That at least was the general impression in Hanover. It is already evident from his visit to Planck in the middle of October that he is worried about his position—did I write you about that yet? Soon afterwards his opponent Schumann came to Planck. Isn’t that amusing? Each accused the other of the blackest atrocities in the past and of the most sinister plans for the future. I fear they may both be right.

With my best regards to your wife[12] and warm wishes
Yours

35 Max Wien: Physics at German Universities
[Late November 1934]

Recent speeches and writings have pointed out time and again that it is the primary responsibility of physics to bring relief in the current serious economic crisis. Undoubtedly, the great economic upswing at the turn of the century was based above all upon progress in physics; and German universities had played a major part in these advances. I only call to mind spectral analysis, X rays, and electric waves.

Development in physics depends directly or indirectly on the work conducted at university departments. Obviously, other laboratories, such as the Reich Physical and Technical Institute and large industrial plants, also play a major role in this.[2] But those who perform the research and inventive activities there had previously studied at German universities; and thus the latter are everywhere the basis and source of progress.

It is therefore all the more important that instruction at universities and research in their physical laboratories be maintained at the present level. It is

Beyerchen [1977], pp. 103–122.
11 Max → Planck was still president of the → KWG. On Erich → Schumann, at that time just appointed head of the research department of the Army Ordnance Office (→ HWA) and on the conflicts between Schumann and various wings of the Nazi science bureaucracy see, e.g., Stark [1945/87], pp. 124ff.
12 Mie was married to Bertha Heß (1875–1954), the daughter of the surveyor Friedrich Heß, in Heidelberg in 1901.
1 This dating is based on the cover letter of Nov. 25, 1934 to Bernard → Rust, Minister of Education, Science and Culture (→ REM), to whom this petition was directed. On the same day M. → Wien also sent this text to other influential science politicians including Johannes → Stark, the then new president of the Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft (→ NG). Cf. Hoffmann [1989], pp. 189ff., and here the two preceding documents.
2 Research at the Physikalisch-Technische Reichsanstalt (→ PTR) covered the fields of spectroscopy, photometry, electrical engineering and low-temperature physics.
the responsibility of the academic departments, leading members of the physics profession, and the governments, to see to this.

Most universities now have large and appropriately equipped departments. However, there are still too few teaching positions, and this need weighs particularly heavily when existing teaching positions remain unoccupied for a long time. In the following I would like to draw the attention of members in the field as well as other circles to this problem.

The first issue is: Which physical teaching positions at universities and polytechnics should be considered essential. We begin naturally with the experimental physics representatives and the physics department head. The latter is kept very busy with the direction of the department, including examinations, meetings, doctoral theses, lectures, etc.; so he will hardly be able to take on more than the broad, general experimental physics [lecture]. Since the general course is not sufficient for proper physicists, but also for mathematicians, chemists, mineralogists, geologists, etc., ‘Advanced Experimental Physics’ has gained increasing acceptance as a required course. A second junior experimental physicist is required for this, who supports the full professor at the same time with the administration of the department and with the guidance of doctoral theses. This person can be an associate professor or an older unsalaried university lecturer,[3] who would have to receive an official, paid teaching assignment, however. These positions are particularly important, first of all because of the additional teaching responsibilities, but then also because, as a rule, department directors will later be selected from all of these second physicists.

Theoretical physics must be represented either by a full professorship, or by an associate professorship. Considering the scope and importance of theory in modern physics, it is not good to have a younger experimental physicist represent this field, however, as was formerly often customary, with the theoretical associate professorship actually only constituting a transitional position to a full professorship in experimental physics.[4] Only in very rare cases does a younger physicist master experiment and theory simultaneously to such a degree that he can represent both completely.

With the close existing relations between physics and technology, and in view of the fact that very many young physicists go into industry or enter the engineering units of the Armed Forces after they have graduated, it is very desirable to expand pure physical instruction by adding a representative of technical

---

[3] An unsalaried university lecturer (Privatdozent) had the right to teach at university, but was only paid a small fee by each course participant. This is an intermediary position usually held by ‘habilitated’ academics aspiring towards a professorship in their field.