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Physicists and the first Pugwash Conference in 1957

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In 1955, a number of prominent scientists, alarmed by the danger of nuclear weapons, signed a public statement which became known as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. This document urged scientists to take a more active role in assuring nuclear weapons would not be used again, and recommended a meeting of international scientists to open dialogue on the topic. The first such meeting, which included high profile physicists from around the world, took place in the small village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia in July 1957. Since this initial meeting, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs have grown to become an international organization with a variety of national chapters. The Pugwash Movement has been key in facilitating discussions on global-scale threats to humanity. The 1995 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to the Pugwash Conferences and to physicist (and founding member) Joseph Rotblat “for their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international politics and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms”. My talk will examine the history behind the first Pugwash Conference and take a look at some of the physicists who participated in the meeting.

*note for abstract review: although this abstract may not fit directly under the theme of “history of the development of physics research and instruments”, it is hoped that the topic is of sufficient interest to the history of physics to represent an excellent fit for the session.

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