

## Report on the March American Physical Society Meeting

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"The Pseudoscientists of APS"

by Eugene Mallove and Jed Rothwell

Not all attendees at the American Physical Society's Centennial Meeting, held March 20-26 in Atlanta, Georgia, were scientists in the true sense of that word. Many of them were pseudoscientists, as their behavior proved. Some 1,000 physicists, including, we are informed, President Clinton's Science advisor, were present as three pseudoscientists took turns mocking cold fusion at a session dubbed, Science, Junk Science, and Pseudoscience,

Monday afternoon, March 22nd. Jed Rothwell, who audio-recorded the entire sorry session, filed this report:

On Monday there were three good papers on cold fusion [see pp.xx] but I had to miss them to attend the anti-cold-fusion lynch mob session instead. It featured Bob Park (Prof. Robert Park of the University of Maryland, the APS spokesman), John Huizenga (DOE anti-cold fusion henchman, retired), Douglas Morrison (CERN), magician James the Amazing Randi, and a top Federal science honcho named Dr. Peter Zimmerman from the State Department Arms Control Agency. It was a trip!

Zimmerman is conducting a jihad against cold fusion, vowing to wipe it out in the State Department, the Patent Office (?), and the Commerce Department with the help of the President's Science Advisor. (The Patent Office?!? And they call us kooks!) It was a depressing and alarming, yet droll. I will describe it in detail when I get a chance. I must tell about the weirdest part here, because if I do not write it down I might think I dreamed it. Zimmerman gave a rousing anti-cold-fusion talk, pressing all the buttons. He said that one of his first official acts was to cancel a meeting about cold fusion (Conference on Free Energy, later renamed Conference on Future Energy to be held April 29-May 1, 1999 in Bethesda, Maryland), and that's one of the accomplishments I'm proudest of within the last year. He announced that he and Park will work to exterminate every trace of CF and all other junk science from the Federal establishment. They will see to it that no other meetings are held anywhere else in Washington, which is a hotbed of cold fusion as we all know. **He called upon the audience to join him in this crusade, and to report to the highest authorities any rumors about unauthorized research and groups of more than three people caught discussing cold fusion.** Naturally, this was met with cheers and applause from overflow crowd there, which was a sort of sci.physics.fusion [www forum] come to life. I thought people like that only existed on Internet.

Anyway, here is the weird part. After the session I approached Zimmerman and asked him for the exact spelling of his name and his job title. He grabbed some papers and held them to his chest, covering his badge, and he said, "I'm not going to tell you." ...He said, "I am not officially here." I asked if he planned to publish his remarks in the proceedings and he said "maybe" in a noncommittal tone (meaning: No Way!).

Apparently he wants his statements off the record, yet he had made them in front of a cheering crowd and he saw me wearing a press badge, sitting in the front row, taking photographs and recording the lecture on audio tape! . . .

I expected some degree of academic civility, but I saw none. I knew that Zimmerman canceled the Conference on Free Energy meeting at the State Department. I expected he would say, "I felt this meeting was inappropriate for the State Department and should be moved to the DOE or some other agency involved with energy." Instead, he vowed to stop the meeting at any other department. **He said that he and Park would work to expose and purge anyone at the patent office who sympathizes with cold fusion. "Bob Park will sink his teeth into that one," as he put it.**

Zimmerman introduced Robert Park, making a few prefatory remarks: "The genesis of this session is when I began to notice, close to a year ago, that "junk science" had become all pervasive in places where I was very much afraid to see it. On public broadcasting systems (NPR) masquerading as news on various networks every day of the week. Later,.. I will shamelessly show how the First International Conference on Free Energy, now ain't gonna be held, and that's one of the accomplishments I'm proud of stopping." [applause]

## The Cancelled Meeting

What got the APS pseudoscientists so riled up was the impending meeting in Washington, COFE (now called the Conference on Future Energy), to be held at the Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD. Our scientific colleague, engineer Tom Valone of the non-profit Integrity Research Institute in Washington, DC had arranged with a State Department person for a scientific meeting to be held at the US. State Department on April 29-30, 1999. This meeting was to be part of a series called the Secretary of State Open Forum. The meeting planned for the State Department was to feature a variety of scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs who would be talking about various proposed advanced energy systems, including cold fusion, which have virtually no associated fuel costs. Other technologies to be discussed were of a more conventional nature, such as solar and wind power, also having virtually no fuel costs. Hence, the conference was called Conference on Free Energy. Workshops were to be held May 1, 1999 at the nearby State Plaza Hotel. Within a week of his recently joining the US State Department as an advisor to the Arms Control Agency, Peter Zimmerman had apparently become intellectually offended by the content of the proposed meeting and took action to make sure that it did not occur. He quickly succeeded in getting it canceled. **Later, he boasted about this in a misdirected e-mail that fell into our possession!:**

Message-ID: <s6f9fcb1.092@acda.gov <mailto:s6f9fcb1.092@acda.gov> >  
From: Zimmerpe@acda.gov <mailto:Zimmerpe@acda.gov>  
To: iri@erols.com <mailto:iri@erols.com>  
Subject: [Fwd: Re: CONFERENCE] -Reply  
Date: Thu, 25 Mar 1999 09:06:30 -0500

**Oh the shame of it all. How dastardly we were to poor Mr. Valone. He and his Aussie friend are embarrassed and it's all our fault. How can they ever forgive us? How can we ever cleanse our souls of this black mark?**

**I had a wonderful time at the Physical Society meeting in Atlanta, and you and I were hailed as heroine/hero for getting the conference moved out of State. I have reason to believe that a "Higher Power" will get them evicted from Commerce too. I will probably take a direct hit in Infinite Energy magazine because they sent somebody to cover the session on Pseudoscience and I was pretty scathing.**

**Obviously, I'm back at work.  
Cheers, pete**

Here are some excerpts from Zimmerman's remarks at the APS meeting:

"Let me take a few minutes to tell you about the Conference on Free Energy. Free means zero cost, it doesn't mean gives free energy. You'll notice that seminar is sponsored by the Secretary of State open forum and that's why I had an in to this."

"About a month ago, I took on a job as the Science Advisor, or Chief Scientist to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency which had been independent but will shortly be an arm of the State Department. So I'm housed in that building. The week before I was to start, Bob [Park] sends me an e-mail, he tells me in some detail about the content of the Free Energy under the sponsorship of the Secretary of State's Open Forum. It says, Pete if you can't get that killed? What's the point of having a State Department?"

"I like challenge and here was a chance to influence an event which had already taken place. A decision had been made. But, you know, I work in Washington and those of us who work in Washington are quite aware that nothing's ever finally decided until the day for it to occur has passed." . . .

**"And now I have to admit that all the work I did to get this conference killed at the State Department is probably [...] because you see Mr. Valone works at the Patent Office and has failed to [...] every schedule of the Commerce department. I don't know anybody in Commerce to get burned yet, but many people I talk to do? And I'm hoping that Commerce will give them as warm a reception as the Department of State did.**

I'll take a few questions if there are any...."

He looked like John Cleese in A Fish Called Wanda, where he is caught naked in a stranger's apartment.