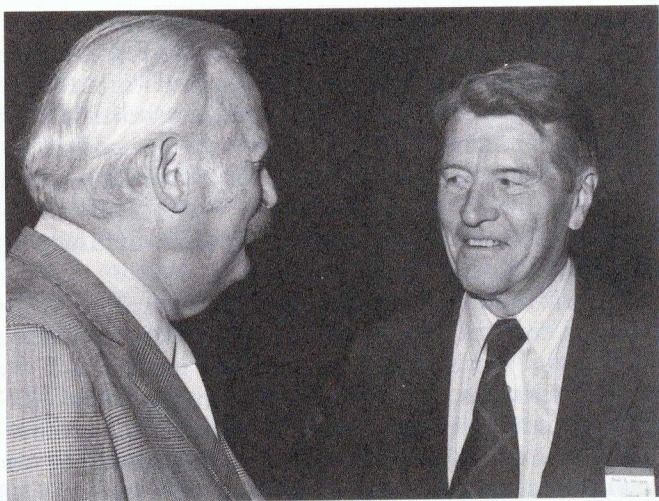


Title 379

Dr Christian Anfinsen, Nobel Laureate, was until his death a Member of the ISR Editorial Board and a regular visitor from the Johns Hopkins University to the Lindau Meetings where I (left) always had long interdisciplinary talks with him. *Courtesy Kemmer, Lindau.*



Title 379

In addition to the serious lectures during the day in the Insel Halle in Lindau, festivities for Nobel Laureates and students take place there in the evenings. Here the **Author** leads an attractive, but unknown, young student in the **Polonaise** in 1989, the annual event which inaugurates the relaxed atmosphere of the Meeting. *Copyright photograph Dietlind Castor, Lindau.*



Alfred Nobel's generous Will, made in Paris in 1895, contained the operating phrase: "Prizes to those who have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind through their research in the preceding year in medicine, chemistry and physics". One of the quite unexpected consequences was that two medical men on the Island of Lindau in Lake Constance, Germany's greatest inland lake, decided in 1950 to organise regular annual Meetings of Nobel Laureates in their Home Town. Six years after the defeat of Germany in World War II, they argued correctly that such Meetings, if attended by foreign Laureates, would help to rebuild world-wide scientific contacts, lost during the War.

These Meetings, which I attended regularly since 1977, proved of great benefit to ISR, as I could persuade one of the Speakers each year to send me their texts for publication. Furthermore the personal contact and discussion with the world's greatest scientists was always informative and stimulating. It should never be forgotten that the award of a Nobel Prize, now for a century — the first was announced in 1901 — is the highest distinction which any man or woman can achieve. Neither an Olympic Gold Medal nor a Hollywood Oscar is anywhere near it, as the Nobel Prize is only awarded for pure intellectual grandeur, far beyond physical prowess or artistic performance.

The Nobel Laureates are invited by the Lindau Curatorium, who take care of their travelling expenses and hotel accommodation as well as those of a large number, about 500, young scientists from German and European universities. Their attendance at the lectures is much appreciated, and the Laureates enjoy their talks with, and comments by, the next generation. The financial support for these Meetings comes from German Governments, both Federal and Länder, from industry and local sources. Whereas the names of the donors are noted on the program, the detailed figures need, according to German Law, only be divulged to Members of the Curatorium.

After the 1995 Lindau Meeting, Chemistry, I wrote a very critical Editorial which I published in ISR 20/3. The chemistry lectures had become pure physics and mathematical calculations and the greatest benefit to mankind could not even be guessed. I suggested that the Nobel Committee in awarding their prizes should emphasise the benefits to mankind in their announcement of the prizes, and the Lindau Curatorium should insist that speakers refer to these benefits in their lectures. Only Lord Porter FRS told the audience in 1995 how his own research subject, photosynthesis, might have a decisive influence on renewable sources of energy for the benefit of mankind. If these chemical benefits to mankind were more widely known and reported by the media present at Lindau, the adverse reputation of chemistry might be removed [see Titles 405-407].