenhower, Press Secretary, James Hagerty; Mr. Eisenhower's psychological warfare advisor, C. D. Jackson, and the present Governor of New York State, Nelson Rockefeller. A detailed account of the matter can be found on pages 87-111 of the recently published book, "Eisenhower As President," edited and with an introduction by Dean Albertson. (Hill and Wang, 1963).

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