

November 18, 1988

Professor Neil Ashcroft
LASSP
Cornell University
Clark Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853-2501

Dear Professor Ashcroft:

Your review of the Pons/Fleischmann proposal, "The Behavior of Electrochemically Compressed Hydrogen and Deuterium," has been forwarded to the authors for a rebuttal. Their response is enclosed. In the correspondence, you are being referred to as Reviewer #3.

It will help us in deciding whether or not to support the proposal if you could provide us with your comments on the rebuttal. Do you believe, based on the totality of the arguments offered in the proposal and in the rebuttal, the proposed project should be supported?

Your response, by return mail if possible, will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ryszard Gajewski, Director
Division of Advanced Energy Projects
Office of Basic Energy Sciences, ER-16

Enclosures

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REVIEWER #3

I am sorry, but I find it very difficult to accept the preliminary findings of Pons/Fleischmann. Deuteriums in palladium are not significantly closer together than they are in solid deuterium. Thus if they are claiming fusion in Pd at the atomic length scales typical of this alloy, then they should also see similar results from pure solid deuterium. It is a rather obvious test.

The idea that the environment of palladium (as a host) is playing a role similar to the negative muon in muon catalysis of D-T is rather primitive. If the important quantity is the overlap of deuterium wave-functions, then it is not at all clear that a palladium host does any better than the molecule of deuterium.

So far as the so-called experiment is concerned, the investigators seem to have trouble in doing their energy bookkeeping and suggest that some "excesses" on the order of 10% are due to fusion. There is almost no discussion of possible heat leaks. The authors should be held to account for their statement that their experiment was "accompanied by an increase in the background radiation count in the lab of > 50%. The long term experiments were all terminated at about this time." It is scientifically irresponsible to leave things this way: what radiation? Why wasn't this followed up by the University safety people?

I don't think you should proceed with this.

Reply to reviewer #3

We will reply to the reviewer according to his paragraphs.

#1 We are at a loss to know how the reviewer can make this statement. Solid D_2 (where the nuclei are held at positions determined by the s-orbitals of the electrons) is simply not comparable to $D+$ dissolved in a Pd host lattice--which is in effect a high density, high pressure, low temperature and infinitely long lived $D+$ plasma contained in a lattice where the electrons are in the d-bands of the metal. We have pointed out in the proposal that there must be collisions between $D+$ nuclei in this system and that the repulsive potential must be appreciably screened by the electrons in the host lattice but that D_2 is NOT formed in this system.

#2 We also do not know how the reviewer can make this statement. Our experiments are in no sense comparable to muon catalyzed fusion (which is dependent on reducing the D-D distance due to the mass of the muon). We only referred to muon catalysis in order to point out that the conditions in tauri,tocomacs, H-bombs or in laser fusion are not an essential prerequisite for fusion.

#3 Again we are at a loss to know how the reviewer could make this comment. We actually pointed out that we have greater than 25% excess energy released at the highest current density. This occurred in three runs of 75, 155 and 101 hours duration. There was absolutely no possibility of heat leaks as the averaged temperature difference between the inside of the Dewar and the external water bath (which in turn was above room temperature) was 1.33(4), 1.43(6), and 1.44(2) $^{\circ}C$ respectively. Our reply to the reviewer #1 question #6 is pertinent to the interpretation of the excess energy. As this reply is lengthy, we attach an extra copy.

The radiation was beta/gamma type, possibly due to the reaction of thermalized neutrons with components of the Dewar. The matter was not followed up because it would in fact have been irresponsible of us to proceed with the experiments in their present form. We need the resources asked for to carry out the experiments under properly controlled conditions. However, we fully realized the outrageous nature of our proposals which is why we spent a considerable sum (personal funds) in order to at least get some preliminary evidence that the concepts are worth pursuing.

Question (6) of Reviewer #1:

"We believe that the results we have obtained so far are a strong indication of a progressive increase in the fusion of D nuclei in the Pd-lattice with increasing chemical potential (= compression). While there are alternative explanations of the excess heating effects, their possibility does not seem to be very likely." (p. 6) Please, what are the other explanations and why are they unlikely?

Our reply:

(6) The main alternative explanations for excess enthalpy generation are:

(i) generation of D_2 at voids in the lattice (see also comments by reviewer #5). However, if this explanation applies, the excess energy generated during 331 hours of polarization at the highest current density would have required formation of D_2 bubbles at a higher rate than that corresponding to the applied current, i.e., there would have been a loss of dissolved D. Such a loss is inconsistent with the observation of the generation of a constant excess enthalpy during three successive periods of 75, 155, and 101 hours. Moreover, at least 0.5 cm^3 of bubbles at 2000 atmospheres (the tensile strength of Pd) would have been formed which would almost certainly have disintegrated our sample of Pd. The structural integrity of the sample was preserved and, indeed, it is well known that electrochemical equivalents of Pd diffusion tubes can be used indefinitely. The easiest way to discount this possibility of bubble formation is to increase the experiment times. However, we do have it in mind to search for any D_2 or, more likely, He bubbles.

(ii) Participation of the reduction of O_2 and/or ionization of D_2 i.e. a shift off the Joule heating term towards the upper bound. However, our experiments showed that the Joule heating exactly balanced the Newton's law cooling at low current densities (where the effects of any O_2 reduction on D_2 ionization should have been at a maximum) while the excess enthalpy increased with the current density. Such behavior (as well as the other points we have set out in the application) is not consistent with the participation of O_2 reduction/ D_2 ionization.

The reviewer may also like to know that in an earlier series of experiments periodic catalytic contamination of the Pd surface led to loss of dissolved D which was associated with cooling not heating presumably because of the cessation of the fusion process.