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—Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

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Today's debate: Evolution vs. creationism

Ruling on 'intelligent design' is one for the history books

Our view:

Judge's blunt words help in fight to keep religion out of science classes.

The 1925 Scopes "monkey trial" is a staple of American history courses. Although Tennessee high school teacher John Scopes was convicted of teaching evolution, the backlash helped open classrooms nationally to Charles Darwin's scientific theory.

On Tuesday, a federal judge in Pennsylvania handed down another court decision on evolution that merits inclusion in the history books. Judge John Jones' 139-page ruling contains far-reaching wisdom that school boards everywhere can draw on when pressured to inject religion into science courses.

Jones, a Republican appointed by President Bush, delivered a stinging rebuke to advocates of "intelligent design," who argue that some forms of life are so complex they must be the product of an intelligent designer. Bringing remarkable clarity to the debate, Jones found that intelligent design, or ID, is "a religious view" and "a mere re-labeling of creationism."

The case originated in Dover, Pa., where ID advocates had prevailed on the school board to require that ninth-grade biology students be read a statement critical of evolution and suggesting intelligent design as an alternative. After local parents sued, Jones presided over a six-week trial that evoked comparisons with the Scopes case 80 years earlier.

Last month, when Dover voters replaced eight school board members who had adopted the policy, the Rev. Pat Robertson

warned that God might forsake their community. We can only wonder what Robertson thinks will happen to Jones, whose courageous opinion sizzles with memorable rhetoric. To wit:

► "The breathtaking inanity of the (school board's) decision is evident when considered against the factual backdrop."

► "It is ironic that several of these (school board members), who so staunchly and proudly touted their religious convictions in public, would time and again lie to cover their tracks and disguise the real purpose behind the ID Policy."

Jones' decision should give fortitude to school boards across the USA under pressure from ID advocates who maintain that evolution vs. intelligent design is a matter of opinion and, as such, teaching both sides is only fair.

The problem with comparing evolution with intelligent design is that ID is a matter of faith, not science. Evolution, by contrast, is backed by overwhelming scientific evidence.

Some intelligent design advocates also suggest that embracing evolution leads to spurning the church. They tend to not mention people like Brown University cell biologist Kenneth Miller, author of biology

textbooks and a devout Roman Catholic.

Just as evolution and religion needn't be in conflict, there's no reason the controversy over intelligent design and creationism can't be discussed in school. It's part of American culture and history. Just don't present ID as a scientific alternative to evolution.

Here's a suggested lesson plan for social studies teachers: Make Judge Jones' decision required reading. Discuss



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"The overwhelming evidence at trial established that ID is a religious view, a mere re-labeling of creationism, and not a scientific theory."

— U.S. District Judge John Jones

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Idea not based on religion

Opposing view:

Censorship of intelligent design will generate more interest in it.

By John G. West

Pyrrhic victory.

It's a phrase proponents of Darwin's theory might do well to ponder as they crowd over the decision by a federal judge in Pennsylvania "permanently enjoining" the Dover school district from mentioning the theory of intelligent design in science classes.

Contrary to Judge John Jones' assertions, intelligent design is not a religious-based idea, but instead an evidence-based scientific theory that holds there are certain features of living systems and the universe that are best explained by an intelligent cause. No legal decree can remove the digitally coded information from DNA, nor molecular machines from cells. The facts of biology cannot be overruled by a federal judge. Research on intelligent design will continue to go forward, and the scientific evidence will win out in the end.

Still, Darwinists clearly won this latest skirmish in the evolution wars. But at what cost?

Evolutionists used to style themselves the champions of free speech and academic freedom against unthinking dogmatism. But increasingly, they have become the new dog-

matists, demanding judicially-imposed censorship of dissent.

Now, Darwinists are trying to silence debate through persecution. At Ohio State University, a graduate student's dissertation is in limbo because he was openly critical of Darwin's theory. At George Mason University, a biology professor lost her job after she mentioned intelligent design in class. At the Smithsonian, an evolutionary biologist was harassed and vilified for permitting an article favoring intelligent design to be published in a peer-reviewed biology journal.

Those who think they can stop the growing interest in intelligent design through court orders or intimidation are deluding themselves. Americans don't like being told there are some ideas they aren't permitted to investigate. Try to ban an idea, and you will generate even more interest in it.

Efforts to mandate intelligent design are misguided, but efforts to shut down discussion of a scientific idea through harassment and judicial decrees hurt democratic pluralism. The more Darwinists resort to censorship and persecution, the clearer it will become that they are championing dogmatism, not science.

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