

APS Committee on International Scientific Affairs (CISA)

ANNUAL REPORT

November 2002 through October 2003

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1 Introduction

In 2000, CISA focused on formulating a *Statement* about the American Physical Society's goals for international relations. The statement emphasized the importance of the APS role in providing a liaison with physicists worldwide. During the past year this role has been CISA's primary concern because of visa issues that have restricted important interactions and collaborations among U.S. and foreign physicists. Another major concern has centered on the APS international outreach programs, particularly with our colleagues in the Muslim world. Over all of these matters has hung the fact that Irving Lerch, the Director of Office of International Affairs, will retire on December 31, 2003. His wise counsel and strong leadership will be missed.

2 Visa Issues

The long delays that foreign colleagues and students experience in obtaining visas to enter the United States create huge problems for the U.S. physics effort. Delays discourage collaborators from coming to the United States for experiments at places, such as Fermi Lab and Jefferson Lab. In addition, the fingerprint and photograph requirement for a visa beginning Jan. 1, 2004, is expected to result in many foreign colleagues refusing to come to the United States. Currently, foreign faculty, post-docs and graduate students worry about leaving the United States to attend physics conferences and workshops, because of a fear that immigration officials will refuse re-entry to the country. The Society, however, must be careful not to attack these visa laws and regulations or it will be seen as undermining national security. Instead, we need to seek legislative relief by encouraging the State and Homeland Security departments to facilitate student and scientific visitor entry. This is particularly timely for the APS with the large March 2004 meeting to be held in Montreal, Canada. The APS wants foreign students to be able to attend this meeting and then return to the United States.

3 International Outreach

3.1 Latin America

The Society's largest outreach program is currently with Latin America, based on the many activities there in 2003. For example, Fred Stein, Director of Education and Outreach, informed CISA about a joint APS and Mexican Physical Society project, in which the book *String and Sticky*

Tape Experiments, edited by Ron Edge and published by the AAPT, was translated into Spanish.

Cuba: Following the successful Medical Physics Conference in Cuba in 2002, the APS sponsored and participated in the VIII Inter-American Conference on Physics Education, held in Havana, Cuba, July 7-11, 2003. Attendance from the United States was good and included APS President Myriam Sarachik, Lerch and Barrett. Meetings with Cuban colleagues were friendly but unproductive in the promotion of human rights issues, which the Cubans wanted to decouple from scientific collaborations and joint conferences.

FeLaSoFi: Lerch and Barrett also participated in the Federation of Latin American Physical Societies (FeLaSoFi) meeting in Brazil in early May. Unfortunately, there was no in-depth discussion of issues, which would have been useful to the APS. Future participation by the APS in these meetings should be based on a discussion in advance of agenda items between FeLaSoFi and the APS.

Latin American Collaborations Database: CISA re-examined this database created in 1998 for establishing collaborations with colleagues in Latin America and concluded that it no longer plays a role or serves a need. Consequently, CISA voted to close the database.

CAM2003 and LNLS: The loss of the Latin American Database is offset by the successes of the CAM2003 meeting and joint synchrotron workshops held at the National Synchrotron Light Laboratory (LNLS) in Campinas, Brazil. CAM2003 will bring together graduate students from the U.S.A., Canada and Mexico at Mérida, Mexico, October 23-25, 2003. Sarachik and Lerch will also attend. In addition, Dr. José Antônio Brum (LNLS Director) wants to continue the joint synchrotron workshops with rotating venues.

3.2 The Middle East

Iran: For about two years, the APS has been involved in useful discussions with the Physical Society of Iran (PSI) that have resulted in launching a number of activities, such as the exchange of society representatives. The APS invited Hessamaddin Arfaei of PSI to give the Beller Lectureship at the April 2003 APS meeting. He could not attend, however, because flights from the region were suspended due to the war and there was a delay in obtaining the visa. Peter Barnes, CISA Chair for 2002, was invited to give a talk at the PSI annual meeting in August 2003, but his travel request was denied by the non-proliferation bureau of the Department of State for "national security reasons." CISA plans to try again in 2004 for the exchange of society representatives. The APS and the PSI were successful, though, in jointly organizing a school on string theory in Shiraz, Iran, September 29 to October 9, 2003.

Iraq: The Carnegie Endowment and the CRDF recently held a meeting on Iraqi reconstruction that focused on the universities. The meeting included representatives from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the State Department, the CIA, and others. Lerch was the only person present from a learned society. During the meeting, the State Department made an appeal to the scientific community to help rebuild the universities. Lerch recommended a meeting be arranged at the

International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy, with the heads of the Iraqi universities and lower-level administrators to work out a plan. In addition, the Association of American Universities was called upon to investigate the Iraqi campuses, by sending a group of former university presidents to Iraq to study the situation. Because the Iraqi graduate program is in shambles, they are interested in the possibility of screening graduate students at the ICTP, who could then be sent to universities in Europe and the United States to finish their training.

SESAME: Barnes reported that the SESAME project in the Middle East is moving ahead. Building construction has begun in Jordan, and the next planning meeting is scheduled for November in Esfahan, Iran.

3.3 Africa Initiatives

The APS has had individual initiatives in Africa for several years. Physics in Africa was highlighted at the March 2003 APS meeting in Austin at a joint session organized by the Forum on International Physics and the Forum on Education. The General Assembly of IUPAP will be held for the first time in the southern hemisphere, when it convenes in South Africa in 2005.

Task Force on Africa: Myriam Sarachik recently established a Task Force on Research Collaboration with Africa, chaired by David Ernst. This initiative originated out of discussions among Barrett, Lerch and Sarachik during the July Havana conference. The Task Force will concentrate on establishing research collaborations with colleagues in Africa to break their isolation from the international scientific community. Possible funding sources as well as physicists in the U.S.A. and in Africa, who are interested in participating in such collaborations, are currently being sought.

4 Science Education

After September 11, the APS has worked to improve relations with colleagues in “Muslim countries.” Discussions with Pervez Hoodbhoy (Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad) led to a proposal to invigorate the teaching of science at Pakistani universities; however, for funding reasons, the focus was later shifted to Central Asia. As a consequence, a conference on *Science Education in the Former Soviet Union Central Asian and Caucasus Nations* will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in April 2004.

The APS is also discussing with the NAS, the ICTP and UNESCO a proposal for an international center for higher education in science and technology at the ICTP. The center would implement education initiatives, especially in developing countries.

5 Director, International Affairs

The work of CISA in 2003 has been carried out with the knowledge that Irving Lerch will retire at the end of this year and that the APS will need to find a new Director of the Office of International Affairs by that time. Lerch is the only person who has been in this position and has *defined* it. The

APS owes Lerch a great deal of thanks for his strong leadership in international affairs during the last decade. CISA has committed itself to providing all possible assistance to the leadership of APS in finding a new Director of International Affairs. To this end, CISA met with the APS Executive Officer, Judy Franz, at both of its regular meetings in 2003 to discuss the international goals of the APS and the qualifications and search for a new Director of International Affairs. It is the opinion of CISA that the Office of International Affairs cannot function effectively without a strong director.

In conclusion, the members of CISA wish to thank Irving Lerch and the staff of the Office of International Affairs, especially Michele Irwin, for their counsel and support during 2003.