

Etc....

California rejects texts, weeds out mediocrity

Associated Press

California's decision to reject nearly 30 biology textbooks for watering down the theory of evolution has opened a crucial new front in the three-year battle to weed out mediocrity in America's schools.

California's school board, led by schools superintendent Bill Honig, voted last week to reject the junior high school texts printed by about a dozen publishers. On Monday, several publishers agreed to revise their texts to put more emphasis on the theory of evolution, which holds that mankind evolved from lower forms of life.

But this wasn't just a replay of the old debate over Darwin and apes.

For the first time, the spotlight of school reform shifted to where some educators have argued it has belonged all along — on educational materials like textbooks and computer software that many have criticized as so dull and intellectually bankrupt that they represent a roadblock to school excellence.

California's use of its textbook-buying power to force publishers to make changes in biology texts

showed that in at least some respects, educational excellence and the laws of the marketplace are inseparable.

Honig, a maverick not easily categorized as a liberal or conservative, has taken on two formidable foes.

On one hand are religious fundamentalists like Kelly Segraves who operates the Science Creation Research Center in San Diego and who have had considerable success in getting biology texts to give less space to the theory of evolution. On the other hand are textbook publishers who have seen school reform movements come and go, and who have openly doubted that educational excellence sells in the long run.

States like California and Texas have tremendous influence over textbook content across the country. Both are among the largest of the 24 states that have a statewide textbook review process. Equally important, the textbook selection process in those states includes open hearings at which religious fundamentalists can argue their views before a broad audience.

Last March, Texas's attorney general ruled unconstitutional a state board of education guideline requir-

ing texts to present evolution as "only one of several explanations of the origins of humankind."

But it's the struggle with the publishers, not the fundamentalists, that could have lasting significance in determining the future direction of school reform.

Honig is by no means the first to criticize "dumbed down" texts.

Last February, former U.S. Education Secretary T.H. Bell criticized the quality of texts. A month later, Honig and other state education chiefs tried unsuccessfully to form an interstate textbook-purchasing consortium.

New York City in 1982 removed high school biology texts by three publishers from that school district's "approved" book list because they de-emphasized — or eliminated any mention of — the theory of evolution.

But until now, the quality of school texts has received remarkably little attention in the dozens of reform reports that have made headlines in the last several years — especially considering that researchers estimate that some 90 percent of classroom activity is governed by texts.



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Harvard freshmen view 'new world'

Associated Press

BOSTON — One giggling freshman was lowered into a sewer tank Monday, while others signed up for a tour of black history landmarks in field trips meant to give newcomers to Harvard University a new view of a new world.

"We want them to open their eyes," said Burriss Young, associate dean of freshmen at Harvard. "I've talked to seniors who have never even been on a subway."

Young packed 500 freshmen into boats Monday for a tour of Georges Island, a Civil War fort in Boston Harbor and one of several unusual stops on a weeklong orientation jaunt.

The dean had said the tour was meant to show students how immigrants must have felt as they approached Boston. "We want them to land in the harbor the way immigrants did," Young said.

But that idea was dropped before the tour, and no mention was made of immigrants. "That

was just some smart comment I made," Young said.

Instead, students were lectured on manhole covers as clues to the progress of civilization and a young woman wearing a Princeton sweatshirt was lowered into a sewer to show her what it looked like and calm her fears about rats underground.

"If all we ever look at are beautiful facades, all we will see are facades," said John E. Stilgoe, a Harvard landscape historian, who preceded the freshman into the sewer.

"In the end all this beauty here depends upon the sewer system," he said.

The odd introduction to college life was organized by Young when he realized that because of the Jewish holidays, he had a few more days than usual to orient freshmen before classes started today.

Greta Garbo celebrates 80th birthday

Associated Press

It has been 63 years since Greta Garbo made her first film; 53 years since she uttered the immortal line, "I want to be alone"; 44 years since she retired from Hollywood.

As she turns 80 today, Garbo's dazzling beauty has faded but her mystique, kept alive by public fascination, has not.

She retired from the screen in 1941 after "Two-Faced Woman" was a critical and box office failure.

While "Camille," and "Ninotchka" became film festival staples, the woman born as Greta Lovisa Gustafson and known worldwide simply as "Garbo" kept to herself.

She was photographed in August in Klosters, a Swiss Alpine resort. Unrecognized by most of her fellow vacationers, the actress now walks with the aid of a stick and looks, if anything, older than her years.

After breakfast each day, she dons a yellow straw hat which covers most of her face and sets off on a 90-minute walk along the banks of the Landquart River. Along the way, she pauses to rest on a bench and savor a long black cigar.

Hollywood gala to benefit AIDS

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Haunted by AIDS-spawned paranoia, fears of new blacklisting and the illness of Rock Hudson, the entertainment industry is asking its stars and moguls to open up their checkbooks this week to combat the deadly disease.

A black-tie "Commitment to Life" benefit Thursday night at the Bonaventure Hotel will feature a galaxy of celebrity appearances and performances in an effort to raise more than \$1 million.

Elizabeth Taylor will be a co-host with Burt Reynolds, Sammy Davis Jr., Shirley MacLaine, and Burt Lancaster.

There will be an auction of an Andy Warhol artwork, an award for former first lady Betty Ford, and performances by Cyndi Lauper, Rod Stewart, the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, Carol Burnett and Sammy Davis Jr.

More than 2,500 people paid up to \$500 each to attend the benefit and TV interviewer Phil Donahue and his actress wife, Marlo Thomas,

A black-tie "Commitment to Life" AIDS benefit Thursday night at the Bonaventure Hotel will feature a galaxy of celebrity appearances and performances in an effort to raise more than \$1 million.

will make a pitch for more contributions.

"The money will be distributed to programs embracing research and support projects for victims," said Scott Barton, one of the gala's organizers.

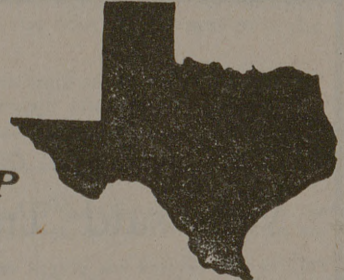
Celebrities have frequently rallied for causes, from the anti-nuclear protests of the 1970s to famine relief in the 1980s, and the AIDS benefit had been planned before Hudson's illness was disclosed.

But Hudson's struggle has galvanized support for fighting the disease. Two years ago, when comedian Joan Rivers headlined the community's first AIDS benefit at the Studio One Backlot, there was little celebrity support.

Hudson is donating proceeds from his uncompleted biography "My Story" to AIDS research through his Rock Hudson Foundation. He discovered last year that he had AIDS, and has been at his Beverly Hills home since his Aug. 24 release from UCLA Medical Center.

Homosexual entertainers, their friends and associates who have not fallen prey to acquired immune deficiency syndrome now see it as a threat lurking everywhere.

The Screen Actors Guild told movie and television producers in a letter this week they want to discuss possible discrimination against homosexual actors "to quell unfounded fears which may be affecting the employability of performers who may be gay or even just suspected of being gay."



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