Ohio Tackles Evolution Controversy

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How the subject of evolution is treated in the classroom has emerged again as a source of controversy, this time in the Ohio State Board of Education. Until now, Ohio public schools have not mandated any direct teaching about the subject.
"Standards" is the new fad sweeping across schools today, and the Ohio legislature has ordered that the Ohio Department of Education write standards that guide how all subjects are taught in public school classrooms. The standards for math and English were accepted rather easily, but the science standards suddenly became very controversial.

The conference report for the "No Child Left Behind" bill signed by President Bush on Jan. 8 includes a science requirement that focuses on "the data and testable theories of science." This new federal law specifies that "where topics are taught that may generate controversy (such as biological evolution), the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist."

When the Ohio writing team presented its first draft, it failed to help students understand "the full range of scientific views" and instead tried to mandate Darwinian evolution as the only acceptable teaching. Ohio's curriculum standards committee questioned why the draft included no ideological diversity, and the media immediately rushed in to fan the flames of old prejudices and activate the liberals who want to raise phony issues about separation of church and state.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer editorialized that public school instructors should limit their teaching to "the most widely accepted scientific theory" and teachers should not "stray from it." The Plain Dealer, plainly, is dealing the censorship card to stifle scientific debate and dissent.

The notion that such a closed-mind, unscientific approach could be advocated in a major newspaper in our current era, when the generally lauded icons are diversity, academic freedom, free speech, critical thinking, multiculturalism, and opposition to censorship, is truly remarkable. The truth and accuracy of science should be determined by scientific evidence and open debate, not silencing dissent.

But censorship about evolution is common. After Lehigh University biochemistry professor Michael Behe argued that irreducible complexity in nature disproves Darwinian evolution, some high schools have censored his book in response to pressure from the evolutionists.

If a scientific theory is true, there is no need to censor criticism. By definition, if a theory is scientific, it should be demonstrated by evidence and replicable experiments, and testable against alternate hypotheses.

Any committee presuming to write school science standards should honestly face up to the fact that current science textbooks usually include demonstrable errors. Some of these errors were exposed years or decades ago but remain in textbooks, often even with illustrations.

Many science textbooks show diagrams or illustrations to reinforce the claim that all modern animals as well as man diverged from a common ancestor. Most textbooks ignore the evidence from the Cambrian

explosion, in which major groups of animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record without any evidence of common ancestry.

The picture of the peppered moths is a favorite in science textbooks to try to demonstrate natural selection in the wild. We now know that the picture is a fake (moths were glued on tree trunks for a photo-op).

The 19th century drawings of vertebrate embryos showing humans evolved from a fish-like ancestor have also been shown to have been faked. This was even admitted by the New York Times.

In the face of such dishonesty (now becoming widely known because of the internet), the Darwinian-only majority of academics has been steadily retreating. Because Darwin's theory has not stood the test of time (it pre-dates the Civil War), respectable scientists have been developing alternate theories of life's origins by presenting evidence of what is called intelligent design.

Darwin himself relied on the expected discovery of transitional fossils, but Dr. Colin Patterson, former senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, admitted that there are none. Professor Louis Bounoure, former director of research at the French National Center of Scientific Research, concluded, "Evolutionism is a fairy tale for grownups."

Are we going to teach our young people to develop an inquiring mind and to be open to new discoveries, or are we going to teach them that science is static, that everything about the origins of life has already been determined and there are no possible deviations from what the establishment has dictated?

Science standards and textbooks should not mandate the dogmas of the past when they are beset with increasing evidences of error and fraud, and when new discoveries can and do occur. Science should be about facing and evaluating new evidence as it emerges.