

# Perspectives

## N.A.B.T: JANUARY 1976

Janus was the god of all beginnings. But he had two faces, for every beginning stems from a past, however steep the slope between. January begins both the calendar year and the National Association of Biology Teachers' year. This month new officers and directors take over positions to which they have been elected. But NABT is Janus-like: it retains in the new year some of its directors, its treasurer, and, in the post of past president, its president of 1975.

Now, therefore, on behalf of both new and retained electees, I present to all members, greetings! And I urge all to consider with us the problems of 1976, conscious of the rapidity of change, but not unmindful of experience from 36 years of existence as an organization.

The basis of this existence is the membership. The activities, the finances, the prestige of this association are not necessarily proportionate to the number of its members. Zeal may enlarge activities, sacrifice may buttress finances, and publicity may puff prestige; but none of these is a sufficient excuse for the existence of this association. NABT exists to serve all those who in any way teach any aspect of the broad spectrum of sciences that is still best denominated "biology." The success of NABT must be measured by the extent to which it enlists the support of this large community of prospective members. Let us consider, then, as the prime problem for 1976, the recruitment of this support.

We do not accurately know the size of this community of prospective members. Some fairly recent compilations of data have suggested that there are about 37,000 secondary school teachers who teach two or more classes of biology. We do not have at hand figures for instructors in junior and community colleges, whom NABT has increasingly served in recent years, nor for others who have interests in our area, such as persons in science education departments of universities. It is clear, however, that the actual number of NABT members constitutes a rather small percentage of the potential number.

Now let us look back a bit. In January 1975, NABT had 7,354 members. This was about 650 more than a decade before, but in January 1972 the number was 8,563, a peak. There is no lack of hypotheses to account for the descending leg of this curve.

To account for it, however, is not my purpose in January 1976. Rather, I wish to ask all who read these words—whether in a copy of *American Biology Teacher*

received through personal membership or in the library copy received through institutional subscription—three questions. Do you who are drawn to the content of *ABT* believe that the biological sciences ride the crest of the wave of the scientific future? Do you believe that the most realistic hope for the human future lies in a wide dissemination of the fruits of biological research and a deep understanding of their probabilistic limitations? Do you believe that a strong organization of teachers of biological sciences is essential for bridging the gap between biological researchers and a many-faceted public upon which they are dependent for support but which, in turn, is dependent upon them for light through the mists of the human future?

If you do not believe these things, then NABT may eventually join the ranks of organizational extinctions that will occur in the current glacial economic climate. If you *do* believe these things, then your name will be on the membership roll of 1976, and that small percentage of potential members who are actual members will be enlarged by January 1977. Such is my prime goal in beginning my presidential year.

Other topics of importance to NABT and to biological education will be discussed in this space in the coming months. I invite comment, recriminations, and uplift.

*Haven Kolb*  
President, NABT

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## Institute on Philosophical Ethics

The Council for Philosophical Studies will present a one-month Institute on Philosophical Ethics during the summer of 1976 for science and engineering faculty from colleges and universities throughout the country. The Institute's resident staff will provide intensive exposure—through readings, lectures, seminars, and discussions—to current moral philosophy, especially as applied to problems of science and technology. For further information about dates, location, eligibility, stipends, housing, and application procedures, write immediately to Prof. Samuel Gorovitz, Council for Philosophical Studies, Skinner Hall 1131, University of Maryland, College Park 20742.