Editorial

N Mukunda, Chief Editor

It is generally true, particularly in our country, that students and teachers of science, and even working scientists, pay little attention to matters of the history and philosophy of science. Of course some degree of maturity is required before one sees the need for and value in studying these subjects ; and in most of our institutions they are yet to take root as serious pursuits. In this issue we feature Karl Popper's portrait on the back cover, and two brief *articles in boxes* on Popper by Gangan Prathap and M G Narasimhan. Popper's name has appeared in some earlier *Resonance* articles – notably Bondi's "Science-its Philosophy and Spirit" in July 1996 – and he is widely regarded as about the most influential philosopher of science of the century. Prathap's article explains why. At the same time we would like to impress upon our younger readers that *Popperian ideas* – howsoever influential – are part of an evolving discipline, and should be approached with a critical and open mind. It is to reinforce this that we requested M G Narasimhan to tell us briefly why life scientists have been quite critical of Popper's formulations. In spite of Sellars and Yeatman, history is never a finished subject, it is always a recreation of the past influenced by new findings and new viewpoints. So is it with the history and philosophy of science as well.

History is never finished, it is always a recreation of the past influenced by new findings and viewpoints.

Turning to other pieces – Goswami begins to explain the difficulties of weather prediction. This reminds us of Niels Bohr's dictum – "It is difficult to predict, especially about the future". Nagesh Rao brings out the structure behind the seemingly simple procedures of dimensional analysis; and Amitabh Joshi contrasts the older *gerontological* and the newer *evolutionary* approaches to the problem of ageing. So, read on and stay young!

"It is difficult to predict, especially about the future" – Niels Bohr