



THE INTOLERANCE OF THE "TOLERANT"

Teaching the evolution controversy is deemed "nonsense" by defense in Kansas' Science Hearings

This past week the State Board of Education held hearings upon proposed changes to the Science Standards, which guide teachers in teaching science. A minority group of the science standards writing committee proposed the changes. State Board of Education chairman Steve Abrams, Kathy Martin and Connie Morris made up a subcommittee to review the proposed changes. The hearings, originally set up for six days ... three days for proponents of the minority report and three days for proponents of the majority report ... were cut short because the majority report proponents refused to attend *in official capacity*. They did attend, however, staging impromptu press conferences in hallways, in front of restrooms and elevators to a fawning group of reporters who, seemingly, based on media coverage of the first three days of hearings, hung on their every word.

Fairness

The hearings were set up with equal time for both sides, something that the minority report members feel is important for students being taught science as well. The opposing side was allowed via its lawyer to cross-examine the witnesses. Mr. Pedro Irigonegaray, a civil rights lawyer who was prominent in the marriage amendment debate for the other side, represented the majority report. His questions seemed pretty predictable and consistent, mostly focusing on what each witness felt about the age of the earth, ostensibly hoping to uncover a "young-earth creationist," and asking whether the words atheism or naturalism appeared in the majority draft for proposed changes to the science standards.

He relentlessly misrepresented "intelligent design" as creationism. He is quoted as saying that he was having a hard time refuting this "nonsense"—despite credentials, accomplishments and peer-reviewed published articles by the scientists who testified the first day. He will be given the opportunity to give his closing arguments if no one on his side testifies this week.

Media

Extensive media coverage highlighted the importance of the hearings last week, but the cameras really only saw one side, thanks to the stubborn refusal of the other side to show up. The auditorium at Memorial Hall in Topeka was filled to capacity (140 people) and the media cameras lined up on both sides. Reporters from as far away as Britain attended the hearings, giving an almost circus-like atmosphere.

Reporters mingling with spectators congested the halls outside during breaks; the reporters couldn't quite grasp that ordinary citizens had shown up for the proceedings. The questioning of prevailing evolutionary thought was even harder for them to comprehend. It made me think about a long-past time in which science would hear nothing but that

the earth was flat or those who ridiculed the idea of microbes because they could not be seen with the naked eye. Those claiming to be "tolerant" and "open-minded" reminded me of children who, when the rules changed, took their marbles and went home.

Testimony

On the first day, Dr. William S. Harris gave opening remarks in which he presented a short history of the minority report and its submission to the State Board of Education. He is an eminent scientist who does research in lipid metabolism and is a professor of medicine at UMKC. His testimony revealed that the "other side" planned to do the same thing they did in 1999: to portray anyone who disagreed with evolution being **the unifying concept** in biology to be ignorant and out of touch. He showed an e-mail from Liz Craig, an evolution proponent and media spokesperson for the group called Kansas Citizens for Science, which stated that the "plan" was to use the media to convince unintelligent citizens that *anything or anyone* who challenged Darwinian evolution is trying to put "creation in the classroom."

Dr. Harris stated that science should be taught in a neutral way with an eye to the Santorum amendment, which states that teaching the controversy in science is appropriate. He claimed that "institutional bias" in public education has no place and that the science standards should be free of bias, particularly bias that reflects a naturalistic worldview that defines all processes on earth to be naturally occurring unguided processes.

Dr. Charles Thaxton, who holds a doctorate in Physical Chemistry from Iowa State University, testified that DNA proves that explanations giving credence only to unguided processes is ridiculous when one sees within the universe order, and complexity resulting in information to cells and organisms. He dealt mainly with Benchmark 7, which discusses the formation of life on earth, refuting the Miller experiment that supposedly "created" life in a chamber by mixing a pre-biotic soup in a reducing atmosphere. He commented that many problems exist with this theory and students need to be taught both the problems and the successes.

Dr. Jonathan Wells, author of *Icons of Evolution*, testified next with remarks on some of the problems with a "common ancestor" as touted by evolutionary theory. He explained that in an analysis he did of all the science standards across the country, **only Kansas** gives priority to a *natural* explanation of the earth's origins. In other words, proponents of evolution who say changing the standards would put Kansas out of the mainstream have already put Kansas out of the mainstream of other states by their naturalistic explanations.

More on specific changes proposed by the Minority Report in the next *Family Concerns*.