

Letters to the Editor

Suggestions Wanted

I am interested in suggestions for an on-going type of experiment that I could initiate for high school students in the area of environmental pollution. I have a large Climatorium at my disposal and would like to use it. I would appreciate any suggestions teachers might have on good experiments to conduct involving plant life and the effects of air or water pollution.

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Biomedical Science

The article by Sharron L. Mee, "Biomedical Science," (ABT 39(1):56) about the National Science Foundation supported curriculum project, the Biomedical Interdisciplinary Curriculum Project, presented a viewpoint that could result in a serious situation developing in some science classrooms. These curriculum materials are similar to other NSF programs where there are major problems regarding their evaluation and monitoring. One of the many serious allegations about this particular program, is their use of a known carcinogen in the colorimetric and nutrient analysis of food activities Ms. Mee noted in her article. The materials have students using o-tolidine (3,3' dimethylbenzidine) [See *J. Nat. Can. Inst.* 45:283, 1970, and p. 25 BICP, Unit II Laboratory Manual]. The students are given no warnings or cautions about using this substance other than to "wash immediately with plenty of soap and water" should any of the substance get on their hands or clothing. (See BICP Laboratory Manual, Unit II, page 24.)

There are other questionable laboratory activities in this particular curriculum. Educators should acquaint themselves with the many problem areas in the curriculum including costs, scheduling difficulties, the educational soundness of the program, and many others for which little or no attention was provided in Ms. Mee's article. The Biomedical Interdisciplinary Curriculum Project is a curriculum fraught with inherent dangers. Neither the developers of the materials nor those who advocate its implementation can provide objective and valid data about its worthiness.

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Creation-Evolution Controversy

Dr. Parker, in his letter (ABT 39(4):247), states his position on scientific creationism. Aside from the fact that the two words in juxtaposition to one another are philosophic opposites, his argument has several assumptions that destroy the "science" of his creationism.

His use of analogy regarding the potter and the pottery and nucleic acid control of protein synthesis is inappropriate at best. Although we may well infer the potter by his works because of previous observations of potters at work, it does not follow that to observe DNA-protein activity infers a prime mover. Please consider that the potter is known to us by direct observation whereas a prime mover always may only be assumed (believed in) if my understanding of the meaning of the word faith is correct.

He later states the activities of archeologists and posits the ques-

tion—if they "can collect and analyze data on created objects and draw tentative conclusions about the nature of the creative agents" why can't biologists?

There are two problems embodied within the question. First, the use of the word *created* as applying to man shaping something from another form or forms of matter is at a different level than the creation of matter and later shaping it into various forms by whatever means. The two "creations" are very much different. The former is merely a rearranging of what exists; the latter is producing something from nothing. The second is a far more serious problem and one which in my earlier words "destroys the science" of his creationism. It asks, in essence, why biologists can't assume a potter from the pottery. There is a very primal answer to that question, one which goes directly to the heart of the whole creationism debate. Science seeks to determine knowledge by analysis of cause and effect relationships found *within* the systems being studied rather than to assume an outside cause. This is both the strength of scientific endeavor and its limitation. Nothing in the analysis of data by *scientific* means may prove or disprove the idea of a prime mover. It is simply outside the scope of scientific interpretation of data to deal with that concept.

Creationism infers a prime mover, thus is at least a philosophic position and probably, for most a theologic position. It is possible to view data from either of these positions and to arrive at somewhat differing conclusions than would be the case if the same data were analyzed scientifically. These differing conclusions are not necessarily in opposition to one another—merely different. They are different because of the differing