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Life's origin may lie in slicks of primeval pollution

Man is the product of an ancient oil slick that covered the earth's oceans if the theories of two A&M researchers are correct.

Bioscientist Dr. Joseph Nagyvary and chemist Dr. Janos H. Fendler have received a grant to explore the origin of the genetic code. By a quirk of fate, the two are both veterans of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 who escaped to the West. They became experts in the two different fields of colloid and nucleic acid chemistry, which provide the crucial components of the life puzzle. Much later, they met for the first time at TAMU and began inter-

disciplinary discussions that led to their proposal on the generation of life.

"We assume, in reliance to the work of Lasaga and others, that a major portion of the primitive earth, or rather ocean, was covered with oil slicks, a sort of primeval pollution," Nagyvary began. "Because there was no oxygen in the atmosphere of the earth, high energy light from the sun caused a photo-chemical reaction with the methane, hydrogen and water vapor present to form the petroleum. All the carbon on earth, in the plants and in the ground, was once petroleum that was produced

in a 10 to 30-foot-deep oil slick."

"Additionally for the first time we took into consideration that sulfur was present which we know it was in abundance," he noted. "We can do a lot of things with the addition of sulfides. It offers new routes to simulations of the situation which produced nucleotides and proteins which are nature's building blocks.

The explanation of the genetic code in the past decade is considered one of the greatest achievements of modern science and resulted, among other things, in the award of several Nobel prizes. The concept deals with the translation of the genetic blue print (DNA) into proteins. The underlying principles for the evolution of the code remain deeply buried however.

"The interphase where the oil and the water met," continued Fendler, "provided the media for formation of micelles from primitive detergents. Micelles can be considered models of primitive cells. They are concentrations of molecules with 'sticky ends' which form a cavity.

"This cell-like compartment," he contends, "may be used for the condensation of nucleic acids which form the building blocks, this could provide the key to the understanding of the genetic code."

"We will create special micelles and bring them together with a full range of 20 amino acids and four nucleotides," Nagyvary added. "According to our hypothesis, the uptake by the micelles will be selective and will reflect what should be required by the genetic code."

"Then," he went on, "in this environment they should react to form more complex polynucleotides and proteins and ultimately one would arrive at final refinement of the present day genetic code which is now much more delicate and sophisticated."

Revision windup expected

AUSTIN — The end may be in sight for the historic Texas Constitutional Convention which began last January.

Delegates have been zipping along since they came back to work after the May 4 primary election, and only one major article — the catchall, controversial General Provisions — was left to complete on tentative passage.

After that, of course, lawmakers-delegates must go back through the whole package on final consideration. And only those articles receiving a two-thirds majority vote can be submitted to voters.

Actually, the convention has until the end of July to complete the entire revision effort.

However, President Price Daniel Jr. has expressed hope for a much quicker windup. Daniel of course, pushed unsuccessfully for agreement on a proposed revision before the primary election, they had to settle for a month's recess during April.

Convention leaders debated whether to submit a \$1 million budget — enough to last until mandatory July adjournment — or to budget piecemeal, hopeful of getting through within a few weeks.

Daniel expressed a preference for budgeting through July, then "giving a lump of it back" on earlier adjournment.

However, Administration Committee Chairman Sen. Jack Hightower of Vernon said he was concerned that appropriating through July would tempt delegates to stay that long.

Meanwhile, Louisiana Gov. Edwin Edwards gave delegates some practical advice on how to get new constitutions adopted. His own state has just approved one.

Food additives to be explained

According to a new Food and Drug Administration regulation—effective March 18, 1974 — food products must give "common or unusual name" of any chemical additive used in the product, along with a separate description of its function. Examples of descriptions include "to retard spoilage," "to help protect flavor," "a mold inhibitor" and "to aid in color retention," says Mrs. Gwendolyn Clyatt, consumer marketing information specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, TAMU System.

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