

# Letters to the Editor

## Suggestions Needed

Breakage in our laboratory continues to be a problem. It has been our practice to charge students for replacement of broken equipment according to current catalogue prices. Recently, our local school board outlawed such practices unless there is "malicious intent" in evidence.

I would like to know what other schools in the country are doing to solve this problem. Any information would be greatly appreciated.

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## NABT Convention Sites

As a biology teacher and member of NABT, I am surprised and upset that the 1978 Convention is being scheduled in Chicago.

Illinois is one of the few states that has not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Many organizations have been participating in a boycott of hotel and vacation facilities in states which have not done so in order to pressure their legislatures to ratify the ERA. This boycott appears to be effective and may mean the difference between the ERA being ratified or not.

It is outrageous that the NABT is not joining this boycott. An organization of biology teachers, so many of whom are women in a field—science—where women have so long been discriminated against should be especially anxious to see the ERA passed.

Some people may say that we are a science organization and, as such, should not take a stand on "political"

issues. This is impossible. The Chicago hotels are hurting as a result of the boycott. Holding a major convention there is not being neutral; it is bailing them out. Objectively, it is a stand against the ERA, even if it was not meant to be.

I urge that people not attend the convention, and that future conventions be held only in states which have ratified the ERA.

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## Peterson Responds

We appreciate receiving your letter expressing concern about the future NABT conventions in states that have not ratified the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. The NABT Board of Directors during its June business meeting voted with 14 "ayes" 3 "nays", and 3 "absentions" to adopt the following motion:

So long as ERA is an active issue, NABT will hold its meetings in states proportionately to the position of those states on that issue.

Since 35 of 50 states have ratified the amendment, the Board agreed that this action would place approximately 70% of future conventions (so long as ERA is an active issue) in states that have ratified the proposed amendment. The Board also agreed to honor its contractual commitments to meet in Chicago and New Orleans (neither of which have ratified ERA) but the schedule of meetings beyond New Orleans would be so developed to compensate for these meeting sites and, over the long range, establish the agreed upon ratio of meetings in ERA and non-ERA states.

You and our other members may be interested in knowing that Dr. Jerry Lightner, Executive Director of NABT, at the request of the Biology and Society Committee polled half of our members to determine their opinions on where future meetings should be held. The respondents were split almost evenly, 720 "against" meeting in non-ERA states and 708 "for." This is a difficult and complex issue, but it is my hope that we can get it resolved and continue with our efforts to improve biology teaching.

Glen A. Peterson  
NABT President

## "Humanizing Language": Some Reactions

I believe your editorial (*ABT* 40 (5):789) is an asinine feministic attempt to clutter the English language. I'm sure that all thinking people can accept the conventional usage of the pronouns as they have been used for many years.

If you truly want to improve the situation, why not invent a set of new words to replace the s/he, him/her, and/or hers/his. This would be far more meaningful and helpful to the English language without seeming to be feministic or male chauvinistic. It could be one of the most valuable suggestions that the science field could offer the English language.

Immediately after your article on page 271, there is a short quotation by Henry David Thoreau—Rewritten to your specifications, it becomes:

If a person does not keep pace with hers/his (you didn't provide for "her/his") companions, perhaps it is because s/he hears a different drummer. Let him/her step to the music which s/he hears, however measured or far away.

I still prefer the original: