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NSTA Report

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National Science Teachers Association

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NSTA Report

Dr. Robert L. Fisher, Director, NSTA District VIII

"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!" Have you seen that poster? It depicts a cascade of lemons pouring down on a man who promptly turns it into lemonade. There are times when it is very tough to have such an optimistic viewpoint on life, times when the internal energy is not sufficient to fuel our initiative to do something productive with what life brings us.

Science education, as well as other areas of the school, is getting its share of lemons these days. Some schools find they must lay off some good science teachers; schools in other parts of the country can't find qualified science teachers. The source of federal funds for science education is drying up, but at the state level confusion obscures the source of future funding from that level for science education. National curricula have run dry of new sources of ideas because they can't meet the needs of individual schools; local schools don't have the resources to develop materials to meet their local needs.

Despair? I think not. We can't look at the dark side of all of this. There is probably some good to be made of reexamination of current resources. I recently participated in the Board of Directors' meeting of NSTA. I did not see despair, no throwing up of hands to say we have met our match. On the contrary, I saw highly optimistic individuals intent on making lemonade. You will read about these activities in future issues of your journals, but let me take a few minutes to highlight some of the meeting for you.

The topic of NSTA conventions occupied a major part of the meeting time. This is a service of the association open to a large part of the membership. In an effort to improve conventions and convention attendance, the Board

- restructured the convention committee to improve communication and involvement of appropriate individuals.
- reinforced the practice of a single national convention and established a committee to identify alternatives to the present practice of fall conventions.
- established the principle of rotating convention on a five-year cycle.

In other action, the Board voted to

- extend NSTA District boundaries to include Canadian provinces.
- approve the position of comptroller to provide information to the membership on the financial status of NSTA.
- apply to NCATE to become an associate member of the organization which is the single national accreditation body for teacher education.

- begin an intensive study of the standards for science teacher preparation.
- keep terms of office at two years rather than the three years proposed at the meeting.
- approve the contract with *Science 81* for a reduced subscription rate for NSTA membership.
- join the ACLU action in Arkansas involving the suit on creationism.
- receive a Science Skills Continuum developed by the Supervision Committee.

It really is a pleasure to work with so many good people that you have elected to represent you on the NSTA Board. It is time for nominations and elections for the position of District VIII director and some other Board positions. Furthermore, it will soon be time to recommend some of you to future committees of the Board. Please contact me if you are interested.

It is your association. Be active in it. Make your own lemonade.

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Games

Many science games are created by innovative teachers to spark interest in a science lesson and may later be returned to classrooms as smartly packaged products. An annotated list of game sources is available from NSTA. Ask for, *Games for the Science Classroom: an Annotated Bibliography* by Paul Hounshell and Ira Trollinger.

Flame Tests

Problems associated with flame tests include, (1) sodium contamination producing an overwhelming yellow flame, (2) the transient nature of the flame and (3) the hazard of concentrated HC1. The following techniques improve flame tests.

Method for Metal Carbonates

Place a few grams of carbonate of the metal ion under investigation in an evaporating basin. Add a few ml of 2M HC1. Play a blue Bunsen flame over the surface of the liquid. The CO_2 bubbles formed lift a spray of the solution into the flame producing the desired characteristic metal color.

Method for Other Metal Salts

Use the same method as above but add a few pieces of granulated zinc before the 2M HC1. In this case the hydrogen gas formed lifts the spray into the Bunsen burner.

"Men who have excessive faith in their theories or ideas are not only ill prepared for making discoveries; they also make very poor observations."

Claude Bernard