

Stupid Interpreter Tricks Continuing Exasperation

—by J. Henry Phillips

IN APRIL 1995 EVERY INTERPRETER in AATIA knew about Senate Bill 151. The idea was to impose a general ban on court interpreting, and then auction off special licenses, complete with a whole system of continuing fees and indignities. The plan was debated before the Senate jurisprudence committee, then abandoned as a bad idea.

More recently, the same two or three people who had the original bad idea tried again—only this time without telling the AATIA membership. With only one side



presented, the measure passed and interpreter surprise was mollified by “grandfathering”—an appeal to cupidity which has the added advantage of buying time. But the “grandfathering” was only temporary.

The agenda for the May 16, 2003, meeting of the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation tried to place Public Comment at the beginning of the agenda under Item 4, with presentation on an examination listed as Item 9, but the public saw through that. The following situation unfolded: to purchase the privilege of interpreting in a non-federal Texas court one has to shell out \$575 (non-refundable) and pass a test which all of the participants in this wonderful plan have thus far managed to fail. As the enormity of the disaster became evident, a dog-and-pony show followed as if on cue.

A testing corporation masquerading as part of a court interpreters association trotted out a PowerPoint presentation accompanied by the usual persuasive patter and jargon. The general thrust of it was that whereas the existing program may be a complete failure, the new improved testing program which this corporation offered

would save the implementation of the law—provided, of course that their corporation receives a monopoly on the testing. Public Comment pointed out that the federal

government had sense enough to limit its testing program to Spanish—thereby covering 98 percent of all needs—while keeping the practice of court interpreting on a completely voluntary basis. When other languages are requested, federally-certified Spanish court interpreters can be counted on to help the courts to locate the necessary talent with no coercion whatsoever.

June 30th brought retractions of rule amendment proposals; others just as mysterious were approved in August, and there the matter rests. The last meeting of this regulatory board was canceled for lack of a quorum. As the smell of this entire business becomes increasingly ripe, spectators may be ahead of the participants by a cool \$575—plus kowtowing for CE credits—for precisely the same practical outcome. ★

Dietz highlights joint AATIA/ATA localization seminar

ATTENDEES AT SUNDAY SESSIONS of the joint AATIA/ATA Localization Seminar, September 6–7, 2003, learned what is on the horizon for translators in the field of software localization.

The highlight of the seminar was AATIA’s own guru, Dr. Frank Dietz, who gave a captivating presentation entitled Localization for the Computer and Video Game Industry.

Dietz is an ATA accredited English > German translator who lives here in Austin. He has worked as an in-house translator at Origin Systems and has translated over 30 computer games into German, including System Shock, Wing Commander 3, Ultima 9 and Sid Meier’s Gettysburg!, as well as the titles of the Jane’s Combat Simulations series.

The U.S. computer and video game industry generates over \$6 billion annually, and many of its fastest growing markets are in countries where English is not spoken. The fact that Austin is one of the most important centers of game development nationwide offers interesting opportunities to local translators.

Dietz discussed the market for game translations, the challenges involved in localizing games, the testing of foreign language versions of games, and the outlook for the future of game localization. Dietz’s website www.frankdietz.com contains a glossary of localization terms.

Dr. Tim Altanero, Associate Professor of Technical Communications and Director and Founder the Localization Certificate Program at Austin Community College gave an overview of the different educational options available in the field of localization at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Software localization is a fascinating world offering an abundance of opportunities. To obtain further information concerning educational options, contact Altanero at