

Since I wrote the article over a year ago, I have tested the approach against a commercial program in a university general biology course, with similar encouraging results. The next step is to make ED-style activities available commercially. Unfortunately, textbook publishers respond more to what is marketable than to what is educationally sound. Therefore, those of us interested in fostering ED and similar approaches in commercial curricula must make ourselves known. Letters such as yours provide a mechanism to provide such information to publishers. We need to encourage all other biology teachers to speak out also.

Smoking at the NABT Convention

I was appalled at the number of my colleagues at the NABT Convention held in Boston in October who disregarded the requests not to smoke during Convention sessions.

Certainly, all biologists are aware of the delicate nature of the respiratory tissues. To inflict smoke on one's own system is certainly a personal decision; to inflict smoke on others is unpardonable! (Smoke from pipes is just as irritating as cigarette smoke.)

Dorothy H. Reardon
5619 Haskell Avenue
Carmichael, California 95608

Controversy at NABT Conventions

In an otherwise high level, informative National Convention in Boston, I am compelled to note, in my opinion, a serious trough. I refer to the address on nuclear dangers by Dr. Helen Caldicott at Saturday's General Session.

Her approach to a serious, controversial topic—highly deserving of attention by biology educators—was more than wanting. It was riddled with the snide, punctuated with innuendo, and obvious in its omissions. (Parenthetically, I must empha-

size that I, myself, am not bland about the absolute safety of nuclear reactors.) Let me detail a few of the more glaring examples.

The overall approach was to link the *possible, suppositional, predicted* dangers from reactors with the *positive, actual, and demonstrated* destruction of nuclear armaments. In the former, the destruction would be an *accident*, in which all efforts of containment had failed. In the latter, the devastation is a *design goal* in which every effort for successful damage has been made. It is as if to say that a TNT charge used to dig a tunnel is no different from a charge set off by a madman in a school! This linkage is an overworked approach. It signifies either a wanton disregard of facts, or an unconscionable skewing of a point of view. If I am not mistaken, Dr. Caldicott, early on, referred to nuclear reactors as “bomb factories.” Surely she knows that the military could find easier ways to develop plutonium! It ill behooves a physician, trained in science, to transmit such hyperbole to a group of educators, also trained in the sciences.

Squat in the middle of her description of possible reactor accidents, she took the trouble to give a detailed and gruesome description of the violence caused at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Again, to put it kindly, this was out of context.

Her dire predictions of cancers resulting from Three Mile Island are totally at variance with those of the most reputable scientists in the world.

To a floor question on possible dangers from coal, she gave a glossy answer about radon. Never a mention of Black Lung. . .the carbon dioxide blanket. . .the acid rains. . .

Many times she alluded to her organization, *Physicians for Social Responsibility*. Are all other physicians irresponsible Dr. Strangeloves?

But now to a positive action: What should NABT do? In the future, when there's a scheduled speaker on a controversial topic way off in one corner, the Convention Committee

owes us another speaker—on the same platform. This year, the *ABT* Editor should actively solicit a reputable scientist to prepare a rebuttal. The reputable science journals, the respected and learned scientific societies, and renowned scientists know at least as much about this subject as Dr. Caldicott. Our readership deserves to hear it.

Joseph M. Oxenhorn
Pathways-on-Green River Hill
Hillsdale, New York 12529

Who Should We Believe?

Professor McReynold's Letter to the Editor in the September issue of *ABT*(42:363) raises the interesting question of the degree of reverence with which we should receive the opinions of those holding higher degrees in science.

The basis should not be a university degree a person holds but whether or not the person has the experience, background, and ability to make authoritative statements. No scientist can be an authority in more than a minute portion of science. I hold a Ph.D. degree in science—the highest earned degree that one can achieve, yet it would be ridiculous for me to attempt authoritative statements in Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Psychology, and related areas. In fact, even in Biology, there are few areas where I can speak with any authority.

Those who cite the opinions of scientists of the Creation Research Society should ask themselves this question: Are these the scientists who, on the basis of studying fossils and living organisms, have become authorities? Are they the people who publish in the scientific journals devoted to paleontology and evolutionary biology? Do they even present “scientific creationism” in a form that can be evaluated by the procedures of science?

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