

## Dissent Spreads to Nobelists, Industrial Scientists

Dissent from the Nixon Administration's military and political policies reached a new high in the scientific community last week. At least four major groups of scientists and professors publicly declared opposition to Administration policies, particularly its conduct of the war in southeast Asia and its handling of dissent at home.

The most extraordinary statement came in a politely phrased letter to the President signed by 44 Nobel laureates\*—roughly two-thirds of all the Nobelists living in the United States. The letter, which was made public on 3 June at simultaneous press conferences in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, called for "a rapid termination of U.S. participation in the southeast Asian war." It also suggested that the Administration has been guilty of "inconsistencies" in its official statements.

The idea for the letter originated with Owen Chamberlain and Charles H. Townes, both Nobel laureates in physics at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. Townes told *Science* that the "shock of the Cambodian invasion and the events surrounding it made us feel it was important to state a position." He and Chamberlain drafted an appeal to the President, circulated it (mostly by mail) to all 69 Nobelists living in the country, and got a quick and overwhelmingly favorable response. Forty-four of those contacted agreed to sign and many of those who failed to sign could not be reached or simply felt it was inappropriate for Nobel laureates to band together to make such a public statement. Townes said only about six scientists refused to sign because they opposed the sentiments in the letter.

American Nobelists have occasionally allowed their names to be identified with political causes. Some have served on committees backing particular presidential candidates, and others have lent their prestige to battles over specific issues, such as the recent fight over the Administration's drug abuse bill. But the scale of last week's protest seems unique. As Townes expressed it: "Many of the people involved have essentially never signed any public statement. I very rarely sign any such statement myself. So it is quite clear that this is a unique kind of response and an effort to be helpful."

The letter to the President said, in part:

"We agree with the stand of many that the health of this nation depends on a swift disengagement from war in southeast Asia, although the violent tactics used by some to express this are repugnant to us.

"We have been increasingly troubled as more and more young people, including many of the most promising representatives of our educational system, have turned away from the system to the streets, to jail, and to exile in opposition to the war.

\* Luis W. Alvarez, John Bardeen, George W. Beadle, Hans A. Bethe, Felix Bloch, Konrad E. Bloch, Melvin Calvin, Owen Chamberlain, Carl F. Cori, Andre F. Cournand, Max Delbrück, Richard P. Feynman, Murray Gell-Mann, Donald A. Glaser, Haldan K. Hartline, Alfred D. Hershey, Robert Hofstadter, Robert W. Holley, Charles B. Huggins, Edward C. Kendal, H. Gobind Khorana, Arthur Kornberg, Joshua Lederberg, Tsung-Dao Lee, Fritz A. Lipmann, Salvador E. Luria, Edwin M. McMillan, Robert S. Mulliken, Marshall W. Nirenberg, Linus C. Pauling, Edward M. Purcell, Dickinson W. Richards, Frederick C. Robbins, Emilio Segrè, Wendell M. Stanley, Albert Szent-Györgyi, Edward L. Tatum, Max Theiler, Charles H. Townes, Harold C. Urey, Selman A. Waksman, George Wald, James D. Watson, and Chen Ning Yang.

"We share the difficulties of many young people in justifying the apparent inconsistencies in recent official statements and actions concerning U.S. plans and expectations in southeast Asia. We also share their profound uneasiness over military actions taken without wide acceptance within government circles, including especially the Congress—actions which have further aggravated the already severe and unhealthy political division within our country.

"We ask simply and urgently that you rise to the heroism that these times demand and take swift and decisive steps to restore a unity of vision and purpose—not in the exercise of power, but behind this nation's historic and best values. We believe this necessitates a rapid termination of U.S. participation in the southeast Asian war."

A second unusual protest was staged on 4 June by some 200 or more industrial scientists from New York and New Jersey who descended on Washington to urge passage of a Senate amendment that would cut off funds for further military operations in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The largest single contingent, perhaps 100 or so, came from IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center, while smaller groups came from Eastman-Kodak, General Electric, RCA, Bell Telephone Laboratories, and Union Carbide. There was also a contingent from Brookhaven National Laboratory.

What made the protest unusual was the fact that, for the first time in recent memory, a sizable group of industrial and government scientists have added their voices to the chorus of dissent emanating from the nation's campuses. Only a few members of the group had ever performed military research, so this was no case of preaching by the suddenly converted. But the fact that so many industrial scientists were willing to journey to Washington on short notice to lobby with congressmen and government officials belies the stereotype that they are apathetic or war-profiteering creatures.

"We are deeply troubled," the industrial group proclaimed. "We see our nation frustrated in its drive toward social justice and general economic well-being . . . we shudder at the atmosphere of hysteria and anti-intellectualism that the war and its byproducts are engendering."

While the industrial scientists were lobbying at offices around town, a third group, comprised of M.I.T. scientists, released a petition urging that the President and Congress stop developing high-accuracy MIRV's (multiple, independently targeted, reentry vehicles or missiles). They argued that MIRV's will dangerously destabilize the strategic balance and thus diminish the security of all nations. The petition had more than 400 signers, a majority of the M.I.T. faculty.

Finally, in a fourth protest, 11 holders of distinguished chairs at the University of Minnesota, including Walter W. Heller, former economic adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, met with Vice President Agnew on 4 June and told him his rhetoric was "driving moderates into the arms of extremists." Agnew reportedly conceded several times that his visitors had some valid arguments.—PHILIP M. BOFFEY