In My Opinion

National Curricula

The BSCS is a familiar term, we hope, to all biology teachers, but more importantly, we hope that the materials it has produced have been carefully examined by all biology teachers. Since its inception, the BSCS has been fortunate in having the very skillful services of its Director, Dr. Arnold Grobman. He has never attempted to steer its course; that is the job of the Steering Committee. But he has furnished the managerial skill in making the BSCS effort a model, as well as helping it gain one of widest utilizations of any such study. Dr. Grobman has been an Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Florida and Director of the Florida State Museum.

Precise terminology is as important, I believe, in the broad area of human relations as it is in science itself. For example, some persons are disinterested, disenchanted, or discouraged with national curriculum studies because they equate them with national curricula. Actually these major curriculum studies are "national" in the sense that their participants have been drawn on a national scale, and they have been sponsored by national organizations.

The materials these groups have produced are to be evaluated on their merits and utilized on the basis of such evaluations. There is no national control of curriculum in America. Responsible authorities are as free to adopt or reject the textbooks of the major curriculum studies as they are to adopt or reject the textbooks of the major publishing houses. The individual science teacher, the school district, and the state textbook adopting commission have the identical authorities—no more no less—than they had before the national curriculum studies came into existence. The major responsibility of these authorities, it would seem to me, is to select for the students under their care the best educational materials obtainable. And if these materials have been thoroughly and carefully evaluated, the auspices under which they were developed should not be a matter of primary concern.

I think it is fair to predict that a curriculum that has been designed by a competent expert national group, and that has been given nationwide rigorous testing in real and diverse school situations, would likely be superior to one that has been developed in the traditional fashion with less resources. But, at the same time, I am sure that a curriculum so designed is not always better for a specific school or a specific teacher or a specific year.

On a few occasions I have been asked by biology teachers to recommend, from among the many available curricula, which one they should use.

For biology teachers who are giving a course that they feel is of high quality and who have reached this opinion through objective evaluation based on reasonably extensive experience, my recommendation has been that they continue with their present pattern. Change, simply for the sake of change, cannot be condoned when the effective education of our youth is involved.

For biology teachers who for a variety of reasons largely beyond their control, such as age, limited background, or timidity, are afraid to change to a more modern curriculum, my recommendation often has been that they simply do their best to up-grade their present courses and, if feasible, investigate the improvements that could benefit their efforts.

For biology teachers who are not satisfied with their present course, my recommendation has been simply that they become thoroughly acquainted with the work of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study and give thoughtful consideration to the contribution it could make in their own local situations.

For biology teachers who, for a variety of personal reasons that are difficult to identify, equate national curriculum study materials with national curricula and, therefore, piously declare that they will have nothing to do with them, I have no recommendations. The unfortunate thing is that they may be preventing the students under their care

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Honorable Mention: Clifford M. Trexler, Victor High School, Victor; Harold G. Knapp, Flathead County High School, Kalispell

Nevada Winner: Sessions S. Wheeler, Reno High School, Reno

Utah: No program

Wyoming Winner: Edward Proctor, Green River High School, Green River

Region IX.

Alaska Winner: Mrs. Jane N. Williams, Lathrop High School, Fairbanks
Honorable Mention: James E. Allen, Setka High School, Setka; Harvey H. Reinholz, East Anchorage High School, Anchorage

California Winner: Barbara Kline Hopper, Grover Cleveland High School, Reseda
Honorable Mention: Norman Abraham, Yuba City High School, Yuba City; Harry Wong, Menlo-Atherton High School, Middlefield and Ringwood

Hawaii Winner: Mrs. Sueko Hirokawa, McKinley High School, Honolulu 14
Honorable Mention: Mr. Mathew Y. P. Chow, Hilo Intermediate School, Hilo; Brother Charles Ehrenfeld, S. M., St. Louis High School, Honolulu 16; Mr. Tadayuki Kate, Kauai High School, Lihue, Kauai; Mr. Ronald A. K. Kong, Kaimuki Intermediate School, Honolulu 16; Mrs. Esther C. Nolan, Radford High School, Honolulu 18; Miss Iris Shinseki, Waianae High and Intermediate School, Waianae, Oahu

Oregon Winner: Harry Dawson, McMinnville High School, McMinnville

Washington: No winners chosen

The Idea Mill

The production of swarms of collectors is not the aim of courses in natural history or biology. Yet teachers frequently express discontent when they have not achieved that goal.

To instill the desire to know nature and enjoy without touching, tearing, or mutilating is an aim to which we can all readily agree. Therefore, the basic scientific attitudes of observation and record-keeping come immediately to the fore. Using either his own notes which have been kept for a season or year or those of a professional observer, the teacher can here show the way to good note-keeping as well as instill the desire to do it. Photographs, as most good books on natural history illustrate, make especially well and succinctly points not otherwise easily remembered.

Collecting, when done, should be done purposefully. In this way, those students whose inclinations will take them into such fields of work can spend time beneficially amassing collections of their interest areas. Of course, here too, photographs are an aid to the appreciation and understanding of the ecology of the plants or animals which constitute the collection.

It is useful to have students know the techniques which are used to prepare museum collection specimens. Even though they themselves may not use these techniques, a far greater understanding is theirs when they view museum collections.

When such aspects to the understanding of natural history are presented challengingly they may become a forceful part of the personality of the students. It is in the classroom, to a great degree, that the future voters on issues of conservation and preservation gain their balance of ideas.

Let's help to balance the conservation sheet with an Emersonian understanding:

"Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the woodrose, and left it on its stalk?
.....
Oh, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!"
"Forbearance"—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Contributions for this column should be sent to its Editor, John M. Youngpeter, Educational Services Department, Ward's Natural Science Establishment, P.O. Box 1712, Rochester 3, New York. Envelope should be marked for ABT.

In My Opinion—

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from receiving a superior education because of a real—or imagined—tragic semantic error.

Arnold B. Grobman
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