

Letters

N.A.B.T: FOR PRIDE IN PROFESSION

Members of NABT should take substantial pride in the action of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declaring the Tennessee "Genesis Law" unconstitutional. The competence of our counsel Frederic S. LeClercq in pursuing a federal ruling in this case is obvious, in that the court's opinion, in his words, "was a complete vindication of our seeking redress initially in the federal rather than the state courts . . . our victory in the Court of Appeals was substantial and decisive."

The court's ruling also constituted vindication of NABT's decision to pursue this action through legal channels and to establish the "Fund For Freedom in Science Teaching" in support of the effort. Whatever our personal feelings regarding the continuing and often irrational evolution-creation debate, we owe it to ourselves to stand and be counted in support of constitutional guarantees of freedom to pursue a professional calling with integrity and with impunity from unjust and unwarranted interference.

At this writing, it remains to be seen what long-term effects this ruling may have in deterring similar actions by other states. Even now, it appears that the state of Tennessee will pursue the question through appeal. What matters most is that the question has been elevated to the level of relevant action affecting all states; and that NABT continue to have the support of its members and others in response to appeals for funds. This is certainly not the last time that we shall be faced with problems of this sort. Efforts to limit use of living materials in classrooms are becoming a threat to effective biology teaching in some states, notably California. Nor have we sufficient funds on hand to complete our obligations in the present case.

This is one of the few occasions when NABT has risen to a major challenge and has won. Don't let it be our last. Continue your contributions to the Fund for Freedom in Science Teaching and continue to stand tall for your profession.

Thomas J. Cleaver
President, NABT

FILM DISTRIBUTOR ADDRESS

I am pleased that you listed my film *Cry of the Marsh* in the "Letters" section of the January issue (*ABT* 37[1]:52) even though the distributor's address was unavailable. The film can be ordered for preview from ACI Films, 35 W. 45th St., New York 10036.

Robert Hartkopf
8826 W. Bush Lake Rd.
Minneapolis 55438

COLLECTING PLANKTON: A USEFUL VARIATION

In the May 1975 issue (*ABT* 37[5]:302), Helen Davis Brown discusses a method of collecting plankton on submerged microscope slides ("Collecting Aquatic Microorganisms: the Glass Slide Method"). Upon removing the slides from the water for microscopic examination, students are directed to clean off the bottom of each slide.

An old and useful variation of this method is to place the slides in pairs, tightly fitted into the slots of the slide box. When the slides are removed and separated, one side of each slide will be clean and free of organisms.

Stanley L. Weinberg
156 E. Alta Vista
Ottumwa, Iowa 52501

Helen Davis Brown comments:

This is a satisfactory and convenient variation of the method I described. In order to obtain a variety of organisms, including algae, care should be taken to position slides vertically in the water, however, as indicated in my article.

SUPPORT YOUR NATIONAL CONSERVATION GROUP

Environmental awareness and concern is shaping the outlook and content of junior high, high school, and college biology courses. Teachers and students alike are vitally concerned. This concern has led to the development of many new and innovative programs in environmental education at all levels, ranging from the study of ecology of an entire river to the organization of an ecology club. Such programs are excellent in that they give teachers and students "hands on" experience in the satisfaction and frustration of local environmental stewardship. However, what about national and international environmental concerns? Yes, you can write letters to your congressman but there is also something else that both teachers and students can do at this level—join a national conservation group.

In our school the 7th grade life science classes and the 10th grade biology classes and their teacher belong to both the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation. After hearing an explanation of the objectives and programs of both these groups, students were eager to contribute to group

memberships in both organizations. All contributions were voluntary and only enough money was collected for group membership. Almost daily students bring in newspaper clippings or magazine articles to show how, through these organizations, their small but important contribution is improving the quality of their environment.

I would urge every teacher to pick a conservation group that supports his views and then support this group. It is something that teachers and students can do for pennies, yet it can bring personal satisfaction and help worthwhile organizations safeguard our environment.

Dennis Holley
Shelton High School
Shelton, Neb. 68876

THE NON-SCHOOL DICTIONARY OF 1984

Your "Letter from the Future" in a recent issue (*ABT* 37[4]:239) was most enlightening. I had always thought I was unique, sitting up here in the future, looking back at the past. But it is most gratifying to discover that I am not alone.

Anyway, you ask us to let you know if we hear anything from the future, so I am taking the liberty of adding one more observation to your very comprehensive survey. You made no mention of the radical change that took place in the English language during the 1970s and '80s, and I want to address myself to this phase.

One need only compare the *Non-School Dictionary* of 1984 with the outmoded *College Dictionary* of 1975 to realize what has happened. Evidently the concept of MAN has been obliterated completely. It all started when some ardent "equal righters" of the '70s raised objection to the word *chairman* because it ended in MAN. They proclaimed correctly that a member of either sex can run a meeting or chair a committee. Therefore, they argued, the term should be changed to *chairPERSON*. Before long, other words underwent the same evolution, and it became customary to speak of a policePERSON, a mailPERSON, a salesPERSON, a doorPERSON, and such like.

It wasn't until 1980 that we realized how little this change had really accomplished towards the elimination of sex bias. Alas! *person* ends in SON which is just about as male as anything can be. So the word *chairperson* still carries the tinge of sex discrimination.

Fortunately, Ms. Ann T. Pasto, one of the leaders of the movement, was able to come up with a solution. She suggested the use of the ending *BODY*. Members of both sexes have bodies as anyone can see, so *chairbody* should be a term without sexual bias. And so, in 1984, we speak of a chairBODY, a salesBODY, a fireBODY, the Neanderthal BODY, the huBODY race, and so on.

I wonder whether you remember the big drives in the 1980s. Their aim was to get sex discrimination out of textbooks, out of TV programs, out of biology, out of childrens' toys, out of the dictionary, out of every-

thing. "Get the MAN out of MANhattan" became the fighting slogan of the day. This spilled over into, "Get the MAN out of MANometer, MANdolin, MANchester, MANitoba, MANchuria, MANDalay, MANGrove, MANager, MANatee, MANSion, MANna, MANagua, MANDarin, and wherever else you find him.

Well, the dictionary was properly de-sexed. In the 1984 edition you don't find MAN anywhere; not even in huMAN . . . which is just as well. Unfortunately this drive had a secondary result which was completely unexpected. What was once known as the stronger sex degenerated and atrophied. Parthenogenesis replaced bisexual reproduction as the way of life, so that two sexes are no longer necessary. Reproduction is by cloning, and it is carried out in sterile laboratories by technicians in white suits.

As far as the study of biology is concerned, this is all to the good. One need no longer distinguish between sexual and asexual reproduction. Difficult concepts such as meiosis, gametogenesis, nondisjunction, sex-linkage are not even mentioned. Sex education is as outmoded as sex, and you'd be surprised at the sharp drop in rape cases and venereal disease rates.

So in 1984 things are good. We may be a little crowded population-wise, but things are good. Still, one must be on constant guard against backsliding. Even an eminent editor like yourself can easily fall into that trap, witness the final paragraph of your letter. There you speak of your MENtor-at-law. How could you allow yourself to use an archaic term that includes such a sex-oriented root as MEN? I can only assume that it is an atavistic throwback to the days of 1975. Surely you know that by 1984, MEN were rooted out of the dictionary.

Philip Goldstein
3000 Marcos Dr., P-401
Miami 33160

Termite Control Without Pesticides

Michigan State University microbiologist John A. Breznak has isolated bacteria which may help keep termites alive, a finding which, he says, has potential in the control of the destructive pest without the use of noxious chemical pesticides. The scientist believes the bacteria, which he has grown in test tubes, help keep termites alive by fixing the nitrogen they need in addition to wood, the insect's principal food. Nitrogen fixation is a process whereby nitrogen, the major gaseous component of the air we breathe, is transformed into ammonia, a necessary constituent of proteins.

The damage termites cause and the cost of controlling them has been reported worldwide at \$1.2 billion a year. Much of this cost is borne by home-owners.