

NEWS AND COMMENTS

THE DEL NORTE COUNTY SURVEY

According to a survey conducted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Crescent City, California, a vast majority of the residents of the Del Norte County in California believes that public schools should include creation in the teaching of origins, along with evolutionary theory.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

Through a door-to-door survey and a radio poll, responses were taken to the following questions: "Should evolution be taught in public schools?" "Should creation be taught in public schools?" "How many children in your home are attending public school?" "Do you attend church?" The responses were restricted to a simple "yes," "no," or "no opinion."

To insure privacy and freedom of expression, the names of those who participated in the survey questions were neither asked nor recorded. To avoid unnecessary confusion as to the issue and possible influencing of the answers, "evolution" and "creation" were not restricted to a formal definition. General definitions, however, were provided upon request: "evolution" is the theory that man has developed from lower forms of life over long ages of time; "creation" is the theory that God created man in His own image. Because the survey would involve the children in public schools, the number of children in each house participating in the survey was recorded. Primarily the survey was intended to gather responses of the adult community, but whenever minors offered their opinions, these too were included in the survey.

Louis R. Goodgame, coordinator of the survey, stated: "The survey was not done to arouse controversy and cause discord. It was not done so that our Church, or any Church, could dictate policies to the local school board." Rather, it was taken "as a public service concerning an issue which we believed to be of vital importance to our community."

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

A total of 1518 individuals participated in the survey (1212 by the door-to-door volunteers and 306 by the radio poll). Of these contacts, 58% thought the teaching of evolution should be continued, while 34% opposed it (8% made no comment). Of the same 1518 total, 89% agreed that creation theory should also be taught in the classroom. Only 8% opposed its inclusion in the classroom, and 3% did not express an opinion.

The contacts were then broken down into two further divisions based on church attendance. Of the 919 who attended church (690 by the door-to-door survey and 229 by the radio poll), 54% thought evolution should be taught, 39% thought it should be discontinued, and 7% remained undecided. Of this same group, 91% supported the teaching of creation, while only 6% said no. Three per cent made no comment. Of the 599 not attending church (522 door-to-door, 77 by radio), 64% thought evolution should be taught; 27% said no, while 9% remained undecided. Creation was supported by 85%, 11% said no, and 4% made no comment.

A comparison between the door-to-door contacts and the radio poll showed a difference. While in the door-to-door survey only 60% favored evolution, with 31% opposing its teaching (9% made no comment), those contacted by radio showed 51% for evolution, 46% opposed, and 3% registering no opinion. One possible explanation is that the door-to-door contacts reached people at random (some had no great interest in the issue), while the radio poll drew responses from those interested enough to phone in their views.

Not recorded on this report, but noted by the pollsters, was a genuine concern from the community, not only that creation should be taught, but how it should be presented in the classroom. The final summary merely stated that there was community support for teaching *both* creation and evolution in the classrooms.

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