

# EDITORIAL

## A MATTER OF FAIRNESS

The various lines of argumentation which have been presented in recent years by those who have been promoting the teaching of either the general theory of evolution or creation in public schools reveal some significant inconsistencies. These seem to tell us that we need to do more careful reasoning regarding the premises which guide our thinking and conduct.

In 1967 when repeal of Tennessee's anti-evolution law was under consideration, the president of the National Science Teachers Association, speaking in behalf of evolution, presented an argument from the standpoint of the need for academic freedom. He stated: "Society cannot tolerate any obstruction of the process of academic inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas." This idea, that evolution must have a fair chance to present its case, has been promoted many times when the teaching of evolution has been interfered with. Hence it is surprising that one notes that when the California State Board of Education was considering the inclusion of the concept of creation in science textbooks, the various scientific and academic bodies defending the general theory of evolution said virtually nothing about academic freedom. Apparently academic freedom was not what the evolutionists really had in mind. Freedom to study the scientific evidence for evolution — yes, but freedom to study the scientific evidence for creation — no.

Creationists have not been paragons of consistency either, although in this case their inconsistencies do not appear to be as glaring as those of the evolutionists. For instance, earlier in this century, creationists were actively promoting in several states legislation that would make it illegal to teach evolution, because they considered it to be false, while recently they have been promoting the inclusion of creation along with evolution. Should error be thus tolerated?

Actually we are somewhat sympathetic to the view of presenting both creation and evolution in the public schools, not because we believe that neither or both theories are correct — we do not —, but because we have respect for the rights of those whose views differ from ours. What is done in private schools is more a matter of concern to those who support those private schools. We are not addressing ourselves to that aspect now except to mention that we hope intellectual honesty and thoroughness will prevail.

Each side of this controversy has at times promoted legislation that would make the teaching of opposing views illegal in public schools. It is

easy to forget how difficult it is to legislate truth. Such attempts appear to betray a degree of insecurity regarding the survival of personal opinions. Personally we are not at all afraid to allow the concept of creation to be compared to the general theory of evolution, as we believe that the evidence for creation by a designer is quite overwhelming. But if the idea of creation is not even allowed mention in science textbooks, as is the current practice, how can students, and society as a whole, draw correct inferences? Should information be thus stifled? Should not the students in the classrooms of our public schools have the privilege of making their own choice? The present position of the evolutionists means that many students will never have a chance to hear about the scientific evidence for design and a designer.

Also, the present practice of considering only the theory of evolution in science textbooks seems to be definitely against the desires of the majority of the citizens, at least in California. (See *Origins* 1:94-95 and this issue, p 42). In addition to this, a sizable portion of the citizenry believes in creation (see also p 42 of this issue), and by sanctioning the suppression of their views in the classroom, we have in effect a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Should we allow this intellectual oppression to continue? We hope that a sense of fairness will promote a change.

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