

NUCLEAR PHYSICS

Condon and Oppenheimer

At the International Cosmic Ray meeting these men were just physicists among physicists despite their prominence in recent congressional investigations.

➤ THERE were two front-page names among the scientists who gathered at the University of Denver International Cosmic Ray Symposium in Idaho Springs, Colo.—front page because they have tangled with a congressional committee and the FBI. They are Edward U. Condon and Frank Oppenheimer.

These are top names in science as well. Dr. Frank Oppenheimer, who has resigned his professorship at the University of Minnesota, received one of the few spontaneous bursts of applause at the very technical sessions devoted to unravelling the mysteries of the penetrating radiation from outer space that bombard the heights of Colorado's mountains most conveniently for scientific study. He had just reported the discovery of a strange burst of radiation, a cluster of photographic tracks made by particles of electricity, electrons, that seemed to have no assignable origin such as ordinary cosmic ray explosions usually have.

The significance of the applause was neither liberal nor conservative. It was just acknowledgment of a good job well done. Dr. Oppenheimer's colleagues had forgotten whether he had made any experiments years ago in communist politics, then much more respectable than now.

There was great concern among his fellow scientists that he go on with the important cosmic ray research that he has been doing for several years. This is jeopardized by his leaving the University of Minnesota staff. He does not know himself what he is going to do, but he and fellow physicists feel "the show must go on."

Dr. Condon—director of the National Bureau of Standards—whose name can hardly be mentioned in print without the smear tag, "appears to be one of the weakest links in our atomic security," was merely an eminent physicist among physicists, like a hundred others there.

It must not be assumed that these two men are not worried, hampered and harassed by what is happening to them. They are. And so were many attending the conference.

There is fear today that the freedom of investigation and expression that is inherent to the scientific method is disappearing from everyday life, under the excuse of security and loyalty. Will it extend some day to science, as it did in Germany and as it does in Russia? Is it any less important fundamentally in everyday life than it is in science?

If anyone were following the Communist line in this cosmic ray conference, he might

have been expected to make a defense of the claim put forth by two eminent Soviet scientists not long ago that there are 16 different kinds of mesons, which are cosmic ray particles. At most, four or five kinds are well verified by non-Soviet scientists.

Soviet cosmic ray experts would have been welcomed at the conference, if their government and ours were exchanging scientists these days.

There was no feeling of nationalism there. The cosmic rays rain upon the Urals and the Rockies. The cosmic ray experts are of many nationalities: Japanese, Canadian, Mexican, Chinese, Italian, Hungarian and many Americans, who have come to this country in almost every wave of immigration from the Puritans to the refugees from Hitler.

Science is strong because, as one scientist puts it, "We don't give a damn where it

is discovered or who discovered it, but only whether it is so."

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HOME ECONOMICS

Eating Too Fast? Try Candlelight

➤ CANDLELIGHT, celery, melba toast and artichokes were advised as devices for slowing the pace at which people, especially college students, eat.

The advice was given by Christine Ricker, director of university dining halls at Stanford University, at the meeting of the American Home Economics Association in San Francisco.

New foods, she finds, had best be introduced in combination with tried favorites on the same plate, if one hopes to have the students eat the new foods. Changing food habits at the college level, she admitted, is difficult.

Homemakers were advised at the same meeting to shop first and then plan their meals. This method for taking advantage of best buys at market was suggested by Dr. Velma Phillips, dean of the college of home economics, State College of Washington.

Science News Letter, July 9, 1949



COSMIC RAY SCIENTISTS—Three of the directors of the Inter-University High Altitude Laboratory on Mt. Evans, Colorado, confer during the Idaho Springs symposium sponsored by the Office of Naval Research and the Atomic Energy Commission. Left to right—Dr. Kenneth Greisen of Cornell, Dr. Byron E. Cohn of the University of Denver, Dr. Bruno Rossi of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.