

The American Biology Teacher

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NEWS & VIEWS

The Peripatetic Executive Director

I spend my working days in the company of five women who staff our Reston office. They have the good grace to let me think I run the place, but we all know that they do. Lest you think I am implying that they are just manipulators, let me hasten to assure you that we have worked hard to achieve this state. Each of us has a set of responsibilities over which we have full control, including the right to fail. Theirs is to run the office, publish the journal, and organize conventions, while mine is to work with the Board toward NABT goals while helping them get on with their jobs.

Mind you, they are an independent lot, given to expressing their opinions on association matters and office practices when they think I am wandering off track, or need to open my eyes. It happens in our monthly staff meetings, over lunch, or in the privacy of my office. When a staff member marches into my office, kicks aside the brick so that the door swings closed, sits down in the chair by my desk, and says, "See here, Wayne, I want to talk to you!" I know I am in for another growth experience.

Each, in her own way, is an independent woman, attempting to stand on her own two feet. The funny thing is, when I look at myself, I see that I too am struggling to be independent, to stand square and tall. All of us are pilgrims on the same journey! That we are opposite sex is pure serendipity.

But for a journey you need a road map, unless of course you choose to just wander in small circles. The road maps we are given as children are inadequate to guide us as adults; they are simply too limited, leaving us no alternative except to constantly extend our road maps, our boundaries, throughout life. Expanding our personal boundaries is not easy; it requires discipline, effort, and courage. As a man, I have had to go beyond childhood notions of women as mother substitutes, sex objects, and actresses in a play called "Domestic Tranquility." Extending

my road map has been difficult, and at times painful, but has invariably led to a richer life. They never said it would be easy, only that it would be fun.

I am writing this having just returned from our Detroit convention. What impressed me most was the number of exciting, vibrant, and "pushy" women offering comments, responding to speakers, and presenting papers. "Pushy" only in the sense that if you confront them, you know they will push back. Women who are laying claim to their careers, their sexuality, and their personal growth.

Jane Kahle, President-elect of NABT; her daughter Katie, an engineer; Mary McConnell, Associate Professor; Frances Vandervoort and Claudia Douglass, members of the Committee on the Role and Status of Women in Biology Education; Tammy Meyer, Coordinator for Region VIII; Blue Magruder, Director of Communications for Earthwatch; Laine Gurley, Chairperson of the Committee for Animal Behavior Teaching and editor of their newsletter; Betty Stump, initiator of the Committee for Community College Biologists; Rosalyn Yalow, Nobel Laureate; Jane Abbott, Maine OBTA Director; Jan Roth, biology teacher; and Cecily Selby, Co-Chair of the Commission on Pre-College Education in Math, Science and Technology are just a few who returned to my mind the Monday after the convention.

These people, our office staff, and others I did not have time to encounter in Detroit share one characteristic: they are lively. They are growing and fulfilling their own destinies. And as I expand my boundaries to include them, they enormously enrich my life. So I say, quite reverently, thank God for lively women. It would be a dull world without them.

Wayne A. Moyer

The concepts of "road maps" and "boundaries" are from *The Road Less Traveled*, by M. Scott Peck, published by Simon and Shuster in 1978.

AAAS Coalition

The coalition of organizations for education in the sciences, organized by AAAS, held its second meeting on October 18th at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C.

This group intends to enhance the role of professional societies in bettering pre-college education in science, mathematics, and technology. Four aims are stated in the charter adopted in draft form:

- 1) Upgrade the competence and status of *mathematics* and *science teachers*;
- 2) Improve the science and mathematics experiences of *students*;
- 3) Help increase *public* literacy in mathematics, science, and technology; and
- 4) Inform the political system as it formulates policies that affect science and mathematics education in America.

The draft charter will be refined by the ad hoc Steering Committee, of which NABT is a member.

After recent meetings, **Jim Rutherford**, chief education officer for AAAS, reviewed his perception of the so-called crisis in science education. He noted that there is increasing national awareness that there is a problem, with the media and various journals devoting space to discussion of science education. At the local level, there are increasing enrollments in chemistry, and boards of education are moving to increase math and science requirements. Congress recently voted the National Science Foundation (NSF) an additional \$15 million for science education. (See note elsewhere in *News and Views*.) Finally, a number of bills have been submitted to Congress in support of science and math education.

However, across the nation problems remain, said Rutherford. The supply of teachers is weak, especially in the areas of physics and math, and schools of education seem to be getting out of the business. Under-qualified and frankly unqualified teachers are appearing in science and math classes due to shortages and "riffing". Reduced funds for laboratory materials, field trips, and textbooks are keeping students locked in their classrooms.

Nevertheless, Rutherford continued, there is an apparent lack of forward planning. The present content of biology courses is perceived by many to be inappropriate for

students whose last course in science is biology and who will be living and raising families in the next century. There are many studies but few decisions on spending except for budget decline.

Later in the session, participants broke up into three working groups to consider: 1) ways in which the needs of education in mathematics and science can be met; 2) the need for communications among associations; and 3) the coalition's work agenda for 1983. **Wayne Moyer**, NABT Executive Director and rapporteur for the Communications group, noted in his report that there is a need for a mathematics, science, and technology education newsletter to be prepared and distributed by AAAS. It would serve to cement the Coalition by providing information about member societies and their education activities. It would also report news, describe programs and special efforts, announce hearings and legislative activities, and generally focus attention of the member organizations on the goals of the Coalition. To be most effective, it should be distributed monthly by First Class Mail to people in the member organizations and other concerned parties.

NSB Commission

The National Science Board Commission on Pre-college Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology held its second meeting in Washington on October 19th. NABT was represented by **Wayne Moyer**.

The 20-member Commission was established to prepare an agenda to improve this country's education in science, mathematics, and technology. During its 18-month life to end in December 1983, the Commission will make recommendations on how to expand the pool of students who are well prepared for advanced careers in mathematics, science, and engineering; widen the range of high quality educational offerings in these areas at all grade levels; and increase the general literacy of all citizens for life, work, and full participation in the technical society which they will inherit. This second meeting marked the completion of Phase I, which is summed up in a report titled, "Today's Problem, Tomorrow's Crisis." This report begins:

Across the United States, there is escalating awareness that our education

systems are facing inordinate difficulties in trying to meet the needs of the nation in our changing and increasingly technological society. We appear to be raising a generation of Americans, many of whom lack the understanding and skills necessary to participate fully in a technological world in which they live and work.

The work of the Commission has been divided among four task groups which are: Governments, Primary Educators (which includes the schools), Facilitators (which includes associations like NABT as well as university groups), and recipients (which includes business and industry). The Commission members chairing these four task groups reported at the meeting on their findings under Phase I, which is intended to provide a common understanding of the problems facing the nation. During Phase II, members of the Commission will attempt to identify exemplary programs in science, mathematics, and technology education, through site visits and public hearings held across the country.

NABT was fortunate to have **Cecily Cannan Selby** participate in our Detroit convention. During a luncheon meeting she met with members of our Executive Committee and the two nominees for Vice President in 1983, **Marjorie King** and **David Lopath**. Later, she addressed a session of the convention, noting that the goal of the Commission is to develop a consensus for a national agenda on science, mathematics, and technology education. NABT members made a number of excellent suggestions to Dr. Selby.

A copy of the report, "Today's Problem, Tomorrow's Crisis" may be obtained from The Commission on Pre-College Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, The National Science Foundation, 1800 G St., N.W. Washington, DC 20550.

OBTA Under Study

In a difficult move, the NABT Board of Directors voted at its meeting of October 17th to suspend the OBTA program for one year while the goals, procedures, and support of this 20-year-old program are carefully studied.

The action was precipitated, in part, by the decision of American

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Optical Corporation to discontinue awarding microscopes to the recipients after the completion of the 1982 program. In a letter to Wayne Moyer, **Dale Scholfield**, Senior Product Planner for AO, noted: "With reluctance, we have arrived at the decision that after the 1982 awards Dale Scientific Instruments would no longer be able to continue awarding microscopes for the Outstanding Biology Teachers. Economic conditions and general market trends dictate this action."

Equally important in the Board decision was the belief that the base of support for OBTA was too narrow, consisting only of one organization and one company. In addition, during the past few years the number of applicants for this prestigious award has dropped markedly for reasons that are presently unclear, but which may reflect reluctance on the part of biology teachers to place themselves above their colleagues through self nomination for the award.

A study committee has been organized under the direction of Board member **Dave Lopath**, and

will address the general questions: 1) Is the OBTA program serving a need in the biology profession? 2) If so, how can NABT organize a coalition of support which involves business and industry, the scientific community, and educators? 3) What procedures should be followed to assure a large field of candidates, fair selection, and local recognition? Comments and suggestions may be made to Dave Lopath, Biology Department, Morgan H.S., Clinton, CT 06413.

Since a number of states have strong programs already in place and a list of potential recipients, the Executive Committee, in a later decision, agreed to encourage individual state directors to operate the program provided they can raise local funds to defray publicity, travel, and other costs associated with the program. A national campaign will *not* be run this year.

The Board deeply regrets having to take this unprecedented action at a time when OBTA seems to be more needed than ever. Two goals seem to be clear for the OBTA program: 1) to increase public support for pre-college science education, 2) to foster professional pride among biology teachers. In a real sense, OBTA is a communications device directed to the public, industry which depends on quality biology education, and the biology education community. During this one-year hiatus the Board intends to develop a revitalized Outstanding Biology Teacher Award Program.

Board Meeting Actions

The Board of Directors of NABT, during its October meeting, took action on a number of policy issues which have been brought to its attention by members and its own committees.

John Ransom and **Steve Lanphear**, co-chairmen of a Committee on Professional Certification, reported on an extensive survey they conducted among state supervisors of science. They were surprised to discover that state superintendents in general want to upgrade preparation requirements for biology teachers and even to require preparation in two related fields. This is contrary to the perception made by others that certification requirements are being reduced. The Board commended Ransom and Lanphear on the completeness and scope of their report, which will be published at a

later date.

In another action, the Board agreed to work closely with Earth-watch on a project intended to obtain scholarship support for teachers who wish to participate in Earth-watch expeditions. The program, which will be described in a later edition of *News and Views*, will provide a mechanism by which local industries and businesses can support teachers on these valuable field experiences.

The Honorary Membership Committee, chaired by **Jane Kahle**, completed its report for 1982. Two people were moved and accepted as honorary members by the Board: **Sandy Wiper**, biology teacher in Massachusetts, and **Jerry Lightner**, former executive director of NABT. These people received their awards at the Annual Banquet on Saturday evening of the convention.

Robert Yager, President of NSTA, joined the Board meeting during the afternoon to discuss ways in which NSTA and NABT can cooperate on selected projects. It is important, he noted, for all science education associations to present a united front. He suggested sharing sessions at each association's national convention, sharing articles of mutual interest for publication in the respective journals, joint policy statements, and possible affiliation. He expressed a desire to avoid conflicts in meeting dates and has established a committee chaired by **Audrey Brainard** to monitor potential conflicts.

Philadelphia in 1983!

The Philadelphia Convention Committee is off and running under the direction of **Stuart Hughes** and **Bob Stemper**. The first meeting of the Convention Advisory Committee met in Detroit and selected the theme "Growth for Tomorrow: Biology-Technology-Education." The convention will be held in the City Center Hotel October 20-23, 1983.

It is certainly not too early to think about making a presentation at the Philadelphia meeting. Biology teachers invariably feel they have little to offer their colleagues but also invariably turn out to have many valuable ideas tucked away in their lesson plan books and file cabinets. There will be ample opportunity for short presentation as well as fully developed longer ones.

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