

Niels Harrit: Professor Pileni's Resignation as Editor-in-Chief of the Open Chemical Physics Journal

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Professor Pileni's Resignation as Editor-in-Chief of the Open Chemical Physics Journal By Niels Harrit

After the paper entitled "[Active Thermitic Material Discovered in Dust from the 9/11 World Trade Center Catastrophe](#)," which I along with eight colleagues co-authored, was published in the Open Chemical Physics Journal, its editor-in-chief, Professor Marie-Paule Pileni, abruptly resigned. It has been suggested that this resignation casts doubt on the scientific soundness of our paper.

However, Professor Pileni did the only thing she could do, if she wanted to save her career. After resigning, she did not criticize our paper. Rather, she said that she could not read and evaluate it, because, she claimed, it lies outside the areas of her expertise.

But that is not true, as shown by information contained on her own website (<http://www.sri.jussieu.fr/pileni.htm>). Her List of Publications reveals that Professor Pileni has published hundreds of articles in the field of nanoscience and nanotechnology. She is, in fact, recognized as one of the leaders in the field. Her statement about her "major advanced research" points out that, already by 2003, she was "the 25th highest cited scientist on nanotechnology" (<http://www.sri.jussieu.fr/pileni.htm>).

Since the late 1980s, moreover, she has served as a consultant for the French Army and other military institutions. From 1990 to 1994, for example, she served as a consultant for the Société Nationale des Poudres et Explosifs (National Society for Powders and Explosives).

She could, therefore, have easily read our paper, and she surely did. But by denying that she had read it, she avoided the question that would have inevitably been put to her: "What do you think of it?"

Faced with that question, she would have had two options. She could have criticized it, but that would have been difficult without inventing some artificial criticism, which she as a good scientist with an excellent reputation surely would not have wanted to do. The only other option would have been to acknowledge the soundness of our work and its conclusions. But this would have threatened her career.

Professor Pileni's resignation from the journal provides an insight into the conditions for free speech at our universities and other academic institutions in the aftermath of 9/11. This situation is a mirror of western society as a whole---even though our academic institutions should be havens in which research is evaluated by its intrinsic excellence, not its political correctness.

In Professor Pileni's country, France, the drive to curb the civil rights of professors at the universities is especially strong, and the fight is fierce.

I will conclude with two points. First, the cause of 9/11 truth is not one that she has taken up, and the course of action she chose was what she had to do to save her career. I harbor no ill feelings toward Professor Pileni for the choice she made.

Second, her resignation from the journal because of the publication of our paper implied nothing negative about the paper.

Indeed, the very fact that she offered no criticisms of it provided, implicitly, a positive evaluation---an acknowledgment that its methodology and conclusions could not credibly be challenged.

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