Ben Stein Provokes the Liberals' Wrath

by Phyllis Schlafly May 7, 2008

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Ben Stein is known to many as an actor on Comedy Central. But the funniest part about his latest movie called "Expelled" is not any clever lines spoken by Stein but the hysterical way the liberals are trying to discourage people from seeing it.

Stein's critics don't effectively refute anything in "Expelled"; they just use epithets to ridicule it and hope they can make it go away. However, it won't go away; even Scientific American, which labeled the movie "shameful," concedes that it cannot be ignored.

The movie is about how scientists who dare to criticize Darwinism or discuss the contrary theory called Intelligent Design (ID) are expelled, fired, denied tenure, blacklisted, and bitterly denounced. Academic freedom doesn't extend to this issue.

The message of Stein's critics comes through loud and clear. They don't want anybody to challenge Darwinian orthodoxy or suggest that Intelligent Design might be an explanation of the origin of life.

Stein, who serves as his own narrator in the movie, is very deadpan about it all. He doesn't try to convince the audience that Darwinism is a fraud, or that God created the world, or even that some unidentified Intelligent Design might have started life on Earth.

Stein merely shows the intolerance of the universities, the government, the courts, the grant-making foundations and the media, and their determination to suppress any mention of Intelligent Design.

The only question posed by the movie is why, oh why, is there such a deliberate, consistent, widespread, vindictive effort to silence all criticism of dogmatic Darwinism or discussion of alternate theories of the origin of life? Stein interviews scientists who were blacklisted, denied grants, and ostracized in the academic community because they dared to write or speak the forbidden words.

The liberals are particularly upset because the movie identifies Darwinism, rather than evolution, as the sacred word that must be isolated from criticism. But that semantic choice makes good sense because Darwinism is easily defined by Darwin's own writings, whereas the word evolution is subject to different and even contrary definitions.

The truly funny part of the movie is Stein's interview with Richard Dawkins, whose best-selling book "The God Delusion" established this Englishman as the world's premier atheist. Dawkins is a leading advocate of the theory that all life evolved from a single beginning in an ancient mud puddle, perhaps after being struck by lightning.

Putting aside the issue of evolving, how did life begin in the first place? Under Stein's questioning, Dawkins finally said it is possible that life might have evolved on Earth after the arrival of a more highly developed being from another planet.

Aren't aliens from outer space the stuff of science fiction? And how was the other-planet alien created? According to Dawkins, life must have just spontaneously evolved on another planet, of course without God.

Stein spent two years traveling the world to gather material for this movie. He interviewed scores of scientists and academics who say they were retaliated against because of questioning Darwin's theories.

Stein interviewed Dr. Richard Sternberg, a biologist who lost his position at the prestigious Smithsonian Institution after he published a peer-reviewed article that mentioned Intelligent Design. Other academics who said they were victims of the anti-ID campus police included astrobiologist Guillermo Gonzalez, denied tenure at Iowa State University, and Caroline Crocker, who lost her professorship at George Mason University.

Stein dares to include some filming at the death camps in Nazi Germany as a backdrop for interviews that explain Charles Darwin's considerable influence on Adolf Hitler and his well-known atrocities. The Darwin-Hitler connection was not a Stein discovery; Darwin's influence on Hitler's political worldview, and Hitler's rejection of the sacredness of human life, is acknowledged in standard biographies of Hitler.

Stein also addresses how Darwin's theories influenced one of the U.S.'s most embarrassing periods, the eugenics fad of the early 20th century. Thousands of Americans were legally sterilized as physically or mentally unfit.

Mandatory sterilization based on Darwin's theories was even approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes writing his famous line, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough." Stein also reminds us that Margaret Sanger was a eugenicist who wanted to eliminate the races she believed were inferior.

Stein's message is that the attack on freedom of inquiry is anti-science, anti-American, and anti-the whole concept of learning. His dramatization should force the public, and maybe even academia, to address this extraordinary intolerance of diversity.