

NEWS AND COMMENTS

BIOLOGY BOOK BATTLES

Controversy has arisen in several states over the use of a high-school biology textbook, *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity*, prepared by the Creation Research Society (CRS) and published by Zondervan Publishing House in 1974.

In Texas there has been more publicity than action. The Dallas public school board voted 6 to 3 to adopt the text as a supplementary source book. Evolutionists and liberal clergymen threatened to take legal action in order to reverse the board's decision and prevent the teaching of creationism in the public schools. Because much publicity over the textbook adoption was generated by the news media, "Americans United for Separation of Church and State" arranged a formal panel debate on creation and evolution in order to present both sides of the question of origins to the public. The presentation took place at the Dallas Public Library and was televised on February 24, 1977.

In Indiana the battle has been much more involved. After the state's textbook commission included the CRS book among its list of state-approved texts in 1975 (and reaffirmed the decision in March 1977), the West Clark and South Ripley school districts adopted it as their sole text, while the remaining five districts used it in conjunction with other textbooks.

In Clark County the parents of two students appealed to the Indiana Civil Liberties Union (ICLU). They argued that the text promoted the Biblical theory of creation in such statements as: "a primary purpose of science should be to learn about God's handiwork," "there is no way to support the doctrine of evolution," and "the most reasonable explanation for the actual facts of biology as they are known scientifically is that of biblical creationism." While defenders of the text such as West Clark School District Superintendent Herman Miller insisted that it presented more than just the Biblical account of origins, critics labeled it as "antiscience" and an attempt to promote fundamentalist religious ideas in the public-school classrooms.

After studying the book, its teacher's manual, and publisher's correspondence, Marion County Superior Court Judge Michael T. Dugan announced in Indianapolis, on April 14, 1977, that the use of the CRS text, which he considered to be clearly one-sided, violated the state statutes, the Indiana constitution, and the U.S. constitutional provisions of separation of church and state. He then ordered the textbook commission to remove

the textbook from the state-approved list. In his ruling, Judge Dugan stated: “Throughout the text, while both viewpoints are mentioned, Biblical creationism is consistently presented as the only correct ‘scientific’ view. Two entire chapters, in fact, are devoted to lengthy discussions of the fallacies and weaknesses of the evolution viewpoint. On the other hand, there are no chapters or passages in the text which deal critically with Biblical creationism.”

Judge Dugan declined to comment as to the validity of either evolution or creationism, saying that the “question is whether a text obviously designed to present only the view of Biblical creationism in a favorable light is constitutionally acceptable in the public schools of Indiana. Two hundred years of constitutional government demand that the answer be no.” He added: “The prospect of biology teachers and students alike forced to answer and respond to continued demand for correct fundamentalist Christian doctrines has no place in the public schools.”

While controversies have arisen over the CRS textbook in the states of California, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas, the Indiana case was the first to reach the courts. ICLU attorney Irving L. Fink predicted that Judge Dugan’s decision would have “tremendous impact around the country” and commented that the commission “didn’t have the guts to change their position” even though their original adoption of the CRS text had been a mistake.

Superintendent Miller remarked that the West Clark School System would continue to use the banned text, because “as far as we’re concerned, it is a legal book until the textbook commission tells us it is not. If we have to change, it’s going to cost a lot of money.” State Superintendent of Schools Harold M. Negley, who is also chairman of the commission, stated that a decision on an appeal of Dugan’s ruling would be made after the commission and state’s, attorney general examined the ruling and that the CRS book would remain in use at least until the commission’s next meeting which would be scheduled later.

Legal actions and court decisions are not the only means by which evolutionists and other opponents of the teaching of creationism continue to battle. Apparently believing the “scientific community” to be threatened by the teaching of creation in the public-school classrooms, the American Humanist Association (AHA), led by its president, Bette Chambers, issued an attack in the January/February 1977 issue of *The Humanist*, a journal sponsored by the AHA and the American Ethical Union. (Effective with the November/December 1977 issue, the latter group will no longer sponsor the journal.)

The issue opened with a statement affirming evolution as a principle of science. Signed by over 160 prominent scientists, educators and religious

leaders, the statement declared that evolution is firmly established in the view of the modern scientific community and is “the only view that should be expounded in public-school courses on science, which are distinct from those on religion.”

The statement was sent to the major school districts in the United States with a plea for “all local school boards, manufacturers of textbooks and teaching materials, elementary and secondary teachers of biological science, concerned citizens, and educational agencies” to oppose measures before state legislatures that require equal treatment and emphasis of creation in the science classes and texts of public schools. The statement also urged supporters of evolution to reject the concept that evolution is a tenet of the religion of secular humanism and to support those who present the matter of evolution fairly in the classrooms.

The Humanist then proceeded to print articles supporting the statement. Preston Cloud, a biogeologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, led off the attack by calling scientific creationism “the new inquisition.” He warned that “although the creationists may be irrational, they are not to be dismissed as a lunatic fringe that can best be treated by being ignored. In California, which accounts for about 10 percent of the public-school enrollment and thus exerts great leverage on textbook publishers, they have proven themselves to be skillful tacticians, good organizers, and uncompromising adversaries.” Although Cloud’s article was intended to produce evidence for evolution, most of his remarks were confined to derogatory statements about the damage that creationism was doing to the progress of science.

William V. Mayer, director of Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, gave a history of evolutionary theory, attempting to establish the concept’s nobility by virtue of its longevity. Thus according to him, even the earliest written records of mankind anticipated the elements of the modern theory of evolution. Charles Darwin was praised for developing concepts of selection that explained the “how” of the evolutionary process. Mayer then lauded the increasing wealth of data supporting evolution and predicted that the future would show even more evidence until the anti-evolutionists would “occupy the same place as do members of the Flat Earth Society in these days of interplanetary exploration.” He also stated that “evolution has become so pervasive that to inveigh against it is similar to King Canute requesting the retreat of the tide.”

Bette Chambers summarized the section by explaining reasons for the statement on evolution: “Since the public is led to believe, thanks to creationist clamor so characteristic of this century, that an open choice between these two alternatives exists within the science itself, it becomes imperative to state that this view is rubbish, lest science education in America become the laughing stock of the civilized world.”

When *Science News* included a brief news item on the evolution statement, reactions as indicated by the “letters” column during the following weeks ranged the extremes from praise to criticism. Some also attempted to find common ground between creation and evolution by suggesting forms of theistic evolution. In the May/June 1977 issue of *The Humanist*, eight of the twelve letters criticized the AHA for dogmatic, narrow-minded intolerance of other views. If the letters could be used as indicators of public opinion, then the myth of the unified scientific community is disproved, and it is not correct to say that all evolutionists are opposed to the teaching of creation theory in science classes. It is doubtful that the statement affirming evolution as a principle of science served to change anyone’s views, and it will not intimidate creationists into ceasing their efforts to have creation presented in the public-school classrooms as an alternative theory to evolution.

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