

OLD WORLD

European Physical Society in Need of Money

by our Special Correspondent, Wiesbaden

THE European Physical Society, now in its fifth year, is healthy in spirit but short of money. That was the message delivered by Professor H. B. G. Casimir, president of the EPS, at the society's general conference here last week.

Professor Casimir feels confident, however, that the financial problems will be surmounted and he mentioned that an organization, whose identity he could not reveal but which "would not offend anybody", is setting up a fund for the EPS worth between SF 20,000 and SF 30,000 a year for financing travel for university lecturers to and from Europe and within Europe. Such a fund is welcome but will not solve the immediate problems of the society.

Professor Casimir added that it would not be in anyone's interest for the EPS to be declared bankrupt. The society now has nine lively divisions, and two of the conferences which it sponsored recently—the one on condensed matter held in Florence and the one on computers in physics held at CERN—were particularly successful.

The fortunes of the EPS were under special scrutiny last week at the second general assembly of the society. The first general assembly was held during the society's inaugural meeting in Florence in 1969, so the Wiesbaden meeting was the first opportunity for the members to discuss as a body the way the society has progressed since its inception.

In his presidential address Professor Casimir said that the EPS has to maintain a balance between the ordinary members (in the form of the appropriate national bodies like the Institute of Physics and the German Physical Society), the individual ordinary members and the associate members, which comprise companies and laboratories whose activities, in the words of the constitution of the EPS, are "directed towards the cultural enrichment of modern society". If a balance is not maintained, he said, the society could become lifeless.

At present there are twenty-six ordinary members, representing some 38,000 European physicists, 2,325 individual ordinary members and twenty-six associate members. The rate of recruitment has, however, been slower than expected; the targets for 1972 are an individual ordinary membership of 2,800 and an associate membership at least forty more than at present. But the Wiesbaden conference, which had

1,400 participants, and a concomitant exhibition of instruments, may well have swelled the membership.

Dr L. Cohen, treasurer of the EPS and secretary of the British Institute of Physics, said that it is difficult "to know from year to year where the society stands financially". The EPS was launched in 1968 with several donations and loans, particularly from the



Professor H. B. G. Casimir, president of the European Physical Society.

Battelle Institute, Geneva, and by the beginning of 1971 the outstanding debt amounted to SF 100,000 (about £10,000), which it is planned should be paid off by the end of 1975. 1971 saw a surplus of SF 73,000—largely attributable to a generous single donation—but the projection for 1972, said Dr Cohen, is "that the society might not meet its com-

mitments completely", although it is hoped that a surplus from the Wiesbaden conference will help matters. Dr Cohen said that the situation in 1973 would depend particularly on whether further donations are received, whether the number of associate members (who pay a minimum of SF 1,000 a year) can be increased, and whether the society's house journal *Europhysics News* is to be expanded.

The last possibility was aired by Professor N. Kurti, University of Oxford, who visualized the time when *Europhysics News* would be a much enlarged publication to which would be attached, in the form of brief news bulletins, what are now the house journals of the national societies. Should, in fact, the national societies simply be branches of the EPS?

Naturally enough, many members had their own recipes for solving the financial problems. Several suggestions of a built-in allowance for inflation were made, and it was also proposed that the fee for most individual ordinary members should be increased from its present level of SF 18 a year, or that a fee structure should be set up. It was, however, pointed out that any attempt to allow automatically for inflation in the fees paid to the EPS by national societies themselves could have serious repercussions.

One of the difficulties for the EPS seems to be that any proposed increase in fees that is unlikely to be effective until 1974—the society has legislated for inflexibility by requiring that the council should have six months' notice of such changes.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATIONS

A Difficult Year

IN spite of difficulties caused by heavy spending in order to explore new business opportunities, Sira reports that it has held its own commercially during the past year.

The research association's annual report, published last week, reveals that the grant from the Department of Trade and Industry again decreased in 1971–72 by £14,300 to £212,900—in accordance with the government policy to encourage the research associations to become commercially viable. But this was partly offset by the receipt of more money from royalties, government contracts and contract work from non-member companies. In all, Sira's income from these sources was £38,200

more than during 1970–71.

The report shows that there was no corresponding increase in income in subscriptions from Sira's 135 member companies and the association's turnover decreased by more than £40,000. But Dr Sydney Jones, chairman of Sira, points out in the annual report that a great deal of money was spent to encourage new business which did not materialize until too late in the year to be reflected in the financial statement.

Sira is already thinking in European terms and during 1971–72 it won contracts for equipment or service in Germany and Sweden as well as Japan. The director, Mr S. S. Carlisle, together with members of his staff, also visited companies in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland in search of business, and Sira was represented at a DTI exhibition in Germany.