

Comments on Letters in the October Issue

Concerning the reporting by *Science News* of Ken Hoffman's views, Ivar Peterson had written: "He [Ken Hoffman] contends that most AMS members had too little information about how funding decisions are actually made to vote knowledgeably." On the other hand, Bill Browder, as President-elect of the AMS, wrote to the *Notices* in answer to my own letter: "Now Serge Lang attacks him for the (inaccurate) journalistic description of his opinions on the referendum last spring."

I. More accurately, I requested the Council to "investigate the extent to which Hoffman expressed the opinion described in *Science News* as a representative of the AMS." The *Notices* editor stated: "The Council of 7 August 1988 considered [Lang's] letter and decided not to take any action." Therefore I ask Browder to document how he came to the conclusion that the journalistic description of Hoffman's opinions is "inaccurate", or that these opinions "are not represented as policy of the Math. Societies." Dan Mostow, current President of the AMS, wrote me on 16 May: "The Executive Committee's information was that Ken Hoffman flatly denies that he said what the reporter Ivar Peterson attributed to him." I called Ivar Peterson, who confirmed that the brief statement of Hoffman's views was a summary of items in a fifteen minute conversation. If Hoffman challenges that rendition of his views, I ask that he take public responsibility for this challenge.

II. As to Browder's statement: "It is not the business of our Society to tell anyone what to think or say, how to do their research, or where to look for funding", the matter is not so simple. What is Browder referring to? Me? Others? It is certainly the business of the Society in certain

Letters to the Editor

circumstances to tell its representative(s) in Washington or elsewhere NOT to say certain things which may misrepresent members of the society, or the society itself; and "where to look for funding", for instance as in Motion II of the Referendum (passed by 74%): "... Therefore those representing the AMS are requested to direct their efforts towards increasing the fraction of non-military funding for mathematics research, as well as towards increasing total research support." I object to Browder's sweeping,

Policy on Letters to the Editor

Letters submitted for publication in *Notices* are reviewed by the Editorial Committee, whose task is to determine which ones are suitable for publication. The publication schedule requires from two to four months between receipt of the letter in Providence and publication of the earliest issue of *Notices* in which it could appear.

Publication decisions are ultimately made by majority vote of the Editorial Committee, with ample provision for prior discussion by committee members, by mail or at meetings. Because of this discussion period, some letters may require as much as seven months before a final decision is made. Letters which have been, or may be, published elsewhere will be considered, but the Managing Editor of *Notices* should be informed of this fact when the letter is submitted.

The committee reserves the right to edit letters.

Notices does not ordinarily publish complaints about reviews of books or articles, although rebuttals and correspondence concerning reviews in *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society* will be considered for publication.

Letters should be typed and in legible form or they will be returned to the sender, possibly resulting in a delay of publication.

Letters should be mailed to the Editor of *Notices*, American Mathematical Society, P.O. Box 6248, Providence, RI 02940, and will be acknowledged on receipt.

absolute statement, as when he refers to "anyone", without qualification as to time, place, position or responsibility. Browder thus raises further questions whether representatives of the AMS (Hoffman, Browder himself as President) will abide by the referendum, or even whether they will give it *any* consideration, let alone appropriate consideration.

III. Browder also states: "A search for ideological purity on the part of some of our members will be highly counterproductive ..." I don't know which members he has in mind, nor do I understand the relevance of his statement. I certainly do not search for "ideological purity", but Browder's letter and statements give me a good opportunity to remind members of the AMS of a concrete case of DOD funding in 1968. The statisticians LeCam and Neyman had cosigned the following advertisement in the January and August 1968 AMS *Notices*:

Mathematicians: Job opportunities in war work are announced in the *Notices* of the AMS, in the Employment Register, and elsewhere. We urge you to regard yourselves as responsible for the uses in which your talents are put. We believe this responsibility forbids putting mathematics in the service of this cruel war.

LeCam and Neyman for 16 years had contracts with the Army and the Office of Naval Research for the support of their unclassified research in statistics, which had been published in standard journals. In letters dated 3 September and 10 September 1968, they were notified by the Army and Navy that renewal of their contracts was being questioned or terminated, because of their ads. The Army letter stated:

... the results of your efforts have been utilized by the Army in various activities related to the current conflict in Vietnam including your regression procedures as

applied to ammunition and ballistics problems... While you as individuals have every right to your own opinions and convictions, your present position vis-a-vis that of the Department of Defense must place you in a most uncomfortable, and perhaps untenable, situation; continuance of this relationship could well serve as a source of embarrassment to you. In view of this unfortunate circumstance, a mutually acceptable decision to terminate our present association when your present support expires appears to be consistent with both our positions.

The ONR wrote similarly, and similar letters were sent to four other mathematicians who had signed the same ad. The case was reported in *Science*, 20 September 1968 and also in the *Washington Post*, same date.

When asked about the utilization of their research in the Vietnam war, LeCam and Neyman answered respectively as follows: "I don't know what they are talking about"; and "I did war work during the Second World War. For 16 years, I have not done any war work. I prove theorems, they are published, and after that I don't know what happens to them." Neyman also told me at the time that he hoped the ad would appear again, and that he would sign it.

After increasing publicity (e.g. in *Science* and the *Washington Post*), and a mounting number of phone calls from members of the scientific-academic community to Washington (DOD, NSF, Presidential Science Advisor, etc.), the Army telephoned that the letter of September 3 should be disregarded, and that if an application for renewal was sent it would almost certainly receive a favorable answer. Neyman telegraphed the ONR:

Your sentiments are understandable. While announcement in *AMS Notices* reflects my feelings on the Vietnam war, my intentions are to proceed whether

modification studies promising benefits for Nation and humanity and would welcome continuation of ONR support.

Then LeCam, Neyman, and the other four mathematicians, got their contracts renewed. I regard the case as typical of the unstable equilibrium of forces between the scientific-academic community and the DOD, subject to pressures from Congress or other public sources. It showed that the DOD did not want a confrontation with that community, and could back down in a specific case when the threat of a serious uproar made itself felt, as was obviously happening after the letters of September 3 and September 10.

Nevertheless, the intimidating effect of the incident was not negligible. Two months after these cases were publicized in *Science* and other places, I was informed by a junior faculty member at one of the campuses of the University of California (not Berkeley) that a senior professor who held an Air Force contract for the support of mathematics told the young man that he would put him on the contract, which would result in a summer stipend, provided that he promised not to sign any controversial political statements. The young man refused—good for him—but we have here an example of the intimidation which resulted from the LeCam-Neyman case or similar ones.

Serge Lang
Yale University
(Received August 31, 1988)

Comments on Letters in the October Issue

Bill Browder's letter in defense of Ken Hoffman points up one of the problems with the Office of Government and Public Affairs (OGPA). This office was created in 1983 by a vote of the Council. The position was created in order to "present a consistent picture of the needs, policies, priorities, and accomplishments

of mathematical scientists" not to define nor create public policy for the mathematical community. Indeed it requires a 2/3 rds vote and complex procedures to insure adequate debate and consideration of the issues in order for the Council to speak on issues of public policy. The Council could not conceivably transfer this authority (especially in perpetuity*) to the OGPA. Yet the Veech committee of the Council which investigated the functioning of the OGPA concluded that as presently constituted the "OGPA will almost always be engaged in some project which is politically or scientifically offensive, and often both, to an appreciable fraction of the AMS membership." Bill Browder apparently expands the principle: not even a vote of 74% of the voting members of the Society instructs AMS officials in what they say.

I don't know precisely how to make the leadership more responsible to the membership. A start would be to make all elections contested. I would be happy to vote for such a motion at the Business Meeting in Phoenix, if someone were to make it. A solution to the problem of the OGPA might be to make the portion of our dues (not inconsiderable) which go to support the office voluntary and to sever official AMS connection with the office. After all, Bill Browder doesn't suggest that Ken Hoffman's effectiveness has anything

* When the OGPA was created in 1983, a cap of four years was placed on anyone's service in the position. This cap was somehow forgotten by the leadership and then removed on the advice of the JPB— a body which included the President, Secretary and Executive Director of the AMS none of whom is elected in a contested election. The reasons given were all the reasons the cap was put on in the first place. The position would not have been created without the cap. The Council at the time felt that an incumbent could make him/herself seem "indispensable", and that no one person should be in the position of representing mathematics too long.

to do with his being an AMS representative.

Michael Shub
IBM, Yorktown Heights, New York
(Received September 19, 1988)

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Veech Committee mentioned in the above letter is the AMS Review Committee for the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics. The Council of April 1987 agreed that every four years, beginning in 1988, a subcommittee of the Council would review the functioning of the Office of Government and Public Affairs and of its impact and would report to the Council. William A. Veech, Rice University, is chairman of this committee.

Politicization of the Society

I am responding to the continuing trickle of letters from AMS members who, evidently upset by some recent actions of the membership, have decried the "politicization" of the organization. Unfortunately, even though it may be true that "mathematics is, in and of itself, devoid of political content," that statement is not devoid

of political content. Even an individual who decides to try to do mathematics without any contact with the outside world is taking a political stand. And certainly any organization has a political component, especially one which must decide how to appeal for funds (both internally and externally), how to represent itself to the surrounding society, and how to think about the ends to which its labors may eventually be put to use.

Leo Marcus
Santa Monica, California
(Received September 23, 1988)

Politicization of the Society

I hereby resign my membership in the Society, effective immediately.

I joined the Society for reasons having nothing to do with politics. I will be happy to rejoin when the Society has nothing to do with politics.

Frank B. Miles
California State University,
Dominguez Hills
(Received September 19, 1988)

EDITOR'S NOTE: A Letter to the Editor from George Bergman was originally printed in the October issue and reprinted in the November issue of *Notices*. The letter was reprinted because one point concerning spacing between mathematical symbols and surrounding words was obscured in the original letter. In reprinting we overreacted and put too much space around the symbol "*x*". The preferred typeset form in item 6) of the Bergman letter should be

If the element *x* has the above property ...

Also, the author of the letter feels that "Typesetting in Journals" would have been a more appropriate title for his letter.

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Demonstrations of MathSci Disc, TeX software, and the use of MathSci Online will be held at the MathSci booth during the exhibit hours.

• A number of newly published titles will be on display at the AMS book sale booth, including titles in the new History of Mathematics series. The first volume in this new series, *A Century of Mathematics in America, Part I*, edited by Peter Duren with the assistance of Richard Askey and Uta Merzbach, was available at the AMS Centennial meeting in August; Part II is expected to be available in Phoenix.

This new series will present historical perspectives on individuals who have profoundly influenced the development of mathematics, as well as those who have made great contributions to the mathematical community, or will trace the development of special areas of research.

• Also available at the AMS booth will be two new five volume sets, *Reviews in Partial Differential Equations, 1980-86*, and *Reviews in Global Analysis, 1980-86*,

as well as new titles in most of the AMS publication series.

- The few remaining specially-inscribed HP28S calculators will be available for \$150 each. *CHAOS* by James Gleick will also be available for \$15.95. Once the remaining stock is sold, the AMS will no longer handle this title.
- Individual members of the AMS will receive a 50% discount on most AMS titles purchased or ordered at the book sale. VISA and MasterCard will be accepted for purchases.
- Complimentary coffee/tea will be available at the AMS Membership booth as well as a useful surprise for the new year.
- Finally, orders will be taken for special mementos from the AMS Centennial – the group photo, the Semicentennial picture, the program, and the tiles inscribed with the "Call to Mathematicians."