

Letters to the Editor

• Brief letters—one or two pages—are more likely to be printed than are long ones, which may be cut.

Advertising Policy and Creationism

This letter questions the journal's editorial policy, which makes no distinction between advertising that seeks to promote more effective biology-teaching and that which seeks to undermine biology education through subterfuge and distortion.

It was pure irony to find in the January 1971 issue two cogent arguments refuting the positions of Duane Gish and the Creation Research Society, and on another page a striking advertisement of the Creation Research Society's new "biology" textbook.

Fairness and objectivity are indeed virtues, but passivity and naïveté in the face of an organized frontal assault are characteristics of fools.

It should be obvious to biologists by now that intellectual arguments with leaders of fundamentalist groups are not going to resolve the issue of "who is going to educate whom and how." As William V. Mayer suggested in his letter to the editor in that same issue, the two philosophies are too distinct to allow for compromise or congruency. The textbook committee of the Creation Research Society is guilty of deliberate distortion of an orderly and logical discipline. Its goals are obviously to discredit science and scientists, while freely using portions of their work out of context with their conclusions.

While there may not be legal constraints upon this kind of ploy, the biology and biology-education community need not sit in stunned and unbelieving silence while mud is splattered all over us, even in the pages of our journal. This is an activist group, willing to market their convictions at the expense of the children of a frightened and emotional generation, already suspicious of science and searching for new moral footings that will protect them from the intellectual demands of their own offspring.

I object strenuously to our accepting such advertising indiscriminantly and hope that we will speak out—where the public can hear—in support of the integrity of science and scientists and against those who seek to discredit both.

My support of science and science education is itself built on faith—faith in the ultimate power of rational man to seek after and eventually to discover truth, and to use it wisely for the benefit of all mankind. Science is anchored in rationality and offers our children a different kind of hope than they will find by exploring the unreal worlds of mysticism, whether they originate in tradition or the drug culture. Intellect must bridge the gap between what we know and understand and what we do not know, cannot understand, and therefore fear. To raise

doubts where there need be none is to stifle inquiry and destroy initiative. Both of these could be fatal weaknesses for humanity at a time of great need.

We must not fail to communicate our faith, nor allow those of little faith to destroy our prerogatives. Religion belongs in the churches. Science belongs in the schools.

Thomas J. Cleaver

Biological Sciences Curriculum Study
P.O. Box 930, Boulder, Colo. 80302

Managing Editor Jerry P. Lightner comments:

There has been no written editorial policy regarding advertising in *American Biology Teacher*. Acceptance or rejection of advertising copy has been left to the discretion of the managing editor.

As managing editor for the past six years, I have used two criteria in evaluating advertising copy. First, does it represent business income related to the association's purposes? Second, does it reflect the academic interests of the readership?

Consider the first of these criteria. NABT is a tax-exempt organization. Advertising in its journal should deal with biology supplies, equipment, publications, and services. However, advertising for some other product (for example, automobiles) could be considered as unrelated business income by the Internal Revenue Service, thereby subjecting NABT to possible reevaluation of its tax-exempt status.

The second criterion is less definitive but equally important. Should our journal publish advertising dealing with biology-related products, such as alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and contraceptives? I have considered these as not reflecting the academic interests of the journal's readership.

In years past I have placed these two criteria before the journal's editorial board. Each time they were discussed, the board agreed to the policy followed; that is, not to publish either type of advertising copy.

From the either/or position outlined above, advertising for the Creation Research Society's textbook is clearly permissible, as this advertising copy is neither unrelated business income nor does it fall outside the academic interests of our readership. However, I must also emphasize that in cases where the character or repetition of advertising could appear to compromise the professional status of NABT, the latter must be regarded as having an overriding priority.

Philosophically I do not accept creationism as espoused by the Creation Research Society's textbook; on the contrary, I am completely in support of the strong positions taken by Cleaver, Mayer, and others against creation as a special theory. Nevertheless, as managing editor I adhere to a position of fairness and objectivity regarding insertion of advertising in the journal within the boundaries of the aforementioned criteria.