

# COMMENTARY



## WHAT AND WHOSE ARE WE?



Two points of view seem to have developed concerning what *Nuclear Applications* is or should be. On the one hand is the view that what was needed prior to *NA* and what is being achieved by its advent is another journal to expand the total scope of the ANS journals from what it had been when *Nuclear Science and Engineering* was the journal of the American Nuclear Society. This view holds that the purpose of *NA* is to provide a home for those papers containing subject matter that is simply not appropriate for *NSE*: It implies that to be acceptable for publication in *NA*, papers must report high quality work, must be well written and informative, and must have what we like to call a high "information density." The proponents of this view hold that high quality work is possible in areas other than theoretical reactor physics.

On the other hand is the view that what was needed and intended was something more like a trade magazine—a publication that would generate articles on subjects on which papers are not voluntarily offered, that would accept for publication items that are easy to read because they contain little that requires appreciable thinking on the part of the reader, and that would cover technical meetings and report on them via staff-generated articles, summaries, consensuses, etc.

The first viewpoint is dictated by our charter, as we interpret it. Moreover, we feel that there are existing publications which have operated for years within the framework of the second viewpoint, although admittedly this fact is germane only to the question of what our charter *should be*, not what our charter *is*.

We would like to see greater balance in subject matter in each issue, and to receive papers on those subjects within our scope [see *Nucl. Appl.*, 1 403 (October 1965)] which are not well represented. Why don't we receive more such papers? We are beginning to feel that in some of these areas there are not as many new and significant developments to report as some had thought or hoped.

Does this mean that we should generate interest artificially by running staff-written articles on subjects people would like to read about so that, by keeping the subject before the scientific public in each issue, workers will eventually gravitate into these fields? We think the effectiveness of such a procedure is highly questionable. Moreover, if this procedure were feasible, it would put us in the position of attempting to mold scientific effort rather than reflect it. On an entirely different question, viz. whether we should try to force adoption of the metric system in conformance with the hopes of the ANS Board of Directors or whether we should merely reflect prevailing usage, our Editorial Advisory Board has recommended that we reflect and portray rather than force and mold. We think this advice makes sense when applied to both situations.

In fairness to those who expect *Nuclear Applications* to be something other than it is, we should point out that our name probably adds somewhat to the confusion. Originally it was to have been *Nuclear Technology*, but before the first issue went to press it was changed to avoid any possible infringement on the rights of *Canadian Nuclear Technology*. In our opinion, the present name connotes too narrow a meaning, and the original name more properly identified the intended scope. Perhaps this is our "thorn in the side."

Before leaving this subject, we should like to go on record as saying that we hope *NA* can be dignified without being stuffy. We think that there is a real difference, and that writing can be of high quality, valuable, and worthwhile, without being mechanical, sterile, and rigid. For example, we actually advocate the use of the first person active voice where necessary to avoid cumbersome word-wasting sentence construction. Scientific writing has suffered too long under the yoke of false modesty.

In summary, editors can go only so far. As to what and whose we are, *Nuclear Applications* is what you make it, because it is yours.

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