An Overture

BICENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE

The celebration of the 200th birthday of the United States affords an excellent opportunity to look at the problems that face our society today, particularly those for which life scientists might make contributions toward solutions. By focusing on contemporary problems we must not neglect the past nor ignore the future. Looking at current situations from a historical perspective and imagining how they might change in the future can provide new insights. Throughout the history of this nation, and especially in the last few decades, there has been unprecedented growth in new information and new technologies within the life sciences. I believe *American Biology Teacher* can make a significant contribution to the bicentennial celebration by publishing articles that address contemporary problems in American society.

During 1976, we will designate selected articles as "bicentennial features." Other kinds of articles will, of course, be published regularly; the need for good biology and good teaching will be with us throughout the Bicentennial Year just as it is in any other year. The criteria that will set bicentennial features apart from other articles include the following:

1. The article must address a contemporary problem in American society that is related in some way to the life sciences.
2. The article must trace the historical genesis of the problem.
3. The article must suggest ways life scientists and life science educators can make contributions to solving the problem.

There are many contemporary problems that might be addressed. Although any given article should deal with a fairly specific problem, the following general areas are suggested: population, pollution, energy, genetic engineering, food supply, nutrition, utilization of natural resources, preservation of natural areas, aging and death, euthanasia, urban biology and problems of the city, health care delivery systems, allocation of medical resources, bioethics, behavior modification, reproductive engineering, and changing roles of life scientists. Many of these problems involve relationships between freedom and the life sciences through infringements on personal rights or restrictions on life science teaching and research. Where pertinent, issues of freedom should be thoroughly explored.

There are good reasons for requiring that bicentennial features include historical perspectives. Not only is it a fitting celebration; it is also an important component of a full understanding of a contemporary problem. In preparing a historical perspective, one might trace the development of a problem from colonial times or from the earliest occurrence of the problem. One might contrast "then" and "now." One might extend the contrast to include future possibilities. Regardless of style, the historical perspective must have substance—it must relate directly to the problem.

Current periodicals abound with iterations and reiterations of problems; what we need are constructive and creative suggestions for possible solutions to problems. Problem-solving often involves interdisciplinary efforts. As life scientists we enjoy a unique position, for the life sciences are directly related to almost every other discipline. We must take advantage of our position by initiating and participating in interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving. We can develop and test models for problem-solving. As teachers, we can involve our students in problem-solving. Our nation was built by problem-solvers. It is a fitting tribute to them for us to publish articles that demonstrate the use of reason, compassion, and creativity in solving contemporary problems.

Call for Papers and Ideas

It is anticipated that most bicentennial features will be authored by high school and college teachers. However, papers written by students will be given equal consideration, provided they are accompanied by a letter from a teacher who is willing to assist the student in answering editor's queries and in proofreading galleys. (See *ABT* 37[6]:364 for procedures for preparing manuscripts.)

The number of bicentennial features published during 1976 will depend in part on your response to this call for papers and ideas. You might help in any or all of the following ways:

1. Write an article and submit it as soon as possible.
2. Send us the name and address of a colleague you believe to be particularly well qualified to prepare a bicentennial feature, along with information on that person's area of expertise.
3. Invite your students to prepare manuscripts and indicate that you may select the best manuscripts to be submitted to us.
4. Write a letter to the editor when you have a response to a published bicentennial feature.

Here is an opportunity for you as a life scientist to celebrate the Bicentennial. Canadian and other non-U.S. readers are also invited to help us celebrate our Bicentennial Year by responding to this call.

Joan G. Creager, editor