

Reports—Current Topics—Queries

JOAN CREAGER TO EDIT *ABT*

Joan G. Creager has been appointed by the NABT executive committee to succeed Jack L. Carter as editor of *American Biology Teacher*. She will formally assume the editorship on 1 July 1974.



Creager is dean of systems science and technology at Washington International College, Washington, D.C. WIC, a four-year non-residential college that enrolled its first students in 1971, is an alternative model for higher education, in which students and instructors work together to design individual learning contracts. Nearly one-third of its students are working adults, and wide use is made of community resources, in addition to campus-based seminars. In addition to helping students with their individually designed curricula, Creager teaches a number of science and mathematics subjects in one-to-one tutorial arrangements and in once-a-week seminars. She plans to establish the journal's editorial offices at the college.

Creager received her B.S. and M.S. degrees from Trinity University and her Ph.D., in zoology, from George Washington University. From 1969 to 1972 she taught biology at Northern Virginia Community College and directed a grant from the U.S. Office of Education for the development of a modularized science-teaching program. She was an editor of CUEBS publications, was editor of AIBS's *Education Review*, and recently directed a course on alternatives in biology-teaching for the NSF-AAAS Chautauqua-short-courses program.

Although she does not anticipate making any immediate modifications in the journal, Creager says, "I am certainly receptive to suggestions from *ABT* readers for improvements, and I hope to see the journal grow and change in response to the needs of teachers in the life sciences."

Jerry P. Lightner
Executive director, NABT

FLUORIDES REPORT MISINTERPRETED

Recently, letters to editors in connection with the safety and usefulness of fluorides in drinking water

have appeared in newspapers in several parts of the nation, citing a report of the National Academy of Sciences on fluorides. Some of these letters contain sentences in common, as follows:

In 1971, the prestigious National Academy of Sciences published a review which substantiates the excessive contamination by fluorides in the environment, in humans, other animals and plants. It states that unequivocal evidence does not exist that fluoride prevents dental decay, or is essential to any animal or plant.

The first sentence of the above quotation is a clear distortion of the report prepared by a panel on which I served as chairman. Cases of fluoride contamination of the environment to the level that would constitute a danger to populations, animals, or plants are relatively rare. Such as have occurred generally resulted from occupational exposures or were limited to particular areas closely adjacent to industrial processes or geologic sources.

The second sentence of the quotation appears to be incorrectly assembled from p. 66 of the report, where it is stated:

Unequivocal evidence that fluorides perform any vital function in animals has not yet been produced. There is no doubt that an increase in the fluoride intake of the population in most parts of the world does result in a decrease in incidence of dental caries in that population. That in itself is no indication of fluoride essentiality, inasmuch as caries incidence depends on many factors, and many persons with perfectly sound dentition have had only minimal exposure to fluoride.

On p. 67 the report states further that "the beneficial effects of fluoride on dental health or bone metabolism should be considered as pharmacological responses, and not as a cure of pre-existing deficiency condition."

A reasonable and correct paraphrase of these statements might be this: Fluoride has without any doubt a beneficial pharmacologic effect in preventing tooth decay, but this does not mean that the presence of fluoride in the diet is indispensable for any vital (that is, important and useful) function, including the integrity of the dental system, in animals or man.

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