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DOWN-UNDER PSYCHIC SINKS by Mark Plummer

[CSICOP Executive Director Mark Plummer is a member of the bar in Australia. Before coming to the U.S. to take over the reins of the most influential skeptic's organization in the world, Mark was director of the second most powerful skeptic's group in the world, the Australian Skeptics.

One of the more common rejoinders we hear from those who object to our investigations is: "What harm is there to believing in psychics?" Listen in.]

In 1984 the founder of BAS, Bob Steiner, traveled on an Australian tour posing as psychic "Steve Terbot." He did not charge fees or collect any money as a psychic.

Steve Terbot attracted a great deal of media publicity and he received a letter from an Australian psychic, John Fitzsimons. In the letter Fitzsimons said that he had enjoyed talking astrally with Terbot. Steiner, as Terbot, telephoned Fitzsimons and invited him to make a special guest appearance at a scheduled meeting in the Ringwood Cultural Centre. Fitzsimons accepted the invitation and spoke supportively even though he knew nothing (obviously?) of either Steiner or Terbot.

When Steiner revealed on Australian National TV that he was a skeptic and that the whole event was a hoax, he singled out Fitzsimons critically. The furor over the hoax died down and nothing more was heard about Fitzsimons until about a year later, when I, then the head of the Australian Skeptics, was approached by four of Fitzsimons' erstwhile followers.

They told me that on the night of Bob's final TV appearance, when the hoax was revealed, a definitely unpsychic Fitzsimons, unprepared for what was about to be revealed, had gathered his followers to watch the show. These people said Fitzsimons turned ashen when he was attacked by Steiner. Fitzsimons' reaction caused them to reassess their belief in him and in his claims. They had several subsequent meetings with me and other committee member of the Australian Skeptics.

The rather bizarre story unfolded: Fitzsimons had told them that they would become psychic mediums and healers, that they could rid

world leaders of negative energies, and that the world would be destroyed by a nuclear holocaust in 1984.

One of the four, Judith Kelly, had lost about 45 pounds on a water diet suggested by Fitzsimons. She had had to be hospitalized for three weeks in February 1985. Two others of the group, Reinhart and Stratemeyer, a married couple, nearly had a marriage breakup because of Fitzsimons' counseling.

The fourth person told the Australian Skeptics that she no longer believed in Fitzsimons but still believed in spiritualism and would find a new spiritual leader. I asked the four to assess the total amount of money paid to Fitzsimons in course fees, payment for books, loans, and other losses such as medical expenses and loss of earnings. I told the four they would have a good case against him. Three (Kelly and the Stratemeyers) decided to sue.

Because I was about to leave Australia to become CSICOP's Executive Director in the U.S. I referred the three to an attorney who was a close friend and who had a good understanding of the issues. The case finally came to court in Melbourne in May of this year. In the writ the three sought \$A69,588 (about \$55,000) for fraud, damages for medical expenses, loss of earnings, repayment of the loans, and payments for courses and books.

Judith Kelly told the court Fitzsimons had prescribed a water diet so she could lose enough weight to be able to run and escape the catastrophe he prophesied. Mrs. Kelly suffered crippling malnutrition after she had been on the diet for three months. She told the court she went from 79 kg to 59 kg while on the water diet. She said the diet she began in November 1984 caused hallucinations, vomiting, double vision and limited limb movements. "[Fitzsimons] said I would suffer no harm," Mrs. Kelly said. "I was convinced by the work I was doing at 'The Circle' [name of the group]."

Mrs. Kelly said she had to stop driving because she had double vision and would reach an intersection and not know where to drive. She said she started using public transportation but had to stop because she could not raise her legs to the steps. A walk down the street was also a problem. "I was like a drunk staggering down the road, blind drunk," she said, "but I was stone cold sober."

Mrs. Kelly said she was admitted to a hospital on February 19, 1985, and was diagnosed as having a thiamine deficiency from malnutrition. She was in the hospital for three weeks, and she had to spend another nine weeks convalescing. In her regular job, a mortuary technician, she had managed only with the help of a very supportive co-worker.

She said that after she recovered she tried to rejoin The Circle, her faith shaken only in the diet. "Fitzsimons said I had to do individual rescue before I could come back to The Circle, and that I would have to endure the rock for two and a quarter hours," she

told the court. Her testimony described the rock treatment as a practice of placing a 35kg quartz boulder on her legs or hips. "In rescue missions, Mr. Fitzsimons used crystals to concentrate energies, like a laser," she described. She said Fitzsimons had told her he would make her a psychic healer and trance medium.

Mrs. Felicity Hampel, attorney for Mrs. Kelly, said her client had sold her house to pay for the Fitzsimons course. She said Mrs. Kelly attended the courses from January 1984 and had spent \$A13,676 that she was now trying to reclaim. Mrs. Hampel said that Mrs. Kelly also sought damages for medical expenses and lost wages which totaled \$A8,042.

The court was told that Mrs. Kelly had rented a house with three other followers to prepare them for living together after the world catastrophe, and to reduce their rent payments, giving them more money for sessions with Mr. Fitzsimons. Mrs. Kelly said that she believed she could influence world events by helping the spirits of world leaders, including Mikhail Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, Bob Hawke, and Augusto Pinochet. Mrs. Kelly said that she had spent up to \$225 per week on Mr. Fitzsimons' courses.

Mrs. Kelly said Fitzsimons hit disciples up to six times across the face if spirits inside them gave the wrong answers to his questions during meetings. She said that was not the only time he hit her and other members.

She said that Fitzsimons knew virtually every detail of his pupils' personal lives, and he used the information to encourage the belief that their family and friends were acting negatively against them. Mrs. Kelly said she was required to list up to twenty sins a night. She said that in hindsight her involvement with The Circle was faulty and illogical. "I was so exhausted and so frightened I couldn't look at anything clearly," she said.

Mrs. Kelly told the court she would attend rescue classes with The Circle which sometimes went from evening until 6 a.m. She said she and other Circle members visited spiritualist venues around Melbourne to try to recruit members. Fitzsimons required negative activities, called "listings," to be reported and confessed to the rest of the group.

Mrs. Hampel asked her client if listings were like written confessions of spiritual sins. Mrs. Kelly said they were. Hampel said that Mrs. Kelly and two other former disciples who were also suing Mr. Fitzsimons had believed him when they were told that they would become psychic healers and mediums, become better people, have physical ailments cured and become more spiritually aware.

Mrs. Hampel said that the world catastrophe predicted for the end of 1984 was revised when it did not occur. The catastrophe scenario turned about a nuclear holocaust which was to tilt the world on its axis, shifting polar ice and causing earthquakes, tidal waves, and falling buildings.

Mr. Stratemeyer said he lost most of his \$A50,000 inheritance while he and his wife attended The Circle between March 1983 and October 1984. He said Fitzsimons had told them they could be psychic healers and cure the disabled.

Stratemeyer said he wanted to leave the group, but realized he would lose his wife if he did. "I could not leave. I knew I would be divorced like other people [from the group] before me," he said. Stratemeyer said Fitzsimons had brainwashed other people in his group and caused them to break away from friends, family, and marriage partners.

Mr. and Mrs. Stratemeyer were members of the group between August 1983 and November 1984. Mr. Stratemeyer said that Fitzsimons had not helped him in any way, and the courses had not helped his stuttering or bladder problems. He said Fitzsimons had told him his brother-in-law was a bloodsucker and that he should be removed from the Stratemeyer's house.

Fitzsimons had also told Stratemeyer that he was doing the wrong thing when he mowed his lawn instead of going to a class. Neighbors had complained because the grass was high and the seeds were being blown into their gardens. Mrs. Stratemeyer said she and her husband did not renovate their house because they believed it would be completely or partially destroyed in the world catastrophe predicted by Mr. Fitzsimons.

Mr. Barry Fox, attorney for Fitzsimons, said his client's followers were adults and should have realized that representations he had made were not being fulfilled. He argued that the plaintiffs had begun attending Mr. Fitzsimons's classes in 1983 and 1984, and they continued to attend although they should have realized that his representations -- if any were made -- "were not happening." "Here was a case where over a long period of time people went back over and over and over again, paying their money. Adult people engaged over a long period of time going to these classes . . . and they continued to go," he pressed.

Mr. Fox cited the case of Judith Kelly, who had told the court that at Fitzsimons' suggestion she had gone on a water diet and lost 45 pounds so she would be able to run from an impending world catastrophe. Mrs. Kelly had conceded, Fox said, that if she had consulted a dietitian she would have been told that the water diet was ridiculous.

"She became well aware of the consequences of pursuing this course of a water diet, and chose to proceed. A mature lady pursued this course, as she admitted, over a long period of weeks or months and chose to hang on in the face of what would have, to ordinary people, called for change."

Mr. Fox told the court his client's attitude was that people could get involved if they wished. He said that Fitzsimons denied giving

an "iron-clad guarantee" of health cures or of personal advancement. Fitzsimons only told his students they could "hope to overcome" physical problems and achieve psychic healing at his classes. "[Fitzsimons] quite readily concedes that if you consider it a lot of rubbish then that's up to you," Fox said.

Fitzsimons told the court he took over leadership of The Circle in January 1980. He had become fascinated with spiritualism and psychism in 1978. "I thought it made life more interesting," he offered. "I grew up with orthodox religion . . . I was taught a lot about fear, hell, fire and damnation," he said. He said he believed in what he taught: "I believe that we can be guided by invisible forces."

Fitzsimons denied his business was a sham. He said he had not told his former students that psychic healing would cure their physical ills. He also denied a suggestion by attorney Hampel that he was taking money from gullible people whom he conned into believing crazy things he himself did not believe.

However, he agreed that he was operating a spiritual group registered under the business name "Aspects" while he was an undischarged bankrupt (an undischarged bankrupt under Australian law is a person who has gone bankrupt but has not discharged his debts or completed the required period as a bankrupt).

On further cross examination by Mrs. Hampel about predictions as to the dates the world catastrophe would occur, Fitzsimons said that in October or November 1984 he had begun to wonder if the dates were wrong, and so had consulted the spirit guides. He acknowledged, when questioned by Hampel, that he had taken out a mortgage on a house in October 1984, despite the predictions. Asked if he was hedging his bets, he said, "You can call it what you like. I needed somewhere to live."

Fitzsimons agreed that in 1983 he had been an undischarged bankrupt whose creditors would have received 20 or 30 cents on the dollar in debt repayments. He also agreed that he did not declare his 1983 earnings to a trustee in bankruptcy because he did not think he had to unless his income was high. After consulting bankruptcy administrators he thought he could run a business but could not obtain credit unless he told lenders that he was an undischarged bankrupt.

The judge found Fitzsimons fraudulently misrepresented his psychic abilities and courses. He ordered Fitzsimons to pay \$A62,000 (\$50,000) to the three plaintiffs. After the case Fitzsimons said he would go on teaching but with more caution. He said he would get a legal contract drawn up before every meeting. Mrs. Kelly was ecstatic about the result.

EDITOR'S CORNER

I learned about a program that was to air on "Family Radio," an AM (fundamentalist) Christian station, in which a scientist was to do some explaining. A scientist who had advanced degrees. I listened to the (June 9) program with anticipation. At the conclusion I was concerned to the extent that I wrote to the station and to the speaker, Dr. Robert Gange. What follows is the essence of that letter, written in rebuttal on June 10. In that letter I requested a response. As of this writing there is nothing from either the station or Dr. Gange.

I tire of fundamentalist Christians maligning science; and I am at the same time amused when these same maligners press those with science degrees in their ranks to the fore. The maligners decry science but love to bathe in its credibility.

Dr. Gange began his program with an age-old question: "Can God make a rock bigger than He can lift?" He said this was the subject of his lesson, and that his program would explore it from a scientific viewpoint. It is for this reason that the program content is subject to skeptical review.

After one-half hour of circumlocution and much repetition of the shortcomings of science, he did not answer the question. He did worse. He obfuscated the question with examples from physics that were misunderstandings at least and distortions at most.

When someone presents him/herself to the church as a representative of science, he or she has a special obligation. The lab coat donned by such a representative is thus a kind of priesthood vestment. One assuming this representative role has an even higher degree of responsibility than the pastor preparing to address his congregation: The congregation must invest greater faith in the scientist than is afforded their presbyter because the subject matter of the pastor is attainable by the average parishioner, whereas particle physics, for example, is likely beyond that same parishioner.

Dr. Gange obfuscated the question he proposed to answer by making some false and misleading comparisons with scientific principles. He urged that there are in science many mysteries, paradoxes, principles and theories so abstruse as to defy our common-sense knowledge. The listener was tacitly led to deduce that since many acceptable scientific ideas are counter-intuitive, there is nothing to be ashamed about what may on the face of it appear absurd in the theistic realm. In all of this, Gange avoided answering the question.

The most blatant misuse in his examples was of the wave/particle nature of light. Before Einstein, light was demonstrated to behave like a wave (reflection, interference, etc.). With the photoelectric cell, Einstein's theory that light also had the properties of a particle (called a photon) was vindicated.

Many subsequent experiments have confirmed this, notably with lasers. In other words, EMPIRICAL considerations have led us to these conclusions, not abstract, mathematical and philosophical models, as Dr. Gange taught. The physical interpretation of this dual nature is known as the PRINCIPLE OF COMPLIMENTARITY. An everyday example makes it easy to understand: We have all seen the picture of identical faces in silhouette, facing each other. Is it a picture of a flower vase or a picture of two faces? It can be either. BUT IT CANNOT BE BOTH AT THE SAME TIME AND PLACE.

This is the crux of the matter, something that goes to the heart of science and the scientific method. There is no paradox, nothing really mysterious about this dual nature of light. We can design an experiment to observe either representation, but we cannot, and I emphasize the importance of noting this distinction, we cannot observe both phenomena simultaneously (meaning, of course, at the same time and place). Light is one or the other.

Dr. Gange therefore misrepresented this physical concept by leading his audience to believe that this property of light is 1) not understood by science, and 2) paradoxical like the question that was the theme of his presentation and my response. He wanted his listeners to believe that the subject question has a scientific counterpart which is alike qualitatively and quantitatively. Science is based on two irreducible components: 1) formal symbolic logic, and 2) empiricism.

Formal logic without experimental confirmation may lead to sterile, philosophic musings. Empiricism without sound, logical underpinnings may lead to frivolous or nonsensical propositions. A scientist wants first for his propositions to abide by the fundamentals of sound logic. He knows that it is pointless to begin experimental design when ordinary syntactic and semantic logic are violated. Modern mathematics, really formal logic in a utilitarian form, has been an incredibly powerful tool to analyze the propositions of science.

What is one of the most basic of all the axioms of logic (I hasten to add that all the axioms are basic, i.e., not derivable from any of the others.)?: The Law of Contradiction. Simply stated, this law precludes the possibility of a statement being both true and false AT THE SAME TIME AND PLACE. Statements violating this law are self-contradictory. If a proposition violates this most fundamental tenet, it is nothing more than arrant nonsense. As soon as this canon is violated nothing called science may follow. (A rational inquirer would hope that ANYONE would flee from demonstrated nonsense.)

With this bit of background, It is also important to make certain there is common agreement of the term "paradox". The loose definition is that which appears to be self-contradictory. The formal definition is that the proposition is indeed self-contradictory.

Now to examine the theme question, "Can God make a rock bigger than He can lift?" It is instructive to ask why the question was posed in the first place. The answer is to demonstrate the absurdity (most absurdities arise directly or indirectly from violation of the Law of Contradiction) of the notion of omnipotence. Theists are forever teaching that God can do ANYTHING. It does not require a very astute first-year student of logic to immediately inquire if God may therefore violate the Law of Contradiction.

The question of God and this rock boils down to this: It is self-contradictory -- a violation of the Law of Contradiction. It is a formal paradox. If the theist makes his bed with the patent absurdity of the omnipotency of God, He must lie in the consequences of it, not try to equivocate and philosophize about how science, too, has its difficult-to-understand principles.

Our novice logician can follow the clear light that illuminates the simple resolution showing the contradiction imposed by the omnipotence dogma. There is no confusion or clutter or even profundity. The notion of omnipotence forces a contradiction, clearly and simply: God can make a rock bigger than He can lift, and there is no rock so massive that He cannot lift it.

For the theist, several paths are possible, two of which I offer here. One is to stop believing that the things of God have to follow ANY kind of logic. The apostle Paul seems to take this anti-intellectual approach in I Cor. 1 & 2. At least he is honest in the open acceptance of demonstrated absurdity. In this case, the scientists who subscribe to God's omnipotence should cease trying to "explain," too, for the resulting contortions are painful to those who know better.

Another path would be to renounce the contradictory notion and believe that God can get the things done that He wants to do without having to violate the laws of logic in the process. This latter path seems doomed because most theists would apparently rather have God's power be absurd than to be limited in any sense. For those who opt for honest acceptance of the living reality of the absurdity, all comparisons with science in this matter must immediately cease.

If religion and science are maintained separately, a live-and-let-live policy will allow peace. Mix them and one has bad religion and bad science. There was bad religion, I think, on the program; and certainly bad science.

THE FIRING LINE

BAS has been sending shock waves throughout the Bay Area during the last month. It wasn't so long ago that paranormalists had the media to themselves. Most of our success in presenting a counter has come from the early work of BAS founders, notably Robert Steiner and

Robert Sheaffer. Steiner, a consummate magician, has been entertaining audiences and exposing bunkum for the better part of the last 20 years.

When the media are offered trenchant (and entertaining) rebuttals, things begin to move. We are now at a point when the two major AM radio stations (KCBS and KGO) regularly call upon BAS to confront paranormal protagonists. In one of the most recent encounters, BAS board member Dr. Shawn Carlson was asked to debate psychic Pat MacEnerney on KCBS' "Nightline." The show lasted one and one-half hours and was a stunning triumph for rationality.

Shawn's delivery was masterful -- no great surprise since he is something of a nationally recognized expert on astrology (he did some of his Ph.D. work on astrological claims). Shawn is a skilled magician, too.

Bob Steiner was the guest on KGO radio on both the Jim Eason and the Michael Krasny shows. The Eason stint was fun because Steiner and Eason were kidding back and forth with Steiner pulling magic stunts to the great delight and amazement of Eason. Bob led Jim to try to find alternate explanations of alleged paranormal phenomena.

The questions posed and the answers suggested caused Eason to reconsider some positions he had not thought to analyze critically before. The same was certainly true of the listening audience. Bob's approach is to educate through the entertainment value of his sleight-of-hand techniques. His stature as a lecturer has grown over the years.

The real piece de resistance for skepticism was the 1-1/2 hour, internationally broadcast TV show hosted by Bill Bixby. Titled "Exploring Psychic Powers," the central figure was CSICOP's James "The Amazing" Randi, featuring his \$100,000 psychic challenge. The presentation was an absolute blow away for the paranormalists.

The worst bomb came at the expense of a Chicago astrologer who, after interviewing 12 people (each within three years of age and a different astrological sign) designated the symbol to which he thought each should fit. Each person was instructed to stand in front of a panel bearing the sign to which the astrologer had matched him or her. Bixby then asked those for whom the sign did NOT match to take one step forward. Every one did.

A San Francisco psychic in a Zener card test scored 50 out of 250 hits: exactly what chance predicts. An L.A. aura analyst said twelve of twelve partitions had people behind them: four did. A Kentucky dowser said eight of twenty boxes contained water bottles: only five did, and he didn't even get all the five. A psychometrist from St. Louis matched only two of twelve people's key chains to their watches.

San Jose psychic "Sly" Brown agreed to appear, but would not allow herself to be formally tested. She was given time to saunter

through the audience rendering her usual gibberish. Her performance could not have been worse if it had been orchestrated by us. She asked a woman, in typical cold-reading technique, "Who is Bill?"

The woman said she didn't know anyone by that name, to which the unflappable Brown rejoined, "You MUST know SOMEONE named William, or Bill. EVERYONE knows a Bill!" The woman thought a moment and then shook her head. "No, I don't know anyone." STILL able to pick herself up, Brown glibly said, "Well, sometimes these things are in the future."

Uri Geller made much ado about the fact that he was appearing for the first time on the same show with Randi. We wonder how clear it was to the viewing audience that Geller did not submit to ANY form of testing.

The most dangerous event that occurred, from our standpoint, was a viewer-audience ESP test. We really dodged a bullet, by the luck of the cards. The test consisted of the five Zener cards, displayed in columnar fashion, with a phone number beside each. Viewers were to call in on the number corresponding to a card of their choice.

At the end of the show, the tally came in: 42% chose the wavy lines card. (The preselected target card was locked in a box.) Guess which Zener card was the middle one in the list?

Whoever designed this test failed to take the geometry into account and the psychological effect this would have for making a biased choice. The distribution of the callers' choices were almost a perfect Bell Curve clustered about the geometrical center of the column of Zener cards.

Had the preselected card been the wavy lines (it was the square), almost all the success realized in the rest of the program would have been instantly forgotten with such an abnormal proportion of the callers choosing the correct card. With a 20% chance of disaster, we were very fortunate. Let's hope that when so much is at stake, more thought is put into the design to preclude such a high-odds debacle.

DEGREES OF FOLLY: PART VI by William Bennetta

The first five parts of this article ran in "BASIS" in February, March, April, May and July. They told how the Private Postsecondary Education Division (PPED) of the California State Department of Education, in August 1988, staged an "assessment" of the ICR Graduate School (ICRGS). The school is an arm of the Institute for Creation Research, a fundamentalist ministry promoting the religious pseudoscience called "creation-science."

The assessment was made by a five-man committee that had been

chosen by, and was managed by, a PPED officer named Roy W. Steeves. The committee included two ringers -- George F. Howe and G. Edwin Miller -- who had been linked closely to the ICR or to the ICR's president, Henry Morris. The committee produced a false, misleading report that concealed the real nature of the ICR, promoted the ICR's scientific pretensions, and said that the Department's chief, Bill Honig, should approve the ICR as a source of master's degrees in biology, geology, "astro/geophysics" and science education.

Two of the committee's legitimate members, James Woodhead and Stuart Hurlbert, then sent separate reports to Honig, telling the truth about the ICR. Steeves -- writing to the PPED's director, Joseph P. Barankin -- endorsed the ICR and urged that Honig should grant the approval that the ICR wanted.

Honig, at least in statements that he gave to the press last December, refused the approval. In January, however, the Department drew back from that decision and began to negotiate with the ICR; and on 3 March, Barankin and the ICR reached an agreement. The ICR would revise its curriculum, purging the "ICRG's interpretations" from all courses that would count toward degrees. (The ICR claimed, and Barankin evidently believed, that science courses purged of interpretation would be like courses at accredited schools. I asked Barankin, in a letter, whether he had had advice from anyone who knew about science, but he did not answer.) To learn whether the ICR had made the contemplated revisions, the Department would send a new examining committee; one member would be selected by the ICR.

The new committee is now at work, and I shall tell something about it here. I assume that my readers have seen the earlier parts of this article. -- W.B., 12 August

A QUESTION OF INTENTION

Did the ICR ever really intend to revise its "science courses" and curriculum, excise "ICRGS's interpretations" from degree programs, and (in the words of its agreement with the Department) "conform the classroom lectures, course textbooks, and other course aspects" to science courses at accredited schools? Documents issued by the ICR may suggest an answer.

On 8 March, mere days after the agreement had been reached, the ICRGS's dean, Kenneth Cumming, sent a letter and a brochure to a prospective applicant for admission to the ICRGS. The brochure conspicuously proclaimed that the ICRGS's "Purpose" was: "Education, research, and publication in scientific and Biblical creationism." (Both the letter and the brochure said that the ICRGS's programs were approved by the State of California. They told nothing about the events of 1988, nor did they tell that continued approval depended on a new review by the Department.)

In June, when the ICRGS had begun its summer session and presumably was running its revised and conformed degree programs, the ICR mailed the June-July-August issue of its quarterly devotional

booklet, "Days of Praise".

The back cover bore the same boiler-plate that had appeared on all the earlier issues. It described the ICR as "A UNIQUE complex of evangelistic, missionary and educational ministries," and it listed the "ICR Graduate School of Creationist Science" as one of those ministries. I speculate, then, that be ICR -- regardless of what its agreement with the Department said -- may actually have intended to continue doing business as usual, dispensing the same old stuff.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

In parts IV and V of this account, I told of the Department's efforts to obscure and rationalize the fiasco of last August. Department functionaries first had issued evasive, false or misleading statements and then had simply ignored inquiries. In early June, when I was writing Part V, they had failed to acknowledge several letters that asked how G. Edwin Miller had got onto the committee that Steeves had assembled for assessing the ICR.

Later in June, however, the Department resumed answering mail, and at least two people who had inquired about the matter of Miller received a form-letter signed by Shirley A. Thornton, Bill Honig's "Deputy Superintendent, Specialized Programs Branch." It said, in part:

At this point, it seems irrelevant to discuss the relationships of Mr. Howe or Mr. Miller. The committee on which they served has written its report and been disbanded. The final committee decision was to deny reapproval. . . . ICR is now in the process of taking corrective measures which shall be verified by another qualitative review and assessment committee this August.

Consequently, we are focusing our efforts on ensuring that the most qualified and impartial panel possible will be selected for [the new assessment committee]. You have my assurance that extra diligence will be taken to ascertain whether committee members have any affiliation whatsoever with ICR or related organizations; if you have any recommendations on how to do so, please share them with Dr. Joseph Barankin, Director, Private Postsecondary Education Division, . . .

This seemed to say that the Department was taking a different stance. It was not admitting that the 1988 committee's proceedings had been defective, but neither was it still trying to justify them. And it evidently saw that the picking of the new committee would demand care and expertise.

THE NEW COMMITTEE

As I write this, the members of the new committee have just finished their visit to the ICR. They were there on 7, 8, 9 and 10 August, and they now will give some weeks to the writing of their report.

The members are: Christopher J. Wills, a geneticist from the department of Biology, University of California at San Diego; Richard E. Dickerson, chief of the Molecular Biology Institute, University of California at Los Angeles; Everett C. Olson, a vertebrate paleontologist from the Department of Biology, University of California at Los Angeles; Lawrence S. Lerner, a physicist and historian of science from the Department of Physics-Astronomy, California State University at Long Beach; and Leroy E. Eimers, from the Department of Science and Mathematics, Cedarville College.

Eimers evidently is the member who, under the agreement between the ICR and the Department, was chosen by the ICR. Cedarville College is a Bible school in Cedarville, Ohio. (During a period in the 1950s it was called Cedarville Baptist College and Bible Institute.)

I do not know why the ICR picked an Ohioan rather than a Californian, nor do I know much about Eimers himself. Unlike the four others on the committee, he is not listed in the 1989-1990 edition of "American Men & Women of Science"; and neither he nor his college department is in the 1986-1987 edition (the most recent one available to me) of "Directory of Physics & Astronomy Staff."

At least two of the Californians on the committee have had earlier experience with creationism and can be expected to show some special understanding of creationists and the ICR. Dickerson has served as a scientific expert in two legal actions that arose from creationists' attacks on science education in public schools, and Lerner was a member of the state panel that recently drafted the new "Science Framework" to guide science instruction in the public schools of California.

The draft has been opposed strenuously by creationists, because it lays strong emphasis on forthright teaching of scientific information about the history of Earth and the history of organisms. (See Diane Curtis's story "The Evolution Battle Evolves," in the "San Francisco Chronicle" for 20 July.) Lerner also has written at least two articles that dealt wholly or partly with creationism, and I have had the pleasure of being the co-author of one of them. (See "The Treatment of Theory in Textbooks," which ran in April 1988 in "The Science Teacher", the monthly of the National Science Teachers Association.)

The committee is being managed by Jeanne Bird, who joined the PPED, as a staff consultant, this spring. She is now one of the PPED's assistant directors. When I talked with her by telephone on 21 July, she was cordial but reticent. She said that she held no degree in science or in law, but she would tell no more about her

education. Nor would she say what kind of work she had been doing for the PPED, or whether she had had any experience in managing the assessment of degree-granting institutions.

SIDEBAR: MEET PROFESSOR JOHN

D. James Kennedy is a fundamentalist preacher who makes commercial religious programs for both television and radio. His headquarters operation, Coral Ridge Ministries, is in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His enterprises include a daily, half-hour radio show called "Truths That Transform".

On 10 May, that show offered an interview with Henry Morris's son John. John Morris has worked at the ICR for some years and now holds at least two jobs there: administrative vice-president and "full professor of geology." One of his geological specialties is discovering that humans and the great dinosaurs lived, very recently, side by side. (See his book "Tracking Those Incredible Dinosaurs and the People Who Knew Them", issued in 1980 by the ICR's publishing arm, Master Books.) He also searches for the remains of Noah's ark.

The interview on "Truths That Transform" was conducted by one of D. James Kennedy's associates, who asked: "What does evolution have in common with the New Age and Marxism?" The putative answers were provided by John Morris, who also promoted a religious video in which he recently had appeared. The video is called "The Evolution Conspiracy: A Quantum Leap into the New Age". After telling his radio audience that there was no evidence for organic evolution, and that "doctrinaire evolutionists are also doctrinaire atheists, and most of 'em are Marxist," he tried to link evolutionary science to the New Age:

It's just -- you know, there's no evidence in the fossil record that [organic evolution] ever did occur; scientific law shows that it couldn't occur, statistics show that it's highly unlikely -- impossibly unlikely -- and so evolutionists, even, are abandoning this concept of pure naturalism, of naturalistic evolution. What they're doing, though, instead of moving over into the creationist camp, they're moving into another sort of evolution. Uh, instead of being naturalistic evolution, they're -- they're saying now that these sorts of things couldn't happen without an overriding mind, without a design.

But instead of attributing that to God, they're -- they're basically saying that nature is alive, that Mother Nature is thinking -- that -- this is the essence of Eastern mysticism. Uh, it's the New Age movement. You would be surprised how much of the technical, scientific literature talks about this idea that nature is alive,

that it thinks and it does this on purpose. . . . So the New Age movement is very definitely evolutionary, and modern evolution is moving in the direction of the New Age. In fact, they used to show the -- the monkeys, you know, getting bigger and bigger and turning into man. Well, now the drawings, they go beyond man into man in a lotus position. My goodness, this is the essence of the satanic world-view.

All this was news to me. I had not known of any scientific law showing that organic evolution could not occur; I had not noticed that scientists were flocking to the New Age movement; I had never seen scientific drawings in which monkeys (or anything else) got bigger and bigger until they turned into a man in the lotus position; and I surely had not know that this was "the essence of the satanic world-view." I hope that John Morris explained all those things to the new visiting committee that the Department of Education sent to the ICR on 7 August, so that the committee's members could fully appreciate the work and intellect of the ICR's "full professor of geology." -- W.B.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Suddenly we are twice the size. BAS has doubled its subscribers and its commitments. We need help.

Yves Barbero has been appointed to be the meeting coordinator as well as CSICOP liaison to entice them to bring the 1991 convention to San Francisco, so he must give up his long-time job of folding and stapling the newsletter. We need a distribution committee.

We need a publicist, too. This job has been handed around from board member to board member in addition to their other duties. It needs the primary attention of an outgoing person, someone willing to learn the media ropes of the Bay Area. Perhaps it needs to be handled by a committee. We're open to suggestions.

While experience is welcome, enthusiasm and willingness are the primary qualifications.

Come to the VOLUNTEERS COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING on Sept. 13th at 7 p.m. at the home of Yves Barbero, 1073 Dolores Street, San Francisco. For further information, call (415) 285-4358 (evenings).

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

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