
March 1989 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet
Vol. 8, No. 3
Editor: Kent Harker

DEGREES OF FOLLY: PART II
by William Bennetta

[Part I of this article ran in our February issue. Here is a summary:]

By law, no postsecondary school in California can award degrees unless the school has been certified by a recognized accreditation agency or has been approved by the superintendent of public instruction (the chief of the State Department of Education). To gain his approval, the school must show academic resources and programs comparable to those at accredited schools that offer the same degrees.

In 1981, when the superintendent was Wilson Riles, the Department approved the granting of MS degrees in biology, geology, "astro/geophysics" and science education by the ICR Graduate School (ICRGS), an arm of the Institute for Creation Research. The ICR is not a scientific institution. It is a fundamentalist religious organization and is avidly committed to creation-science, the fundamentalist effort to devise quasi-scientific "evidences" that the Bible is an accurate book of history and of science. In its literature, the ICR calls itself a complex of "ministries" and lists the ICRGS as one of these. The president of the ICR and the ICRGS is Henry Morris, a preacher and former engineer.

In 1987, after the superintendency of the Department had passed to Bill Honig, the ICR sought renewed approval. During the preceding few years, "creation-science" and the men who purveyed it had been repeatedly discredited by scientists and jurists. An especially potent analysis had been issued in 1982 by Judge William Overton, of the federal district court in Little Rock, when he ruled unconstitutional an Arkansas law that would have put "creation-science" into public schools. Overton showed that "creation-science" was simply biblical religion in disguise, and he denounced specific misrepresentations made by preachers from the ICR. By 1987, nobody could have made a serious inquiry into the ICR or "creation-science" without finding that both had been exposed as fakes.

In August 1988, the Department sent a five-man committee to assess the ICR's degree programs. The committee's report, dated 5 August, was baloney. It omitted or obscured anything that might have disclosed the nature or aims of the ICR and the ICRGS, and it

promoted the fiction that the ICR did scientific work. It mentioned "creation-science" only once, in a throw-away line; it never told what "creation-science" was. It never told that the ICR itself called the ICRGS a religious ministry. It attributed "academic and research capabilities" to the ICRGS's faculty, even though no academic or research achievements had been claimed in the ICRGS's application. It ended with: "The committee recommends to the superintendent by a vote of 3 to 2 that full institutional approval be granted."

PART II

The farcical report by the committee that had visited the ICR was signed (on its last page) by six men; and even the way in which it was signed was fatuous. The five members of the committee were denoted by their names alone, with nothing to tell who they were, what their professions were, where they worked, or why they might have been able to assess degree programs in science or science education. The reader learned only that they were "Dr. George F. Howe, Dr. Stuart H. Hurlbert, Dr. Robert L. Kovach, Dr. G. Edwin Miller, Dr. James A. Woodhead."

The signature of the sixth man, Roy W. Steeves, bore the cryptic note "For PPED." Steeves was in fact an assistant director of the Private Postsecondary Education Division of the State Department of Education, and he not only had recruited the committee but had managed its proceedings. The report did not tell this, nor did it describe the proceedings.

The report was not the last word, however, nor had integrity drawn its last breath. The two committee members who had voted against approval -- Woodhead and Hurlbert -- decided to furnish Bill Honig with individual accounts of what they had seen.

On 16 August, Woodhead sent to Honig a two-page letter. It was on stationery of the Department of Geology at Occidental College, and its signature block identified Woodhead as the chairman of that department. The text said, in part: "One problem with the course of study at ICR is that the curriculum is quite restricted in each of the science departments, apparently as the result of the small size of the faculty. (1) A more serious problem is that course titles . . . do not actually represent course contents as indicated by the corresponding syllabi. The result is that students' transcripts must be misleading to other educators or potential employers.

"The major problem . . . is that the teaching of scientific method is entirely ignored. Laboratory equipment and computing facilities are almost entirely lacking, and hardly any classes include laboratory components. A glance through the catalogs of any of the schools the ICR considers to be comparable shows that in every instance laboratory work is an essential part of the scientific curriculum. (2) Yet students working for advanced degrees at ICR do so without laboratory segments in their classes. . . .

"On another level, though, I wondered how ICR can expect its students to successfully challenge the results of modern science if they are not taught scientific method. For that reason I spent a large part of my time during the three days of our visit perusing masters' theses. . . . I looked at seven or eight . . . and found them, as a group, to be dreadful. . . .

"The topics chosen were, in general, much too broad for masters' theses, and their scientific contents were much too thin. For instance, how can second-year graduate students be expected to debunk all of the current understanding of geochronology, sedimentation or the propagation of light. . . ? In the first example, the student exhibited a near total misunderstanding of the principles of radioactive decay as applied to geochronology and [had] obviously never done any geochronological work; in the second, the student used the time-honored technique of 'proof by blatant assertion' to place all of sedimentation within a catastrophist framework; (3) and in the third, the student's argument for the existence of an 'ether' to support the propagation of light in a vacuum was just plain stupid. . . . At worst, the students cannot write decent theses because, first, they do not understand scientific method, probably because the faculty members do not understand it themselves or are precluded from teaching it by the tenets of ICR, (4) and second, they do not have the requisite background in mathematics, physics and chemistry. . . ."

The other dissenting member of the committee, Hurlbert, sent his observations to Honig, on 26 August, in a 37-page document showing all the features that had been absent from the committee's own report: clarity, candor, rigor and care. The document was on plain paper, but its title sheet identified its author as a professor in the Department of Biology at San Diego State University.

In his introduction, Hurlbert repudiated the report of the committee, saying that he had had little influence on its content and that he did not consider himself to be an author of it. The rest of his text comprised twelve major sections. Here are some items:

On page 2, in his section "Flaws in the review process," Hurlbert noted that the review involved very complex issues, yet the Department had invoked its standard procedure: "Five persons who were unknown to each other . . . were asked to meet, discuss, interview, reflect, read, analyse, argue, deliberate, and write a final report, all within a 48-hour time period. . . . Perhaps such a schedule suffices for reviews of more traditional organizations. But ICR is a politically controversial, radically unconventional institution with marginal qualifications and an anti-science philosophy."

On page 3, in the same section, Hurlbert told that the materials distributed to committee members before their visit did not include curricula vitae of the ICRGS's faculty. So ". . . about ten days

before our site visit, I requested that the [Department] arrange for a full set of complete curricula vitae to be sent to each VC [visiting committee] member. I was told this was not possible. . ."

"Three sets were made available to us at ICR and we scanned them as time permitted. However, most . . . were very incomplete, many being nothing more than one-page summaries of the sort that might be given to a journalist preparing an article on ICR. . . . ICR seems not enthusiastic about having complete curricula vitae of its faculty members inspected by outsiders."

On page 5, under "Problems in the report of the Visiting Committee," Hurlbert told how the report had not disclosed the ICR's major purposes and had naively parroted the ICR's claim to having programs in science. Yet the primary purpose of both the ICR and the ICRGS were clear in documents that the committee had seen: "to teach `creation science'; to increase the number of `creation scientists' with conventional (in name) graduate degrees in science; to foster the teaching of `creation science' in private and public schools by increasing the number of teachers trained in the subject. . . ."

On page 7, in the same section, Hurlbert noted how the report said that the ICRGS's courses "attempt to present a two-model evaluation addressed to the origin of life." He commented: "This is the most misleading statement in the VC report. It suggests there is a balanced and fair presentation of the evidence and the differing interpretations of it. Virtually all of the documentation and testimony support exactly the opposite conclusion. . . ."

Starting on page 12, Hurlbert quoted from eight statements indicating "that the highest scientific, educational and judicial bodies in North America are in full agreement that `creation science' is non-scientific." One statement was the decision by Judge Overton. The others came from such bodies as the National Academy of Sciences, the Academic Senate of the University of California, and the American Chemical Society. All had been issued before 1986.

(Hurlbert did not say, but maybe should have said: All those statements were in the public record and had been available to Roy Steeves. If Steeves had made any effort to prepare the members of the committee, he surely would have furnished significant material from the existing literature about their subject: At the very least, they deserved to be warned that they would be visiting a known den of charlatanry. But Steeves had made no such effort.)

On page 17, under "Conventional scientific interpretations are NOT `fairly presented in ICR courses,'" Hurlbert told this: "One of the students interviewed misinterpreted a QUESTION from the VC about WHETHER a fair balance of viewpoints on origins, etc. was presented. . . . He thought we were SUGGESTING such balanced presentations should be the norm. He objected strongly to the

supposed suggestion, and seemed unaware that -- according to the claim in ICRGS's Application (p. 3) -- he had been the recipient of balanced presentations." (5)

On page 21, under "Purposes of ICRGS are religious, not scientific," Hurlbert said: "ICRGS's claim that its purpose is `to discover the truth about the universe by scientific research. . .' is inaccurate. By ICR's own testimony, all the major truths relating to `origins' are already known and are given in the Bible and in the ICR tenets. . . . The Absolute Truth is already known to them and ICR's primary purpose is to disseminate it."

On page 24, under "Misrepresentations of weaknesses in ICRGS program": "Most of the faculty members have doctoral degrees, though often not in the fields in which they are teaching and advising students. The archetype in this regard is Dr. Henry Morris. His doctorate is in civil engineering. Yet he teaches a course (Advanced Studies in Creationism) that treats the `origin and history of the universe, of the solar system, of life, of the various forms of life, and of man and his cultures . . . using data from paleontology, astronomy, biochemistry, genetics, . . .' Dr. Morris has no formal training or practical experience in any of these fields."

On page 25, in the same part: "According to [the dummy catalog submitted with the ICR's application], `The Master's program in Biology trains students in the nature and origin of the living state through a broad background in all areas of vertebrate biology.' The statement is quite odd. One would not expect the study of vertebrates to shed much light on the origin of life. But of course from ICR's point of view, each `kind' of vertebrate originated fully formed from the hand of God. That is the only opinion that ICRGS staff and students are allowed to hold."

"It is complete misrepresentation, however, to claim that the program provides `a broad background in all areas of vertebrate biology.' Aside from the course in Human Biology, ICRGS does not offer a single course in vertebrate biology. Not one!" (5)

After explaining more misrepresentations mounted by the ICR, Hurlbert said: "The ICRGS program severely violates the trust placed in it by the students. The students are misled into thinking that with the skeletal curriculum and facilities provided by ICRGS they can put a small stone in a sling and upend some nasty, humanistic, evolutionistic Goliath, some large body of conventional scientific evidence and theory.

"[Henry Morris] was quite frank in stating to the VC that he likes the students to take on these big topics because the resultant theses can then be used to produce creationistic publications. . . ."

"The students are deceived in many ways. They are encouraged to think that the selective quoting of `authorities', selective

neglect of evidence, setting up and demolishing of straw men, and adhering to prescribed opinions regardless of the evidence all are valid modes of scientific analysis."

So the truth was known. Woodhead and Hurlbert had told it. And Hurlbert -- by describing the ICR's antics in detail, and by supporting his account with examples and quotations -- had written the report that the committee should have written. (6) Indeed, he had written what the committee probably WOULD have written if the committee had been responsibly prepared for its task and had been allowed to operate with diligence, integrity and care.

(I learned about the operation of the committee when I sought answers to obvious questions: Given that the committee's report was incompetent, false and misleading, why had Hurlbert signed it? Why had Woodhead signed it? Why had ANYONE signed it? I shall tell the answers, and shall tell the real objective of the committee's work, in Part III of this article.)

Honig evidently did not see the committee's report, or the dispatches from Woodhead and Hurlbert, until late October or early November. That is what he said when, on 10 November, he met in Sacramento with three members of the committee: Woodhead, Hurlbert and Howe. (He had invited all five members, but Kovach and Miller could not attend.)

Honig was not pleased. He knew that something was foul; he seemed intent on ensuring that the ICR would not gain approval if its programs were bogus; and he wanted the committee members to reconsider what they had seen and how they had voted.

It was unlikely that anything could make Howe reconsider, for Howe was the ICR's man. (Indeed, he had been among fifteen people whom Henry Morris, in a letter sent to the Department on 7 June 1988, had recommended for the committee.(7) He brought to the November meeting a 17-page document, addressed to Honig, that purported to refute Hurlbert's account. It was typed on plain paper. It showed Howe as its author, described him in a footnote as "a research scientist," but did not cite any affiliation. (Howe worked at The Master's College, a religious school in Newhall.)

Howe's text had two parts: a statement in which he urged Honig to approve the ICR, then a 13-page letter from Henry Morris. (The letter was addressed not to Honig but to Howe, at Howe's residence; again, there was no hint of his affiliation.) Morris, pretending to answer some of Hurlbert's charges, repeated some of the ICR's usual evasions and throw-away lines. Example: ". . . we have only a small resident faculty, but each member has a terminal degree in his fields, plus extensive research and teaching experience." (Recall: Hurlbert's issue was not whether the ICR men had degrees in "their fields" but whether "their fields" were the fields in which they were teaching. As for their experience: Where were the curricula vitae that would describe and document it? Morris did not say.)

The meeting did not yield any definitive changes, but it evidently confirmed Honig's suspicions, bolstered his determination to avoid participating in a sham or a scam, and suggested that he might resolve the case by turning to Kovach, the professor of geophysics at Stanford. Kovach already had seen Hurlbert's dissent; and in late November, the Department sent to him other documents providing information that had not been presented (or had not been considered) during the committee's proceedings in August. Kovach would examine those documents before talking with Honig.

End of Part II

NOTES:

1. The ICR's application to the Department showed a "regular faculty" of eleven men, including the librarian. These eleven ostensibly ran three departments of natural science and a department of education.
2. In its application, the ICR had to name, for each of its programs, an accredited institution that offered a comparable program. In science education, the ICR compared itself to the University of Wisconsin; in geology, to San Jose State; in biology, to San Diego State; and in "astro/geophysics," to the University of Toronto, the University of Colorado, the University of Texas at El Paso, Colorado State University, and the University of California at San Diego!
3. "Catastrophism," in the lingo of "creation-science," means explaining geological phenomena as relics of Noah's Flood. The Flood itself is disguised as "a catastrophe" or "a worldwide catastrophe."
4. All functionaries of the ICR must make an annual commitment to the tenets of both "scientific creationism" and "biblical creationism," as listed in the ICR's bylaws. The tenets of "scientific creationism" include declarations that life did not originate through natural processes but was made directly by a supernatural Creator; that "Each of the major kinds of plants and animals was created functionally complete" and did not evolve; and that the first humans were specially created in fully human form.
5. Emphasis in the original.
6. For a free copy of Hurlbert's document, write to him at the Department of Biology, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182.
7. When I talked with Roy Steeves on 17 January 1989 about the recruiting of the committee, Steeves was not sure whether he had got Howe's name from Morris's letter or had independently found Howe by surveying college catalogs.

DETHRONING THE GOD-MEN OF INDIA

by Yves Barbero

[B. Premanand passed through the Bay Area in December as part of his tour of the U.S. and Canada. The Governor of India's CSICOP lectured in San Francisco and Palo Alto (at Stanford). He had much to say about the exploitation of the unlettered in India. Much of what he had to say applies to the lettered of America as well.]

A magician of the first water, a dazzling showman, a bouncing personality with an earthy wit, clear intelligence and a mind with razor-sharp rationality are just some of the ways Mr. Premanand can be described.

Premanand noticed at age 8 that people "possessed" by God jumped around like mad men. "Was God mad?" he asked himself. He said that this was the beginning of his doubts.

This prominent author and lecturer heads the 100,000-strong Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (India) and has been tackling the so-called god-men of India most of his sixty-plus years. If he didn't have the solid honesty he possesses, he could easily make millions as a god-man himself. He knows all their tricks and devices but makes a business of replicating them to expose these frauds to the Indian public instead.

His dislike of the god-men's dishonesty, and his sympathy for the poor and dispossessed whose lives are made miserable by them have made Premanan their bane. They fear and hate him so much that his life has been in danger more than once.

He gave this portrait of the typical god-man.

They usually use very simple tricks that can be bought in a local magic shop or which are a skill that anyone can learn and perform if he or she understands basic physics. For example, Premanand discovered that you can hold a flame near your skin for about three seconds before it burns, so anyone can pass a torch back and forth on the arm without danger. It's simply something that few people would try. At age nineteen (1946) he tried the flame trick. He warns, however, that if you have a flowing beard, as he does, you should keep the flame away from it! Hair burns immediately. He showed us another god-man trick he bought in a magic shop in which it seemed he had an inexhaustible supply of ashes materialized from thin air (which, he said, the god-men claim are those of cremated humans): he distributed some to every member of the audience (some 150 persons).

Skepticism is necessary in India as a simple matter of social justice.

God-men are usually managed by professionals, who make a point of keeping doubters and skeptics at arms length. Often, the god-men are not very bright or manage to say the wrong thing, so their trick is "holy silence." Meyer Baba was such an example (there is a U.S. branch of that group, still going strong). On the other hand, keeping quiet may not be so dumb.

Reputation is all important to the god-men, and they take advantage of it. Premanand tries to destroy their reputation by replicating their tricks and then exposing them in the press. (Borrowing from this principal, I've been offering a free computer astrology printout to anyone who sends Bay Area Skeptics a stamped envelope. Naturally, I also send a copy of "BASIS", too. This upset a local astrologer in the extreme since I was giving away what she sold.)

They often take advantage of their connections with government. In one case, a god-man gave a valuable jewel to the female relative of an important judge. Since the jewel "materialized," it was not considered a bribe.

No god-man has ever created anything without the movement of his body. By striking the hand of a performing god-man at just the right moment, Premanand has exposed the tricks of more than one of them.

No god-man has ever been shown to be immortal, despite their claims to the contrary. Need we say that at some point they all die.

For the last 26 years Premanand been associated with American skeptics. Like James "The Amazing" Randi, he offers a \$10,000 prize (100,000 Rupees) for anyone who can demonstrate, under monitored conditions, psychic powers. Like Randi, he has not had to pay.

India has a "good law," Premanand pointed out. No one is allowed to publicize a supernatural power. The law is more honored in the breach, but it allows him to sometimes use authority to embarrass god-men.

Premanand attempted to use India's Gold Control Act against one of the most famous god-men, Satya Sai Baba, who allegedly makes gold from thin air; Premanand suggested this was in violation of the Gold Control Act which regulates the manufacture and distribution of gold. Apparently, materializing gold was not considered manufacturing according to the court which ruled against Premanand. But it allowed him to make a point about the idiocy of the god-men's claims.

In America, psychic phenomena are often considered chic or may be the butt of jokes in academic circles, but in a country of such poverty as India, believers are often asked for great sums of money by god-men in exchange for miracles. The only way the average person can possibly raise this money is by borrowing from local loan sharks at rates reaching 360 percent. They are often in debt for life after that and become indentured servants, or they sell

their children in some form of slavery. Skepticism, as a result, is necessary in India as a simple matter of social justice. It is more than an academic exercise.

The meeting was one of the more successful we have had. There were over 150 in attendance.

B. Premanand's address is:
CSICOP (India)
10, Chettipalayam Road
Podanur-641 023, Coimbatore
(Tamilnadu) INDIA

ANTHROPOSOPHICAL MEDICINE by Dan Dugan

Don Henvick and I recently joined a congenial group of about 30 people for a lecture on anthroposophical medicine (AM) by Dr. Joop van Dam, M.D., visiting from the Netherlands. The audience included a broad span of ages and ethnic backgrounds. A flyer explained that anthroposophy is "a science and world view based on the knowledge of the spiritual world that Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), its founder, acquired and perfected through conscious development of those higher faculties that slumber within every human being." Anthroposophical medicine claims twelve hospitals and hundreds of clinics in Europe which are fully recognized and funded by state and private medical insurance plans. AM is practiced only by licensed physicians and therapists, of which there are now 45 in the U.S. The handout also announced the formation of the "Michael Medical Clinic" specializing in AM, to open temporarily in Castro Medical Clinic in San Francisco. The clinic is assisted by the non-profit Michael Group, Inc., and will be staffed by an internist, a family practice/AIDS M.D., and a eurythmist. (Eurythmy is a dance form created by Steiner.)

Dr. van Dam was a low-key but engaging speaker. He announced his theme to be "Healing and Rhythm." He began by deploring separate medical specialties for body and spirit, asserting that every contact or interpenetration of higher and lower worlds creates a rhythm, and that every rhythm is caused by that interpenetration. He continued that the social ideas of anthroposophy have been accepted, including "psychosomatic insights" and "taking responsibility for your own biography, or soul-life," but that anthroposophy's "insights into matter" haven't fared as well. He prefaced his natural science remarks with an "ecology/consciousness-raising" story about a dead bay which cleansed itself and recovered completely four years after its pollution was stopped. They need not wonder why they have not done so well in this area.

Having raised an appropriate self-righteous fervor, he proceeded to the SERIOUS pseudoscience. The phases of the moon and its

zodiacal position selectively influence the growth of different parts of PLANTS, according to van Dam, and all this is purportedly supported by a "statistically significant, reproducible" study. He then referred to some 1927 Stuttgart experiments of Lilli Kolisko, which are alleged to prove that the planets each selectively influence, by some supernatural force, the capillary absorption of the salt of their particular associated metal. This study is often referred to in AM writings and appears to be fundamental to the system. Anthroposophists call these supernatural forces "peripheral forces," asserting that they counteract the conventional forces of gravity, magnetism and electricity. When the peripheral forces stop moving, all forms as we know them are created. The forms of nature consist of frozen, still moments of these forces.

Dr. van Dam then turned to medicine. Chemical medicines are bad because they "silence" parts of the body, so anthroposophical doctors use "natural" medicines, closely related to those of homeopathy. He openly recognized the improbability that any molecules of the active ingredient remain in typical dilutions of 10 to the minus 30th, but asserted the process accumulates "peripheral forces" in the solvent as the concentration of the original substance vanishes. The peripheral forces are then "attracted" by tossing the solution into the air for three minutes at each stage of dilution, which allegedly reduces the effect of gravity. Low potencies (high concentrations) of materials have their ordinary effects. High potencies (vanishing concentrations) have an opposite effect, so the reaction of a substance may be controlled in both forward and reverse direction by the degree of dilution.

He mentioned a study at the University of Amsterdam which he claims proves the effect of an AM preparation on seeds and on tissue cell cultures in which an effect continuing beyond the 23rd 1/10 dilution (referred to as D23) was measured. (A copy of this study has been obtained and will be reviewed later.) He cited other examples, one being that lead has an "earthly" nature, fixing, protecting, closing, "densifying," so it is therefore used in sixth-step dilution (D6) to treat rickets by "densifying" bones, and in D30 for treating arteriosclerosis with the opposite effect. It seemed to me that while thinning arterial plaque it should reasonably be thinning bones.

The good doctor then described the importance of periodicity in therapy. He talked about circadian rhythms, a week as the rhythm of the soul-life, and certain monthly and annual rhythms. He told a story about a man who "felt fine" exactly one year to the day after his operation; this proved to Dr. van Dam that his rhythm theory of nature is correct. He described treatment of the liver as a cure for insomnia, depression, and constipation, and offered injection of meteoric iron as a cure for migraine.

Don Henvick asked what the difference between AM and homeopathy was. Van Dam said that homeopathy was empirical, while AM was a deeper approach, including knowing not only what happens but why.

He proposed that by using "trained perception" to study a plant, one could divine what it was good for. This is the research method of Goethean science -- a more "spiritual" science -- which is taught in Waldorf schools, about which I shall write more some other time.

Since the audience appeared to consist entirely of reverent believers, I refrained from asking Dr. van Dam how he differed from the House of Representatives definition of a quack: "Anyone who promotes medical schemes or remedies known to be false, or which are unproven, for a profit."

The second night of Dr. van Dam's seminar was to be about "art therapy" -- the direct healing effects of colors and art.

I had already suffered enough.

BOARD CHANGES

At the last BAS board meeting in December, Vice Chair Mark Hodes was released because of heavy career obligations. We are indebted to his contribution -- a steady, mature hand directing BAS. He has consented to remain on the board, but in a less demanding position.

Yves Barbero has taken Mark's post, adding more responsibility to his already deep commitment to the aims of BAS. Yves has been a stalwart over the years, taking on just about any job asked of him. His faithful work to see that every issue of "BASIS" is mailed on time makes our system hum along. Congratulations, Yves, and thanks, Mark for your continuing support.

The enormous talent and enthusiasm of your BAS board is a tribute to our skeptical aims. There are some exciting plans in the works for 1989. We expect to increase the breadth and scope of our activities and to expand into the (higher) education system. Bay Area Skeptics is going to be a force to be reckoned with.

We would like to offer special thanks to all the rest of the BAS family: you out there who continue in our backing. Of course, none of this would be possible -- or fun -- without your moral support. Your calls, letters, and most important, your OWN contacts with the public are by far the most effective way to let others know that there is some specific counter to the oceans of nonsense in which we are immersed. Many people have related instances in their encounters with psychic nonsense in which their experience with BAS has helped them effectively confront and counter paranormal claimants.

Our main source of income is the newsletter. The biggest expense is printing the first 500; after that the cost per issue decreases rapidly, leaving us badly needed funds to fulfill agenda items we believe would help promote change. We are very gratified that

increasing numbers of subscriptions include a contribution above the basic \$15 rate; this makes each of us on the board realize even more the obligation and responsibility he has to serve the goals of rational inquiry.

To broaden the scope of our activities we need help. Perhaps the easiest way for individuals to do this is to make a copy of your favorite issue of "BASIS" and give it to a friend. There is no reason we can't greatly multiply our subscription rolls. If you would like us to help you, send us a name and we will mail a courtesy copy to a friend or acquaintance.

And finally, send us your ideas and suggestions, both for the function and organization of BAS and for the news letter -- there is every likelihood they will be used to increase the effectiveness of Bay Area Skeptics.

ATTENTION!

BAS advisor Eugenie Scott, Executive Director of The National Center for Science Education, shipped us a copy of an on-going committee report sponsored by the American Society of Zoologists. This report, "Science As a Way of Knowing", was published in 1984 and is just recently in a new printing.

Thanks to Genie's efforts (and the use of her name) "BASIS" readers may obtain a free copy of the report by writing to:

Dr. John A. Moore
UC Riverside
Riverside, CA 92521

\$100,000 OFFER!

Yes indeed, you read it right. James Randi has increased his \$10,000 offer to \$100,000 for a successful demonstration of some paranormal ability under controlled conditions. Many paranormalists have had little or no motivation to risk their reputations for money that would not match what they could make in a couple of months. This ten-fold increase should make some heads turn. Congratulations, Randi.

Those interested in being tested should write to James Randi in care of the BAS address.

Randi is in the process of preparing a TV special that should air this summer.

Opinions expressed in "BASIS" are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of BAS, its board or its advisors.

The above are selected articles from the March, 1989 issue of "BASIS", the monthly publication of Bay Area Skeptics. You can obtain a free sample copy by sending your name and address to BAY AREA SKEPTICS, 4030 Moraga, San Francisco, CA 94122-3928 or by leaving a message on "The Skeptic's Board" BBS (415-648-8944) or on the 415-LA-TRUTH (voice) hotline.

Copyright (C) 1989 BAY AREA SKEPTICS. Reprints must credit "BASIS, newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics, 4030 Moraga, San Francisco, CA 94122-3928."

-END-