

SUMMARY OF ERRORS AND DISTORTIONS IN NPR STORY ON EVOLUTION & OHIO, April 21, 2004

Story was broadcast on the show "Day to Day" on April 21, 2004. Edition: 4:00-5:00 PM.

NPR Transcript:

Unidentified Man: It is the basis of modern biology. And to suggest that we should put some ill-defined, poorly thought-out, quote, unquote, "alternative theory" out and give it equal time in science classes does a disservice to science as well as a disservice to biology.

Response:

NPR quotes a false assertion that the Ohio lesson plan covers alternative theories to evolution, but never allows anyone on the other side to rebut the claim. In reality, the Ohio lesson plan does not deal with alternatives to evolutionary theory. Dr. West from Discovery Institute repeatedly told NPR reporter Janet Babin about this fact. In a clear case of bias, Babin decided to present this false allegation about alternative theories without citing the response by the other side.

NPR Transcript:

JANET BABIN: Macroevolutionary theory. That's a new term devised by those who embrace alternatives to evolution. Those who use the term reject the idea of big, evolutionary leaps such as man evolving from apes. They do, however, accept what they call microevolution, in which species undergo small changes over generations.

Response:

Contrary to Ms. Babin's claim, "Macroevolutionary theory" and "microevolution" are terms that regularly appear in mainstream, peer-reviewed science journals. They were not "devised by those who embrace alternatives to evolution." Babin's misreporting here demonstrates her own scientific ignorance.

NPR Transcript:

They call their approach a theory of intelligent design, a view that life is so complex it must have been designed with the help of a higher power or god.

Response:

Babin misrepresents the definition of intelligent design theory. Design theory merely proposes that "certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause." The nature of that intelligent cause is outside the scope of the theory. Thus, it is wrong to claim that according to design theory the intelligent cause must have been "a higher power or god." It should be noted that the correct definition of intelligent design theory is featured prominently on Discovery Institute's website.

NPR Transcript:

John West heads the Discovery Institute, an intelligent design think tank that's largely responsible for promoting intelligent design theories.

Response:

John West is the Associate Director of Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, not the head of the entire Discovery Institute. Moreover, Discovery Institute is misleadingly identified as "an intelligent design think tank." Discovery is a think tank that deals with a wide variety of public policy issues, including transportation policy (its biggest program) and technology policy. The Center for Science and Culture (which supports challenges to neo-Darwinism including intelligent design) is only one of Discovery Institute's many programs.

NPR Transcript:

They call their approach a theory of intelligent design... John West heads the Discovery Institute, an intelligent design think tank that's largely responsible for promoting intelligent design theories He says Ohio's plan is a compromise. Mr. JOHN WEST (Discovery Institute): What students need to know is both the evidence for evolutionary theory; we think they should also know about some of the scientific criticism of parts of that theory that are being made in the scientific literature. And we think this is a moderate common ground approach that everyone on both sides of this contentious issue should be able to agree on.

Response:

Although the quote from Dr. West is technically accurate, the lead-in and the context are grossly misleading. Dr. West is made to appear as a supporter of teaching intelligent design in Ohio. In fact, Dr. West made clear to Babin that neither he nor Discovery Institute favors requiring the teaching of intelligent design in Ohio or elsewhere. More importantly, he repeatedly made clear that the Ohio curriculum does NOT cover alternatives to evolution such as intelligent design; all it does is cover peer-reviewed scientific criticisms of neo-Darwinism. But Babin censored these comments.

NPR Transcript:

BABIN: ... Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and the American Civil Liberties Union are considering mounting court challenges to the new lesson. Barry Lynn, with Americans United, says if the school board was pressured to change the curriculum to conform to religious dogma, that's unconstitutional.

Mr. BARRY LYNN (Americans United for the Separation of Church and State): If we find out that this is simply religious doctrine being promoted by a small interest group, then this information would provide us with the basis for possible litigation, something we would take very seriously.

Response:

Dr. West discussed in some detail why the Ohio lesson plan is constitutional. But in another example of clear bias, Ms. Babin only chose to quote those who think the lesson plan is unconstitutional.