

Dr. York receives the Forum on Physics and Society Award

May 5, 1976

Dr. Herbert F. York, professor of physics at the University of California, San Diego, has been presented the Forum on Physics and Society Award for Promoting Public Understanding of the Relation of Physics to Society at the 1976 spring meeting of the American Physical Society in Washington, D.C.

The Forum on Physics and Society Award recognizes outstanding achievement in promoting public understanding of significant issues relating physics to society. York, who served as the first chancellor at UC San Diego, was cited for his writings on strategic weapons policy through-which "Dr. York has provided the public with a unique personal view of the arms race from the perspective of a long-time participant."

More than 1,000 invited and contributed papers were presented at the three-day meeting of physicists. Besides the general sessions covering the latest advances in physics research, this year's meeting held several sessions of current interest including the safety aspects of sodium-cooled, fast-breeder reactors.

As a junior member of the Manhattan Project during World War II, York helped to initiate the uranium enrichment facility at Oak Ridge. In the early 50's he organized and became the first director of the Livermore Laboratory where he led the design of nuclear weapons. Between 1958 and 1961 he served as the first director of defense research and engineering in the Pentagon.

During this period his perspective on strategic weapons changed and, in his own words, "It was during my tenure in that job as scientific administrator of the United States side of the arms race that I formed the views I still hold about the futility of the race and the absolute need to find some alternative course."

As a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee from 1964 to 1968 and the General Advisory Committee of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency from 1963 to 1969, York became an influential advocate of arms control. He was a leading spokesman in opposition to SAFEGUARD deployment in the 1969 ABM debate and later became chairman of the rejuvenated Federation of American Scientists.

His book, "Race to Oblivion," was published in 1970. In it he describes in laymen's terms the entire history of the arms race since World War II and his own perception that "the end result of it all has been to produce a situation which is at once wonderously absurd and exceedingly dangerous..."

In 1973 he edited "Arms Control," an anthology of Scientific American articles. York is currently engaged in a detailed study of the seminal strategic weapons decisions since World War II, of which the first output, "The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller, and the Superbomb," has just been published.

York was named chancellor at UC San Diego in 1961. He resigned three years later but remained at the campus as professor of physics. He served as dean of graduate studies from 1969 to 1973 and as acting chancellor from 1970 to 1972.

York was one of five winners for 1962 of the Ernest Orlando Lawrence Memorial Award of the Atomic Energy Commission, so honored for "important contributions to our knowledge of elementary particles and especially for leadership in applying atomic energy to the national defense." In September, 1965, he headed a twelve

member United States delegation to a UNESCO conference on the application of science and technology in Santiago, Chile. He has also served on other groups and with other agencies studying technical assistance in Latin American.

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