MICRO WAVE NEWS

A Report on Non-Ionizing Radiation

BEMS' Bad Joke

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EMFs are hot. People are interested again and things are happening, at least for the moment. Here's some of what's going on:

• The French government is stepping up its efforts to limit the use of cell phones by children. It's not just talk. Ministers of State are now involved. Legislation and regulation are in play. Public interest in France has never been greater. An example: *Sciences et Avenir,* a major French science magazine, devoted a special "dossier" on EMFs: What You Really Need To Know in the May issue. It runs 21 pages, in color.

• A Congressional briefing on cell phones and health risks is scheduled to be held in Washington in mid-September. Senator Arlen Specter, a brain tumor survivor, is slated to participate. This would be the first time a U.S. senator has publicly expressed interest in RF radiation since the 1992 hearings on radar guns (see *MWN,* S/O92). "It's the right time and we're going to make it happen," one of the organizers told *Microwave News.* Meanwhile, two large-circulation national magazines, GQ and Harper's, have commissioned feature articles on EMFs.

• After a decade of work —and lots of internecine squabbling— the Interphone study team has finally been submitted its results for publication. The director of IARC himself orchestrated its release from a perpetual state of limbo. We hear the paper is under expedited review. Everybody wants to see the paper but no one expects it to settle much of anything. The disputes will just move out into the open. If the Interphone epidemiologists spent three-to-four years fighting over how to explain the tumor risks, the public debate will surely be fierce. Also, don't forget that much of the Interphone data has yet to be analyzed.

Against this backdrop, the Bioelectromagnetics Society (BEMS) is holding its annual conference in Davos, Switzerland, this week. A 90-minute slot was left open on Friday, the last day of the meeting, for a "Hot Topic," to be announced at the last minute to be as

topical as possible. What did the organizers pick? — "When Do We Know Enough To Stop Research on the Safety of Wireless Communications?"

It could be the punch line of a bad joke. A society that is supposed to be dedicated to research suggests it might well be time to give it up. In poker, it's called a "tell." It tells you what's really going on. "Stop the research" is an industry mantra —another is, "the weight of the evidence shows there is no cancer risk"— and BEMS is all too willing to play along. BEMS has always had a schizoid relationship with research. It is one of the few research societies that rewards those who don't find effects and runs out those who do. No wonder the society's future viability is in doubt.

That same Friday, the leaders of BEMS and the European Bioelectromagnetics Association (EBEA) will meet to discuss the possibility that the two groups might join together. Right now, that seems unlikely, as neither side wants to lose control.

We suggest a different model: a "Big Tent" approach. Not only should BEMS and EBEA merge, but they should seek alliances with all the other groups that work in the field: Those who work on visible light, on bone and wound healing, on sleep, on hyperthermia, on cancer therapy, on pain control, on animal magnetism, on avian navigation and so on. These are all part of bioelectromagnetics and only an integrated approach will lead to answers. The one problem with this concept is that it would mean that BEMS would have to shrug off the influence of the wireless industry and the military, which now dominate the society. That's not likely either, we know.

Also on that same Friday, June 19, the New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) is holding a one-day conference on *Circadian Disruption and Cancer*. Among the speakers will be David Blask, Russel Reiter and Bugs Stevens, former regulars at BEMS meetings. It's time to lure them and other serious scientists back into the fold. The only way to do that is to commit to research, not repudiate it.

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