

APS To Stay Aloof from Politics

With the debate on the war in Vietnam in the background, members of the American Physical Society have voted to keep their organization out of politics.

The society recently rejected the Schwartz Amendment, which would have allowed its members to vote on resolutions having political and social implications beyond pure physics.

The amendment, introduced by Charles Schwartz, University of California associate professor of physics, was an attempt to involve the society in the discussion of the Vietnam war and other political issues.

The debate, which began within the organization more than 1 year ago, was resolved recently when more than half of the society's members took part in a mail ballot on a constitutional amendment, which would have allowed APS members to vote on resolutions on "any matter of concern to the society." The constitution now limits such activities to matters of direct professional concern to physicists. The amendment was rejected by a 2 to 1 vote.

The debate, which has drawn strong opinions from some of the nation's leading scientists, began when the editors of *Physics Today*, an American Institute of Physics journal, refused to publish Schwartz's letter on the morality of the Vietnam war; they said the letter did not have any relation to pure physics. Stating that physicists must recognize "the absurdity of complete political innocence," Schwartz circulated a petition for amendment of the APS constitution. The resolution has been debated throughout the spring.

Scientists opposing the Schwartz amendment included National Academy of Sciences president Frederick Seitz. A strong opponent was Federation of American Scientists chairman and Cornell professor Jay Orear.

—Marti Mueller

connection with the UFO project. Air Force officials fear the controversy will throw a cloud over the Condon group's final report no matter what that report says.

Perhaps the most substantial critics of the Condon investigation are two scientists who have had extensive experience with the UFO problem—James E. McDonald, senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics, in Tucson, who has been investigating UFO's almost full-time in recent years, and J. Allen Hynek, chairman of the department of astronomy at Northwestern University, who has long been the Air Force's chief UFO consultant.

McDonald, who leans toward the hypothesis that some UFO's may be extraterrestrial probes, expressed fears to the National Academy of Sciences as early as April of 1967 that the Colorado project was not being vigorously pursued. He has also expressed his reservations in speeches before technical groups, in newspaper interviews, in private communications to the Colorado project, and in an interview with *Sci-*

ence. He charged that Condon had repeatedly discussed UFO's in a "clearly negative tone," even before the project was off the ground. He said Condon had shown a "disturbing preoccupation" with crackpots while ignoring responsible witnesses; and he lamented that Condon, whose name was being used to secure public confidence in the project, was not personally examining witnesses or investigating cases.

Accusations and Refutations

McDonald's accusations were based partly on information supplied by dissatisfied project scientists, partly on discussions with Condon and Low, and partly on newspaper interviews with Condon and on secondhand reports of Condon's speeches. However, Condon told *Science* that "McDonald doesn't know a damn thing about what we've done."

Hynek, who feels the UFO problem needs a thorough scientific investigation, has generally withheld criticism of the Condon study on the ground that the group's final report should speak for itself. But at a recent colloquium,

and in an interview with *Science*, Hynek said that Condon has "grossly underestimated" the nature and scope of the UFO problem. He also said the Condon group seemed to have adopted an attitude that UFO's must either be nonsense or else a sign of extraterrestrial intelligence, whereas Hynek believes the truth may lie between these extremes.

The events that brought the Colorado project's tensions to public notice revolved around an internal university memorandum, dated 9 August 1966, which weighed the pros and cons of taking on the UFO project.

Memo Criticized

Critics of the Colorado project claim the memo indicates the university never intended to conduct an objective study. But several investigators connected with the project told *Science* they could see no indication the study was planned or conducted in a biased manner. Some felt Condon may have been skeptical about UFO's, but they said he seemed very willing to allow exploration of all approaches to the problem. Condon is said to have been unaware of the memo until it became a subject of controversy among staff members.

The memo ultimately found its way into the hands of McDonald and of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), the largest organization of UFO buffs in the country. As a result, two of the Colorado project's staff scientists were fired. One was David R. Saunders, a psychologist, who was conducting a statistical analysis of UFO data. The other was Norman E. Levine, a young electrical engineer, who was working on radar and plasma-physics aspects of UFO's. Both men have subsequently criticized the project on essentially the same grounds as McDonald.

In a press release to a Colorado student newspaper on 8 February, Condon said the two were discharged for "incompetence," but many observers think he really meant "insubordination." Saunders was clearly a key staff member—Colorado's proposal for an extension of its contract devoted more space to describing Saunders' duties and responsibilities than it devoted to those of any other scientist. Condon later wrote, in a letter published in *Scientific Research*, that "one factor" in discharging the two men "was that they supplied outsiders with material taken from personal files (not project files)." Condon has told colleagues the memo was "stolen." Saunders and Levine contend