ing yet to come," says an official of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. "We're not out of the woods yet."

The initial feelers last year on Soviet-U.S. arms reduction talks, which would placate the nuclear have-nots, are still far from the conference table.

The development that could have a sharp effect on the non-nuclear powers' confidence is the upcoming U.S. decision on the fate of the Anti-Ballistic Missile system. The ABM has been coming in for heavy fire from scientists who question its effectiveness, Congressmen who object to the cost, and from community groups objecting to the planting of nuclear warheads in their backyards.

One proposed ABM site, for example, is Bainbridge Island, near Seattle. Within a day after the announcement, Washington Representative Thomas M. Pelly received almost 140 protesting telegrams. New Jersey Senator Harrison Williams rose in the Senate to call the ABM a monster, and other angry responses were heard in regard to sites near Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

On Feb. 4, House Armed Services Committee Chairman L. Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) advised Defense Secretary Melvin Laird to stop acquiring new ABM sites until a "definitive statement" of position on the matter was made by Nixon. Two days later, Laird announced that all ABM construction and site acquisition would be halted, until Congressional hearings had probed the status and potential of the defense weapon.

Laird himself apparently sees any major Congressional vote-shuffling as unlikely. "Most of the people that are taking the position against the anti-ballistic missile system," he says, ". . . took that position in the last session of Congress."

He emphasized, however, that neither research and development nor procurement has been discontinued. So, with the program moving on, the hearings will probe for any ways in which it might fail to meet its promise. One of these is likely to be cost; the $5 billion "thin" system originally proposed now may run to almost $10 billion. Another is effectiveness against sophisticated, decoy-laden strategic missiles with electronic countermeasures.

Nevertheless, some officials feel that the ABM is bound to come. One such is House Appropriations Committee Chairman George D. Mahon (D-Tex.), who feels that the Administration will ask Congressional approval for the system, and get it. "I know the Joint Chiefs of Staff," he says, "and I know Secretary Laird, and I know what their thoughts are on this matter."

PHYSICAL SOCIETY

Science and defense

It is often said that to find out what is really new in physics the curious party should not sit down at the formal sessions of the American Physical Society, but rather listen in on the informal conversations in the hotel corridors. Here physicists, famous and not, discuss the latest and most daring of their experiments and speculations, things they don't yet dare to put into formal presentations.

This informal information mill was working as usual during the national APS meeting, but in the halls of the New York Hilton it was being upstaged by a form of corridor activity that is new to the society's meetings. People were handing out leaflets, gathering signatures on petitions, and distributing lapel buttons.

The leaflets invited interested persons to the inaugural meeting of a new organization, Scientists for Social and Political Action. The petition sought formation of a new division of the society, one which would concern itself with social and political questions rather than with some sub-specialty of physics as all the present divisions do.

About 300 people attended the group's inaugural meeting, and about 100 joined to organize an entity that, according to Dr. Michael Goldhaber of the Rockefeller University, will be free of highly defined organizational structure. It intends to be a collection of autonomous local chapters that will stand ready to acquaint the public with the scientific facts about problems such as the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile), pollution and urban transportation.

The move is the second attempt by activists to prod the society into taking an active part in social issues. A constitutional amendment that would have allowed the APS to take official stands on public policy was defeated last year (SN: 7/27, p. 82).

In all of this, the "military-industrial complex" and the Department of Defense figure as serious villains. "The Vietnam War," says Joel Feigenbaum, a graduate student at Cornell University, "has destroyed the confidence of scientists that we could trust the Government with the results of our research." Yet a great deal of that research depends on the DOD budget, an aspect of the system that the young activists definitely want to revolutionize.

The activists want to wean scientists away from their financial dependence on the military. There are not entirely humorous suggestions of a kind Scientists Anonymous to provide moral and perhaps material help to those who are trying to kick the DOD habit.

As a dramatization of opposition to the Defense Department, students and faculty at several universities have put together the so-called March 4 movement.

This calls for stopping all research work for one day, March 4, by anyone who elects to participate. Meetings and symposia will be substituted. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell and Yale Universities are the original centers of the March 4 idea, but it has spread, organizers say, to about 20 or 25 more campuses. Even the Bell Telephone Laboratories are expected to send a busload of participants to MIT.

Although some of the elders of the American Physical Society reacted to this ferment as if they had discovered an anarchist conspiracy in their attic, the society officials did not provide anything like a direct confrontation with regard to the request for formation of the division. They took the request under cautious and conservative, but real, consideration. One of them rather plaintively remarked, "To become a member of the older generation, you just have to live enough years."

The petition to form a social affairs division of the society has been referred to a committee on formation of new divisions, standard procedure that has been gone through with every other division.

CIGARETTE COMMERCIALS

Smoke-free wasteland

Television without Marlboro country, television without Newport's springtime lovers or the worn boots of the Camel walker—as incredible as television without football.

But that cough-free wasteland is exactly what the Federal Communications Commission imagined when it proposed a ban on all television and radio cigarette commercials.

Citing reports that 9 out of every 10 lung cancer victims are smokers (lung cancer kills 50,000 Americans every year), and that smoking is associated with 25,000 deaths annually from bronchitis and emphysema, FCC Chairman Rosel H. Hyde has declared that "in the case of such a threat to public health, the authority to act is really a duty to act." The commission is charged by law with licensing broadcasters to use the airways "in the public interest." Cigarettes, it decided in a six-to-one vote, are not in that interest.

At the same time, the FCC commissioners were quick to declare that the proposed ban on cigarette ads should