

WALTER KOHN, 1923 -

For fifty years Walter Kohn has been one of the world's most outstanding condensed matter theorists. He was born in Vienna, Austria, on March 9, 1923 and came to Canada during WWII. He obtained his B.A. (1945) and his M.A. (1946) from the University of Toronto prior to proceeding to Harvard for his Ph.D. under Julian Schwinger. Before leaving for Harvard, he spent part of his time as a geophysicist in Quebec and also worked part-time as an industrial physicist in Toronto. Most of his scientific career has been in the United States. In 1998, he received the Nobel prize in Chemistry for creating density functional theory. This theory became the method of choice for condensed matter physicists studying the dynamics of electrons. It also, according to the Swedish Academy, made Kohn one of "the two most prominent figures" in the "enormous theoretical and computational development" leading to the emergence of quantum chemistry.

Kohn's entry into Canada was not smooth. Since he was born of Jewish parents he needed to escape Nazi-occupied Austria. In 1938, at age 16, he was just young enough to qualify for the last Kindertransport out of Austria. He stayed for two years with a family in England before being sent to Canada for detention as an "enemy alien". He



Walter Kohn

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eventually served in the Canadian armed forces during WWII. He may not have been truly welcomed by Canada but he has retained very warm attachments to our country.

He was a professor at the Carnegie Institute of Technology for a decade (1950-1960) and then spent almost two decades at the University of California, San Diego, before moving, in 1979 to become the first director of the new Institute of Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has ranged widely over condensed matter theory but the density functional work for which he won the Nobel Prize was carried out

during the 1960's at the University of California, San Diego. Its development involved Kohn's collaboration with Pierre Hohenberg and Lu Sham.

For his large circle of friends and admirers, Kohn is a delightful person. He is full of Viennese urbanity and charm, and always very generous and supportive. We are very fortunate to have enjoyed his strong association with Canada.

Erich Vogt, Professor Emeritus
University of British Columbia

NEWS / NOUVELLES

NEW MEMBERS APPOINTED TO NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

On February 8, 2000, John Manley, Minister of Industry, and Dr. Gilbert Normand, Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), announced the appointment of Dr. André Gosselin, a senior researcher and former Dean at Laval University, and Pascale Michaud, a Partner in SECOR Consulting Group, to the governing Council of the National Research Council of Canada.

Dr. Gosselin is not only a highly respected educator, scientist and research leader who has published hundreds of papers, received many national and international honours, and introduced many innovations

as Doyen de la Faculté des sciences de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation at Laval University, he is also an entrepreneur and active in the innovative business community. His honours include Fellow of the American Horticultural Society, Prix Roland-Harnois of the Conseil québécois de l'horticulture, and the Médaille de distinction agronomique of the Ordre des agronomes du Québec.

Ms. Michaud is an international expert on the process of innovation and the governance of complex projects. She was the co-developer of the IMEC International Research Program, an important worldwide initiative concerning the management of large-scale engineering and construction projects. As a researcher, policy consultant, and Partner in SECOR, she provides strategic advice to organizations including Hydro-Québec, Usinor, Bristol Myers Squibb and the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology.