

# THE PHYCOLOGIST



The Newsletter of the British Psychological Society

Editor: **Bruce Osborne**

Home page: <http://www.brphycsoc.org/>

Number 59

**August 2001**

## Contents

Editorial	1
BPS Winter Meeting 2002: Celebrating 50 years of the Society	2
Call for Abstracts	3
BPS Auction	3
Nominations for Council	4
Historical Corner	4
Obituary: Peter Fay	6
Meeting Announcement	10
Council Officers	11
Instructions for Contributors	12

## Editorial

A recent publication (*Science Policy Priorities 2001, Institute of Biology Publication*), produced on behalf of the Affiliated Societies of the Institute of Biology, makes interesting reading. Three major areas of concern were identified, lack of long term investment in science, the poor public understanding of science and the importance of sustainability. One of the most alarming facts identified is a ~20% decline in investment in UK Science as a proportion of GDP post 1986. Underlying this reduced investment was an increasing reliance on short term, goal orientated R&D funding and a decrease in fundamental or 'blue skies' research. Whilst we might argue about the relative merits of 'fundamental' versus 'applied' investigations the absence of long term funding must be worrying irrespective of our views about these two approaches to scientific research. As the *Science Policy Priorities 2001* document clearly identifies it is the absence of any coherent career structure caused by a reliance on short-term contracts that often makes science unappealing. It is always a surprise to those outside the academic community to realise that no formal career structure exists within higher education institutions. My own experiences indicate that students are less likely to start a postgraduate programme of research now largely because of the absence of future opportunities, compounded by poor financial support. In the past I believe there was an expectation of a lectureship after a successful and productive PhD thesis. Now there are few opportunities, nor is there the same opportunity to change direction to pursue other interests. Don't get me wrong, progress to a lectureship should not be automatic, but there should be some flexibility in the system. The worry is that able researchers that have much to contribute are leaving science for alternative careers.

