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June 20, 1975

Mr. Henry Hamilton, President
Missouri Archaeological Society
c/o J.A. Elchenberger
P.O. Box 14
Saverton, Mo. 63467

Dear Sir:

At the recent meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in Dallas, Texas there was much discussion about House Bill No. 787 and particular section 13 of this bill regarding replication of artifacts whether by flintknapping or resin casting. I wish to take this opportunity to express my opposition to this bill and to state my reasons for doing so.

I have spent fifty years of my life perfecting my flintknapping and trying to achieve the perfection of toolmaking of prehistoric man. I have never given or sold a replication but have made these tools for study collections by universities and museums and used them to record the manufacturing techniques of the primitives. For the past ten years National Science Foundation has financed my work in this field through Idaho State University for they realized the importance of reclaiming this lost art and relating lithic technology to typeology. For six years the National Science Foundation has financed a field school for students to come to Idaho and study the art of flintknapping so they could improve their archaeology and typeology and relate the tools to the habits and movement of man. We have had students attend from the U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, France, Greece and Japan and they have all stated that this has been a valuable aid to their field work. This has permitted me and all these students to write technical papers regarding the manufacture and function of these tools - something that was unknown to the profession prior to the present interest in lithic technology. One of my works, "An Introduction to Flintknapping" is now required reading by many of the major universities. None of this effort has been for the purpose of teaching students to fake artifacts and sell them - and none have done so - but rather to revive a lost art and make for a better understanding of the cultural habits of ancient man. Dr. Louis Leakey, Dr. Francois Bordes, Dr. Jacques Tixier and many others in Europe and Africa are using flintknapping for this same purpose and it has made a tremendous impact on archaeology.

Prior to this time, students had to relate artifacts from pictures in books and, since they are not in the third dimension, they really had no clear idea of the size, thickness or flaking pattern of these tools. Now with some of the study collection - both those of casting and stone - they are able to study the real tool and relate it to their science. In 1969, the American Museum of Natural History in New York thought this was important enough to have me appear there for ten days doing demonstrations for the public and to have a public display of my replicas for one year. I might add, that these demonstrations brought more people to the museum in one day than any other exhibit. This only serves to point out the interest of the general public in this lost art.

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Flintknapping is an art and it would appear to me that to prohibit anyone from replicating the tools of ancient man would be unconstitutional. Certainly, I agree that no one should ever make replicas or imitations for resale as the genuine article and think this particular part of the bill should be kept intact. However, if you realized how difficult it is to make a genuine replica you would instinctively know that the person taking the time to perfect this art would not be one who would do it for monetary purposes. I have seen some fakes for sale in different states and in Mexico but they are so poorly done that anyone could recognize them as fakes and, therefore would not buy them.

You have a man in your state, Mr. J.A. Eichenberger, who has been doing casts of original artifacts and selling them to universities and museums for study. This is an invaluable service and the State of Missouri should be proud to have such a man as a resident. Without his casts ninety-nine percent of archaeologists would never have a chance to study point types and the entire profession owes him a debt of gratitude for his contribution. Certainly, his cast could never be sold as the genuine article for they are obviously casts and can do no harm to anyone - only good to the profession.

Most of the major universities now have what we call lithic labs. where we practice flintknapping and thermal alteration of lithic materials and this has been a real asset to the students. Your bill would prohibit such classes and would set archaeology back to the dark ages.

I heartily recommend that you reconsider this bill and amend section 13 to make it possible for those interested to practice the art of flintknapping and casting of genuine artifacts but prohibit the sale of replicas as genuine artifacts.

If I can clarify any of my statements further or give any more information that will help in rewriting this section of the bill please do not hesitate to let me know. This is not only important to me but also to the nation and our archaeologists abroad.

Sincerely,

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