

Letters to the Editor

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

“MONKEY’S POINT OF VIEW”

At the request of Maybelle Ryan and several others who attended the final session of the NABT national convention in San Francisco I am sending in the following anonymous poem:

Evolution: the Monkey’s Point of View

Three monkeys sat in a coconut tree
Discussing things as they’re said to be.
Said one to the others, “Now listen, you two,
There’s a certain rumor that can’t be true:
That man descended from our noble race—
The very idea! It’s a dire disgrace.
No monkey ever deserted his wife,
Starved her baby and ruined her life.
And you’ve never known a mother monk
To leave her baby with others to bunk,
Or pass them on from one to another
’Til they hardly know who is their mother.
And another thing! You will never see
A monk build a fence ’round a coconut tree
And let the coconuts go to waste
Forbidding all other monks to taste.
Starvation would force you to steal from me.
Here’s another thing a monk won’t do:
Go out at night and get in a stew
Or use a gun or club or knife
To take some other monkey’s life.
Yes! Man descended, the ornery cuss,
But, brother, he didn’t descend from us.”

In these days of serious concern for the plight of mankind on a finite planet, overpopulation, and pollution, questions of where we came from and where we are going are sometimes too weighty for young folk and their parents to carry without some lightening of the load by “truthful” humor’s perspective. The fact that there is friction between evolutionists and creationists shows that teachers have not done their public-relations work. I have taught evolution in southern public schools since 1954—from small, clannish country schools to large consolidated schools and religion-affiliated schools. I never had a bit of trouble; and I give much of the credit to holding Bentley Glass’s view of evolution and posting the above poem on the wall at the beginning of the unit and having dittoed copies for questioning parents.

Rachel Perry Jackson
237 North Blvd.
DeLand, Fla. 32720

FACT, NOT THEORY, MATTERS

I don’t write many “letters to the editor” but I think the arguments about the teaching of evolution have gone way beyond the bounds of ridiculousness. Now that we have a national meeting devoted to evolution and everyone has had his say, can we settle down and teach (except perhaps in California) the process of evolution? If so, we can leave that “creation theory” and “fact vs. theory” junk for the janitors to toss into the trash can.

In the many years I taught evolution, both as a separate course and as an integral part of more general courses, I never mentioned the “evidence” for evolution, as I also omitted “evidence” for digestion, insemination, growth, symbiosis, and any other biologic process. I told my students that after they thoroughly understood the process of evolution they might, if they cared to, spend some time arguing the theoretic aspects. But after we had considered the factors in evolution, the nature of the gene pool, genetic drift, differences between natural and artificial evolution and between biologic and cultural evolution, design of experiments for testing premises of evolution, and the many other aspects of the process, the students had lost interest in “the theory.” They had come to appreciate evolution for its own magnificent vistas, and not as a take-off point for meaningless argument. I say “meaningless” because I never met a defender of the “creation theory” who could tell me in clear English what he meant. Whenever I was asked “Do you teach evolution as a fact or as a theory?” I responded with “Would you teach digestion as a fact or as a theory?” Evolution being a process, questions about fact vs. theory are meaningless, except by the use of double-talk, which has no place in an educational institution.

Enough of this. I especially liked your comments about Paul Goodman. I didn’t know him at all well, but I thoroughly enjoyed his conservative liberalism and remember how irked he could get when anyone tried to pin a label on him.

John Breukelman
1715 E. Wilman
Emporia, Kan. 66801

Warning Signals of Cancer

Cancer’s seven warning signals spell CAUTION: Change in bowel or bladder habits, A sore that does not heal, Unusual bleeding or discharge, Thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere, Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing, Obvious change in a wart or mole, and Nagging cough or hoarseness. If you have a warning signal, see your doctor at once.