

Texas Repeals Antievolution Rules

Bowing to public and political pressure and the threat of litigation, the Texas Board of Education has repealed the state's antievolution rules, which for a decade have seriously diluted coverage of evolution in high school biology textbooks. The board voted to repeal the rules at its 13 April meeting in El Paso, just 1 month after the state's attorney general, Jim Mattox, delivered an opinion that the rules were "in contravention of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution" (*Science*, 30 March, p. 1373).

Texas scientists and educators are now poised to ensure that the next round of textbook selection, which begins in July and ends in November, will reverse the state's creationist-inspired antievolution trend of the past 10 years. "If the books recommended by the textbook selection committee are inadequate scientifically and don't meet the spirit of the repeal of the rules, we will go to court to ask for an injunction," says Michael Hudson of People for the American Way, a lobby group that has orchestrated pressure on the Board of Education.

Because Texas represents some 10 percent of the nation's school textbook market, publishers have typically tailored their products to what is acceptable in the Lone Star State. The effect of the rules has therefore been felt nationwide. Concern over the consequent deteriorating standards of biology education has begun to be expressed in several states. For instance, 2 years ago the New York City Board of Education rejected two biology texts recommended to it because of the inadequate treatment of evolution. And educators and politicians from 21 states met recently in Florida to discuss what could be done to counteract the influence of Texas on the nation's education.

Meanwhile, Hudson and his colleagues have for almost 2 years been bringing to public attention at the state level the activities of the Board of Education, which is chaired by Joe Kelly Butler, a bluff, independent-minded oil man. In addition, Hudson was instrumental in having Senator Oscar Mauzy solicit the attorney gen-

eral's opinion on the constitutional status of the rules. Once Mattox's decision was recorded, Hudson let it be known that People for the American Way would bring suit against the board if it did not repeal the rules. Although Butler's inclination was to ignore this challenge he was advised by an attorney for the Texas Education Agency that he really had no choice but to repeal the rules.

Pressure on the board was further intensified at the end of March by the extremely unflattering comments made about it in a preliminary report of a Select Committee on Public Education, which was established by the governor last year. The committee effectively blames the board for declining academic standards in the state: it therefore recommends that the board, which is an elected body, be dissolved and replaced by a nine-member body, to be appointed by the governor. Butler's tactics are therefore seen as being influenced by a desire for his own and his board's survival.—**ROGER LEWIN**

India and Italy to Share Biotechnology Center

Paris. In a controversial decision, India and Italy have been chosen to co-host the new international center for genetic engineering and biotechnology being established under the auspices of the Vienna-based United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

India's component of the center will be based on a new site being developed by the government outside New Delhi. In Italy, the center will occupy laboratories on a science park currently under construction in the northeastern city of Trieste, close to the Yugoslav border.

Formal approval of the creation of the center and set of statutes were agreed at a meeting in Madrid last October. The statutes have so far been signed by 30 countries. No agreement, however, was reached on a site, for which bids had been received from seven separate governments (*Science*, 30 September 1983, p. 1351).

A committee set up to discuss the siting question met in November and

recommended adoption of a federal structure. Under this arrangement, administration, planning, and evaluation would be carried out from a single location, while operational activities will be shared by six "operational units," each with responsibility for a particular subject area. It was widely expected that these responsibilities would be divided between the seven countries.

This recommendation, however, did not generate unanimous approval, and was rejected at a subsequent meeting of the committee in January in favor of splitting the center between Italy and India—both of whose governments have already offered considerable sums of money to cover initial capital costs. The decision was reached on a majority vote, but only after the other five countries (Egypt, Pakistan, Spain, Thailand, and Tunisia) had left the meeting in protest at the procedure being used to reach a decision.

A similar pattern of events lay behind a meeting in Vienna at the beginning of April, to which the planning committee had been asked to report. After 2 days of intense discussion, the issue of the site was put to a vote, and a decision to split the center between Italy and India was endorsed by 13 to 3, with two abstentions.

Several of those voting in favor of the proposal are countries that intend to identify national biotechnology units as "affiliates" to the center. Under the already agreed statutes, these would be eligible to participate in the center's training and R & D activities, and to receive project funds from international sources allocated by the center's board of governors.

In contrast, of the five countries unsuccessful in their bids to be the site of a single center, two (Egypt and Pakistan) voted against the two-site solution, two (Thailand and Tunisia) did not participate in the final vote, and one (Spain) did not even participate in the meeting.

UNIDO officials are hoping that the controversy surrounding the selection of the site, as well as the relatively novel idea of splitting a center of excellence into two separate parts several thousand miles distant, will not undermine its effectiveness. It raises questions about how the center will fare in raising funds from international agencies, however.—**DAVID DICKSON**