

An Overture

Involvement and Commitment—A Partnership

Why are you a member of NABT? What personal satisfaction have you derived from your membership in this association or for that matter in any association that you have joined? I suppose that as the treasurer of NABT I should be ecstatic with a membership of over 6,000 individuals. To be sure, I am pleased, but I am not ecstatic. It is an unfortunate fact that NABT has a large membership with very few *members*.

The following story illustrates my point. Several years ago, while interviewing a teacher for a supervisory position, I asked, "What have you done to advance yourself professionally?" The teacher proceeded to enumerate a long list of associations to which he belonged. He was most perplexed when I asked, "In which associations are you a member and in which are you a *member-member*?" Of course, the difference is the same as that between being a spectator at a game and a participant in the game. NABT appears to have many spectators but relatively few participants.

Quite often, I hear the comment made about an attorney, a physician or a teacher—"he cares!" What does it mean "to care"? Individuals who "care" have usually made a professional commitment and are deeply involved in their work. This sometimes intangible and sometime elusive quality is the difference between a member and a *member-member*.

The words for this article have been present in my mind for several years. I have spoken them on several occasions. They have never appeared on paper. Because the dictionary defines "overture" as a "formal or informal proposal," I believe that this is the appropriate forum to present my case and offer my proposal.

The Need for Involvement

Recent articles in this column and elsewhere in the journal have focused on issues with which biology teachers must become involved. One "Overture" was titled "We Cannot Be Apolitical." How ironic that for years my cry has been that biology teachers must become involved. Biology teachers must be concerned with issues other than the factual material taught in the classroom. However, involvement is a commitment. And yet, isn't it easier to allow the other person to do it? If something doesn't turn out well, we can then point our finger at someone else. We're not to blame, we haven't done a thing! If each member of NABT were to look into a mirror and ask, "What can I offer to NABT?" and based upon his/her answer contribute time and effort, the result would be that NABT would be doing something for each member.

Unfortunately, most people choose the path of least resistance. They find it easier to look the other way, take things for granted and leave the work to be accomplished by others. Quite often, the effects of this type of behavior are unanticipated and disastrous. One example of this occurred in New York City, where for many years, motorists traveled along the West Side Highway. Most people took it for granted and very few bothered to check its function. Those who saw the cracks in the foundation never bothered to report them. The results of this behavior are history. The foundation collapsed and with it a major passageway for New York City motorists. The moral of the story is obvious. The soundness of NABT's foundation depends upon the strong commitment and constant involvement of each member. This continuous flow of involvement and personal commitment will be the catalyst that will stimulate NABT to periodically examine and repair itself, and constantly grow!

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Involvement and Commitment

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What Can I Do?

This is the question most often asked by Association members. Sometimes it is more rhetorical than interrogative. To answer the question, I return to my original question—"Why did you join NABT?"

What about you? What can you do to get involved in NABT and give it your commitment? Have you thought about any of these activities?

1. Contact your regional director and plan a local seminar.
2. Correspond with the chairperson of a committee and offer your services.
3. Prepare an article for the *American Biology Teacher*.
4. Write to the President of NABT and offer your talents.
5. Respond in detail to questionnaires and documents.
6. Offer your services to the membership director of your state. Assist in publicizing NABT and actively campaign for membership.
7. Write to the director of your state OBTA committee. Do you know of someone worthy of nomination? Would you like to serve on a screening committee?
9. Do you have an idea for a new committee for NABT? Do you have a special talent (e.g., proposal writing)? Write to the Executive Director, President, or a member of the Board of Directors.
9. Will your state be hosting a national NABT convention? This is an excellent opportunity for involvement.
10. Do you have a literary ability? Have you thought about reviewing publications or writing book reviews for our editor? Have you thought about offering your services to the Publications Advisory Committee?

The "I-don't-have-time" Syndrome

The next time you look through the pages of a local or regional science conference brochure, note the names of the participants. Do they look familiar? Chances are the same names have appeared in the conference brochures year after year.

Organizations, such as NABT, need transfusions of "new blood." Where will the "new blood" come from if everyone resorts to the "But I don't have time syndrome?" NABT must not succumb to the disease of apathy. We cannot afford the luxury of members "not having time" to get involved. Involvement and commitment are a partnership. NABT depends upon this partnership. Why? Reflection on these questions will help to explain why.

- Should NABT continue to recognize and reward the accomplishments of biology teachers?
- Should NABT encourage and stimulate state and local organizations to conduct seminars to keep biology teachers informed of new developments in biology and education?
- Should NABT establish and maintain working relationships with other associations whose objectives and goals are similar to those of NABT?
- Should NABT *set* the trends in biology education rather than *follow* the trends set by others?

These are vitally important questions, that you, an NABT member, must resolve. If you respond "Yes" to these questions, then you must become involved in and make a commitment to NABT. If you dare to share the burdens of creating and implementing the goals, objectives, and philosophy of NABT, you can take pride in your title—NABT MEMBER.

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Squirrel Carrying Capacity

...from p. 335

affect population. A high estimate of carrying capacity might lead to inappropriate restocking or predator control.

Summary

Students measure oak trunk diameters, calculate acorn yield from a data table, convert mass into energy and eventually population, and critically analyze their final results as they estimate the squirrel carrying capacity of an acre of oaks. The investigation leads to discussions of population dynamics and wildlife and resource management techniques. As a result of this exercise, students can begin to understand the relationship between forestry practices and wildlife management and perhaps gain a greater appreciation of the problems encountered in balancing the needs of humans and wildlife.

References

- LUDWICK, R.L. FONTENAT, J.P. and MOSBY, H.S. 1969. Energy metabolism of the eastern gray squirrel. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 33(3):569.
- MOEN, A.N. Personal communication.