

**PE1530/O**

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**To: Petitions Committee, Scottish Parliament; Linda Fabiani MSP; Richard Lyle MSP; John Wilson MSP; Clare Adamson MSP; Siobhan McMahon MSP; Mark Griffin MSP; Margaret McCulloch MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP.**

**From: Colleen Wilson**

**Subject: Scottish Secular Society's petition against evolution denial in schools.**

I write to express my support for the above petition and also to seek your support.

By way of background, my daughter attends Kirktonholme Primary School in East Kilbride. In September 2013, she received two books, "*Truth Be Told: Exposing the Myth of Evolution*" and "*How Do You Know God is Real?*" These books were "gifted" to all the pupils by Mr Alex Gear of West Mains Church of Christ. The Alabama-based author of the books has subsequently blogged that the shipping and printing costs for 500 copies of each book (approximately \$5,000) were met by US donors.

The books purport to have some scientific basis; they are marketed in the style of science textbooks and are cloaked in pseudo-scientific language. My six year old daughter told me that the books "... have dinosaurs and space in them..." - two of her favourite subjects. The books, showing dinosaurs and humans co-existing in the same time-frame, state that the Earth is about 6,000 years old, and that evolution by natural selection is false.

We are rightly proud of our education system in Scotland. We are rightly proud of our scientific heritage. Indeed, it is less than a year since Professor Peter Higgs of the University of Edinburgh received the Nobel Prize in Physics for his theoretical discovery of the mechanism which explains why sub-atomic particles have mass. The subsequent discovery of the predicted fundamental particle, at CERN's Large Hadron Collider, provides a great example of the scientific method i.e. the formulation, testing and modification of a hypothesis through systematic observation, measurement and experiment.

The teaching of science, and the application of the scientific method to provide an understanding of our origins, is something that cannot be adulterated by unscientific dogmatism. Creationism (where species of different living things are separately created) and Intelligent Design (which believes that natural processes cannot generate the kind of new information required for evolution) are not valid scientific hypotheses. That a non/super-natural intervention, or the suspension of natural laws, are required within these doctrines means that they cannot be held up to the same scrutiny afforded to credible science.

Biology, genetics, astronomy, fossil records, geology and other areas of science provide **overwhelming** scientific consensus on the origins of the universe, and on the common descent of living things and their change over time.

I wouldn't expect my daughter, and her peers, to be taught scientifically-invalid views such as the Earth being flat, the Sun and planets in our Solar System revolving around the Earth or that storks deliver newborn babies under cabbage patches. I do expect her science education to give her an understanding of gravity, atomic theory and so on. So, too, do I expect the scientifically-established fact of evolution as an undisputed part of her science education.

Otherwise, what will become of our next Professor Higgs and Nobel prize winners?

Colleen Wilson  
9/11/2014