

## E D I T O R I A L

By its very nature a journal attempting high-speed publication of "short communications dealing with important new discoveries or topics of high current interest in rapidly changing fields of research" must provoke controversy. Our contributors have very strong biases—concerning what is important, urgent, and promising, concerning the abilities and character of their immediate competitors, and concerning the value of their field of interest as compared with other branches of physics. The referees whom we consult in cases of doubt have similar biases—indeed, they are quite often prominent contributors themselves. Occasionally it becomes necessary to ask advice from more than one expert about a particular contribution. The divergence of opinion we often encounter illustrates the difficulty of making clean-cut decisions on many borderline items.

When a "hot" subject breaks there is a deluge of follow-up contributions. It is a ticklish problem to determine a proper cutoff point, i.e., when further developments should be shunted to the regular slower channels of publication (unless something startlingly new comes up).

With the rapid exploitation of new ideas, priority questions become serious problems. Possibly important technical applications often lurk in the background, and it is very difficult (but essential) to determine whether the work submitted to us has importance and urgency as basic physics, and thus qualifies for PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS.

We expect that some of the Letters we publish will turn out to have flaws and occasionally major errors because they are hastily prepared. But we never cease to be amazed that so many authors who con-

sider their work to be highly significant and urgent don't take the time to make a careful last minute check for typographical errors, omissions, possible ambiguities, unclear remarks, and flaws in figures.

Contributors are expected to consider carefully the merits of their work before deciding to submit papers for publication in PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS, and to avoid loading us with papers that do not meet our criteria. But we still receive too many papers which even the authors must have known were in the category of "not enough to qualify for an Article in THE PHYSICAL REVIEW but short enough to fit into Letter size." This is a major factor in our statistics of over 40% rejections.

With our limited space publication must be restricted to work for which quick communication to the scientific community is likely to be valuable. But we must keep a reasonable balance, and must resist the tendency to publish only material in the currently hottest and most competitive fields. Our philosophy is that a contribution which seems of unusual significance and value in one of the more slowly moving fields also merits rapid publication since it can stimulate activity and progress in that field.

From the above discussion it is clear that many of the judgments that have to be made are of necessity highly subjective. We welcome any information which contributors can give us concerning their work and its potential value, preferably in the form of an adequate introductory paragraph to their paper. We do not take kindly to attempts to pressure us into accepting Letters by misrepresentation, gamesmanship, and jungle tactics, which we have experienced to some (fortunately small) extent.

S. Pasternack