

December 2, 1980

To: The Hillsborough County School Board

Re: Partial Dissent from the Origins Curriculum Committee Guidelines and Goals for Discussion and Instruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

While one of us was principally responsible for the original draft of a major portion of the Goals and Guidelines under discussion, we feel we must bring to your attention part of the context in which they took the form you have in order to explain our strong dissent from part of what they say and especially from what they do not say.

We note that guideline number 4 was adopted without modification or dissent. It states: "No scientific position should be presented as being necessarily more or less moral, ethical, righteous, religious or Godly than any other."

In spite of this there was great objection by some members of the committee to the original language of guideline number 13. This originally stated:

"13. In an academic context, creation should be taught as a man-made concept to explain human observations to the human mind."

Some members of the committee argued that the wording of number 13 was unacceptable. Specifically they felt that creation was not a man-made concept, but was a Divinely Revealed concept. They felt that the idea of creation could not have been reached by the human mind without Divine Revelation. They would not agree to present Scientific Creationism as a product of the human mind in an academic context.

This is unacceptable to several of us for the following reasons:

- 1.) While we vary among ourselves on whether creation or Scientific Creationism are true or not, we recognize the historical fact that many thinkers reached the concept of creation by reason alone without revelation.
- 2.) Scientific Creationism must be presented, in an academic context as a scientific theory. It must never be re-presented as a Divinely Inspired Theory in a public school science classroom.
- 3.) To present creation or Scientific Creationism in an academic context as anything other than man-made concepts gives them the color of being more moral, ethical, righteous and Godly than evolution, even Theistic Evolution, and thus contradicts guideline 4.

- 4.) To present creation or Scientific Creationism in an academic context as something other than man-made ideas presents them in such a way that simply teaching about them could either contradict or support a religious belief, and this is contrary to Guideline 11. *scientific*
- 5.) It is not at all clear that an authoritative spokesperson for Scientific Creationism would find it is either necessary or desirable to present it as anything other than man-made concept in an academic context, in a science class, or anywhere in a public school.
- 6.) The guideline in question was modified at a meeting at which many of the committee members on all sides were absent and no vote of even the partial committee was taken to ratify it.

We respectfully dissent and ask that guideline 13 be reworded to express its original intent, to bring it back into line with the other guidelines, and to make it consistent with the constant claim that Scientific Creationism is not religion or is not to be taught as Divine Revelation. This must be made as explicit as possible or three evils will come to pass. First we may have to teach that some science is better than other science because it is Divinely Revealed. Secondly we make the fair and equitable presentation of competing Scientific Theories virtually impossible. Third we contravene the first amendment's prohibition against establishment of religion. We do not ask that Scientific Creationism not be taught. We ask only that it be made explicit that if it is taught as a scientific theory it be taught - in public school science - as a product of the human mind - nothing more and nothing less. If this is not made explicit, we believe you are doing a disservice to the truly scientific proponents of Scientific Creationism and to the academic and constitutional rights of students. We believe this is a crucial test of the Board's commitment to academic rigor, fairness and integrity in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

John V. Betz
Thomas J. Burns
Randy L. Akers
Henry R. Mushinsky
Alexander W. Roth
Richard Taylor
W. Edwin Steiner, Jr.