

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The National Association of Biology Teachers came into being only because it was needed. So enthusiastic has been its reception that I venture the opinion that had it not been started when it was (July 1, 1938), some other organization with similar objectives would have sprung up by now. The movement to organize the teachers of biology in the high schools was overdue.

This ripeness of time was doubtless one of the reasons for the rapid growth of the movement—around two thousand members in two years. But there were other reasons, namely, the low cost of membership; a lively magazine with a practical slant; a sensible, workable policy as written into the constitution; and, as I have discovered, a group of officers with an eye single to the needs of those actually engaged in the teaching of the life sciences to our young people.

The first year was given over largely to building membership, since we could not hope to turn out a monthly magazine for one dollar a year without a large subscription list. But in addition to getting organized, starting a magazine and putting on a drive for members, our first officers found time to seek and obtain affiliation with such national organizations as The Union of American Biological Societies and The American Association for the Advancement of Science. At the same time a working relationship was worked out with existing local biology groups and several of them immediately became our affiliates.

In the second year certain readjustments in organization were attended to, local affiliation work was extended, representation on the National Science Committee was obtained, a permanent editor

was secured, and a renewed effort made to obtain additional members. In addition, some exploratory work was done in the field of extending aids to teachers in service.

Now we enter upon our third year and it is altogether fitting that we pause again to inquire our direction. We must continue to build up membership, not as an end in itself but because we need sufficient numbers to ensure a thirty-two page journal every issue. You have doubtless noticed that occasionally during recent months the journal has dropped to twenty-four pages. You should know that whenever this happened it was because there were not sufficient funds on hand at the moment and we were determined to live within our income. From the beginning, articles of considerable merit have appeared in every number, and the Journal is fast making a name for itself. As a result a steady flow of creditable manuscripts is coming in, so that in the future there should be plenty of good material on hand at all times. To put them into print, however, we must have enough members to assure a thirty-two page magazine every month. There must still be many biology teachers unaware of the existence of the N. A. B. T. We want them to have the opportunity to belong, but we must depend upon our present members to spread the word around. I sincerely hope that each reader will consider himself or herself a committee of one to secure new members during the present year.

In the second place as our association grows greater in numbers and hence more secure financially it can become of more and more assistance to affiliated groups and to individual biology teachers. The direction such assistance shall take will depend upon the circumstances

at the moment, but your officers are looking into various possibilities and would welcome suggestions from you.

These are all desirable objectives, to be sure, but it is questionable if they alone are sufficient justification for the existence of an association that chooses to term itself "National." The life sciences have so much to contribute to human welfare that we dare not coast along, complacently defending biology as a school science and knowing all along that it is losing ground. Paraphrasing the Bard of Avon, the fault may not reside wholly in the "Powers that be," but in ourselves. He among us would be audacious indeed who would aver that we as biology teachers have given or are giving to the future citizens of this nation the very best that biology has to offer. The time may be at hand when it would be the part of wisdom to cease rationalizing, to shed complacency, and to assume a more positive attitude. Maybe it will be necessary to alter our entire approach to the teaching of our science. Something of the sort would seem to be indicated by certain of the articles that have appeared in the *Journal* as, for example, the leading article in the February, 1940, number.

What I should like to know is to what extent such an attitude is abroad in the land, and to what extent a radical departure from the traditional is justified on the basis of expediency, educational philosophy and the needs of young people. As indicated above, your association is already cooperating with a National Science Committee that has been deliberating on such matters for two years. Should we wait for the report of findings of this committee or should we anticipate this report and begin to make our own adjustments right now?

The presidency of a National Association of Biology Teachers at this time is not something to be undertaken lightly. Leadership is not doing something for the mere sake of doing it. It must be borne in mind that the 1940-41 officers wish to represent you.

GEORGE W. JEFFERS

WE ENTER A THIRD YEAR

With this issue *THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER* begins its third year of successful publication. As a result of the generous support of many persons—contributors of manuscripts, advertisers, subscribers, officers of the association, and members of the editorial and advisory staff—the most difficult period in the life of a new journal has been safely passed. We look to the future with confidence, soliciting the continued cooperation of all those who in the past have found our pages of value. Our aim is to make the magazine still more useful to teachers, and through them to improve the quality of the biology taught to our students. In this we shall all be making our greatest contribution to the welfare of the nation.

There are at least two ways in which you can help to make your magazine still more useful: first, by advertising it among teachers who are not members of the association, and who may even never have heard of its existence; and second, by sending in your own written contribution of experience or ideas. Short articles and notes, including news items, are especially welcome. If you have a question in the field of biology we shall attempt to obtain and publish an answer from an expert. All letters of general interest will, so far as space permits, be published promptly. May we hear from you?