

# Einstein Theory Causes Scientific War

IF THE United States were helplessly in debt, its people half starved, its government shaky, its industries crippled, and if it owed a huge foreign indemnity for the collection of which alien armies camped on its soil, it would be hard to picture anyone paying attention to the grave problem of whether light rays are bent on entering a gravitational area. Much less would it be imaginable that newspapers should give the pros and cons columns of space and that mobs should form over the matter.

That is roughly what is happening in Germany, and Albert Einstein is the cause of it all. Einstein is the founder of the theory of relativity which is so abstruse that only twelve men in the world are said to be capable of understanding it thoroughly. Seemingly many more have grasped it in Germany, for his theory is now the center of a gigantic debate, with hosts of partisans on both sides, hard words passed and rougher words lurking in the background.

This could happen nowhere but in Germany, where the study of science, in fact any study, has always been more controversial than anywhere else and where thousands have taken sides on questions of pure knowledge which they themselves did not understand. In fact it has been claimed that Germans have spent their lives in difficult study solely to be able, at the end, to say to some professorial college, "There, I told you that you were all wrong."

The Einstein Battle rages fiercely. Paul Weyland, his chief antagonist, in an opening statement called the distinguished theorist a "ruthless manufacturer of mathematical fiction," and his chief followers, "chalk physicists." These were hard words, and duly reported in the papers.

Some of Einstein's journalistic supporters seem to be much at sea as to his theory, but insist he must be all right because otherwise the Swedish savants would not have given him the Nobel prize. This is rather good reasoning at that, and doubtless serves a multitude of supporters who do not know or care whether an object viewed from a moving body traveling in the direction of the light rays is larger or smaller or neither.

Einstein is popular in many quarters because he is a German who has, despite the ill opinion formed of Germans during the war, compelled the recognition of foreigners. With others he is unpopular because of his alleged pacific attitude during the war, and all this adds to the general jollity.

Battle has been largely joined over three points of his theory: One his dictum that light rays are bent on entering an area of gravitation, another his deductions from the variations of the orbit of the planet Mercury, a third his deductions and theories on the red rays of the spectrum. These are abstruse matters and quite beyond the ken of the ordinarily well educated.

It seems to matter very little whether it is as Einstein says that the ray bending was proved by ob-

servations during the eclipse of the sun in 1914, or whether the truth is with his opponents who claim that he observed the effect of the sun's corona. Whether the Einstein theory or the Newtonian law accounts for Mercury is a thing over which few Americans will lose sleep.

Nevertheless they enrage and excite Germany. When Weyland and Professor Gehrke, the shock troops of



(C) Keystone

PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN

the opposition, opened the battle at Philharmonic Hall in Berlin, the hall was packed. The renowned relativist was in a box with his daughter, taking the attacks calmly, even smiling now and then.

Herr Weyland fired first. He announced that he had come to explode the "Einstein fiction," but was criticized for not explaining what this fiction was, the

audience standing sorely in need of finding out exactly what Einstein meant. He then attacked the newspapers and the scientific press for advertising the theory.

Supporters of Professor Einstein began to scream at him, "Get to the facts," and the speaker demanded that these disturbers be, "put into the air."

Finally he called Einstein and his followers scientific Dadaists, and concluded that his ideas were all wrong and anyhow he had stolen his notion of Mercury.

Professor Gehrke made a better impression. He outlined the Einstein theory, said it was a brilliant intellectual feat, but useless. He proceeded to show that Professor Einstein had altered his theory since first announced. He was a humorous speaker, and received a good reception.

In the end, however, he said that the Einstein theory was not the Einstein theory at all, but had been printed in a book by a Hungarian writer, Palagyni, in 1901.

This should have ended a pleasant evening, but after the meeting a number of students chased Professor Einstein home and threatened to cut his throat. This was not the first mix-up that he has had with the students, mostly ardent German Nationalists and militarists, who were annoyed by his politics. Earlier in the year they broke up several of his lectures because it had been arranged that they should be free to the public. This the students, who had paid the university fees, declared was unfair and eventually by means of bringing fish horns to the lectures won their point.

Of course at the meeting, Professor Einstein had no chance, but next day he had his innings. He threatened to leave Berlin flat if any more trouble ensued.

"I seem to myself," he said, "like a person who lies in a comfortable bed but is plagued by bedbugs. My closer colleagues have treated me with all possible consideration. For some months, however, since the announcement of the English eclipse expedition, which substantiated my theories, I have been attacked by certain persons on non-scientific grounds, and in the end I wish peace."

He does not shrink from criticism, he said, and this was shown by the fact that he had himself asked the scientists for discussion of his theory of relativity. Then he grew angrier and said that the explanations of Dr. Gerber as to Mercury were not explanations at all. That was also true of the work of others in the red rays of the spectrum.

Moreover, said Professor Einstein, he had never heard of Palagyni and did not read Hungarian.

Altogether, the controversy threatens to go on for at least two years and then take a new lease of life. Two years is set as the time in which observatories in England and Germany, now testing the theory of relativity, can make a report. Meanwhile the professor and his opponents must call each other names on the basis of pure reason.

## Taking Books to the Farm in Auto Libraries

SOME bright man (or was it a woman?) has at last realized that long rows of books neatly stored away on hundreds of gloomy looking shelves in town and city public libraries are about as useful to the masses of people as unshorn wool, unpicked cotton, or undug spuds.

Thousands of dusty volumes are being resurrected from their places of burial in ornate-fronted libraries and sent out into the rural districts where live the sort of people who are not only hungry for something to read, but who will satisfy such appetite if given the opportunity. Country folk, you know, are not burdened with the all-consuming problem of spending their evenings Movie-ing, Shimmy-ing, Dansant-ing or Chop-suey-ing.

Realizing the voracious book appetite of country people, the American Library Association is busily engaged in blazing the way for city and county libraries to adopt this new system. Library officials are having constructed special automobiles which have facilities for carrying hundreds of books and magazines. With capable young women in charge these "library autos" are sent out on the side roads of the country districts, away from the main arteries of traffic, where they stop at each farmhouse and give father, mother and all the children full opportunity to select the kind of publications that appeal to their individual fancies.

Maryland, Delaware and Minnesota are taking the lead in this new line of educational and country-satisfying work, and the results are said to be more

satisfactory than the backers of the movement ever dreamed would be the case.

On "Library Auto" day children can be seen perched on the fences all along the route eagerly awaiting the coming of the "nice book girl" in her wonderful fairy-like machine. Mothers, busy with baking, washing, mending, cooking, cleaning and dozens of other household duties, stop for a few moments every now and then, and going to the front door, look far down the road for dust signs indicating the approach of the book wagon. Of course some one will ask, "Why

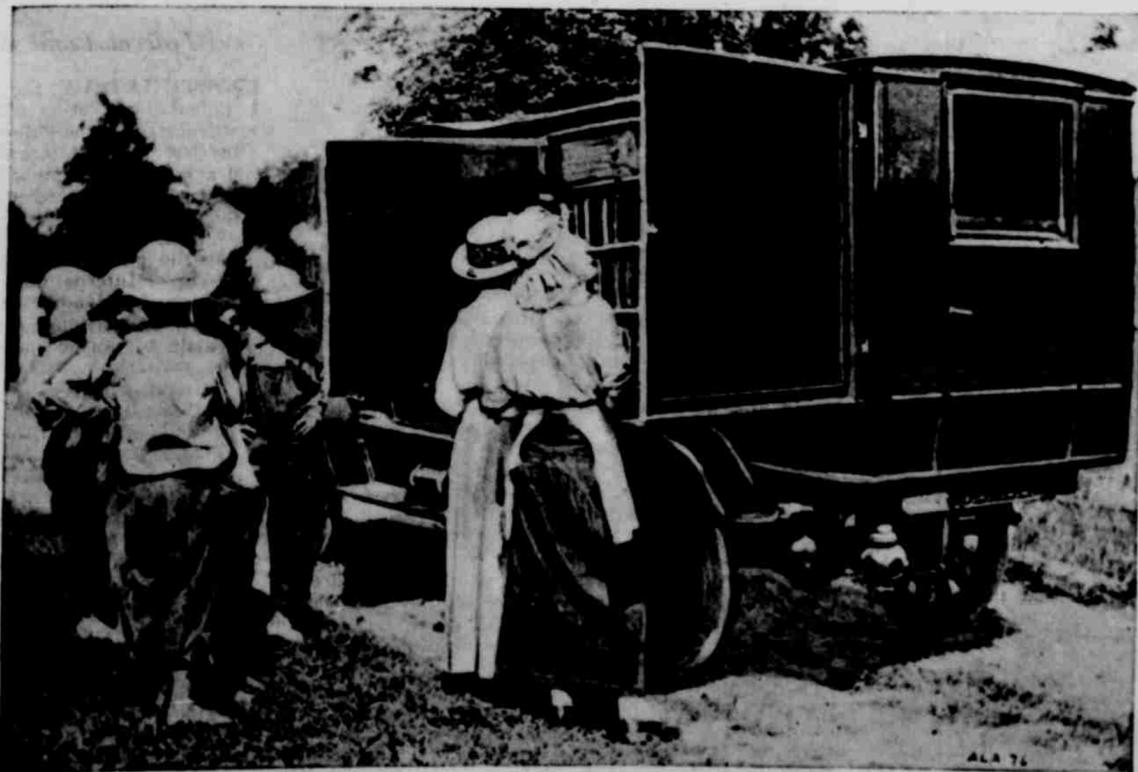
go to all this bother and expense taking books out to the country? Why not let the country people come in to town and get them? We (Mr. Carnegie and ourselves) have erected these big beautiful libraries, and they surely ought to show a little appreciation by coming to them for their books."

There are two answers to this question. One is that the rural resident cannot drop in at the library any time he pleases. Such a visit often means an inconvenient trip of 10 miles or more. The second answer is that whereas the average individual finds it hard, and sometimes impossible, to browse among the shelves of the modern library, he can make himself completely at home among the more modest supply of books in the auto libraries.

When the rolling bookshelves draw up at the farmyard gate the librarian merely unfastens the doors on the side of her truck and there you are—all the treasures of romance, adventure, science and history at your fingertips.

There, in the sunshine of the road, before your home or standing in the shadow of your big maples, the library is robbed of all its mystery. The librarian turns out to be a very human person who likes doughnuts and cider and apples and who is only too willing to chat with you and to make helpful suggestions.

The plan should work splendidly in the rural communities and if it does, the librarians who conceived it will have done something well worth while for rural America.



Country people getting books from the "Auto Library."