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REMARKS OF DON COVINGTON to the KANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Good Morning

My name is Don Covington. I am a resident of Lenexa, Kansas. I have been a citizen and taxpayer in the State of Kansas for most of my adult life. All six of my children and one stepdaughter have come through the Kansas school system, and at least seven of my twelve grandchildren will probably do the same.

So as you can plainly see, I have a strong, personal interest in what takes place in Kansas classrooms with regard to both curriculum and content.

However, my strongest motivation for being here this morning has to do with the action taken by this Board in August of last year concerning the adoption of science standards that will govern the teaching of evolution in public schools. I will not presume to instruct you about the issues involved in the controversy surrounding that decision, for I am sure you are all much more expert than I -- or at least you should be. And I am sure you are all familiar with what has taken place since then. I know I certainly am.

However, in consideration of the events surrounding this controversy and particularly in light of last week's national election, I am sure it is not news for any of us that we are engaged in a lively political and ideological contest for cultural supremacy, and that the public school classroom has been targeted as one of the primary battlegrounds. And so what takes place in these classrooms will receive considerable attention in the months to come, especially concerning the current emphasis placed upon the subject of evolution..

Now, it is a matter of record that there is a growing disagreement within the ranks of biologists concerning many aspects of what is otherwise presented as "fact" by science educators and as contained in many biology textbooks. And this disagreement will increase as new discoveries and mounting evidence are produced by contemporary scientists, which evidence does not conform to NeoDarwinism and thus presents a serious challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy, although the implications of such evidence seems to be lost on the major media and disregarded by some science educators.

Apparently, science educators and textbook writers are a little slow in catching up with what is going on and has already taken place within the scientific community. After all, as an example, we have known for only a hundred years or so that Haeckel's embryos were faked--we just haven't gotten around to taking them out of current textbooks. As a consequence of this -- and other -- misinformation in the curriculum, our schoolchildren have been consistently given a distorted view of the biological sciences, and many devoted teachers have been forced into compromising positions pitting their professional careers against their personal ethics and integrity.

As you might expect, I would much prefer that my tax money not be used to purchase such text materials that contain false information, and those that present speculation as scientific fact. And I strongly protest the use of such text materials in the classroom, and ask that this Board of Education use its influence to insist that all science text materials used in Kansas public schools are free of misinformation and the philosophical prejudices of naturalism that seem inseparable from the present teaching of Darwinism.

As members of the Kansas State Board of Education, you have been presented with a tremendous opportunity as well as an awesome task as we enter the 21st century. You will have my complete support as you continue the courageous stand that was begun last year with regard to the teaching of evolution in our public schools.

And please -- *PLEASE!* -- don't apologize for your action. Neither you, your actions, nor the State of Kansas are, or were, an embarrassment to the nation. At least not yet!! Instead, you should be proud of the decision you made on August 11, 1999, concerning how evolution should be taught as part of the biological sciences. After all, your decision was not only consistent with good science and solid logic, it was also in the best academic interests of our school children!

I trust that you have not been -- nor will be -- intimidated by the distorted, uninformed media accounts of your actions--no matter how vociferous and rude, or by pressures to conform to dubious national standards to qualify for entitlement programs. Please keep clearly in mind that the impressionable minds of our children are quite precious to us; they hold the key to the future and they are not for sale. In a limited and delegated sense, families and parents entrust schools with the education of their children, but that trust is conditioned on the understanding and even the requirement that the classroom will not be used to indoctrinate students with values and worldviews that conflict with the privately held beliefs of the student and/or his or her family.

Accordingly, I do not want my grandchildren to be taught a materialistic philosophy masquerading as empirical science -- which it clearly is not. I do not want them indoctrinated with questionable, unproven and even fraudulent concepts that are paraded as fact concerning life and its origins, and that spring from an equally questionable naturalistic worldview, no matter how "politically correct" that worldview may otherwise be. Instead, I would like my grandchildren exposed to the full truth about evolution: the facts, the fantasies, the fallacies and the frauds. Teach them how to think -- not what to think! Teach them how to recognize and compare the differences between theory and evidence . . . between science and philosophy . . . and between fact and fiction!

I therefore urge this Board of Education to take a leadership role when it comes to science education. Help us to sort out this controversy. Bring the controversy into public view, and don't be afraid of presenting the facts nor of presenting all of the evidence. Encourage our students to learn how to search for Truth and not to be satisfied with whatever is in vogue just because it is in vogue. Teach them that science is indeed a search for Truth. Teach them that nothing in science makes sense except in light of the evidence. ALL of the evidence! All of the Pro's, and all of the Con's.

For as someone once wrote: "I saw tomorrow in a little child's eyes, and thought how carefully we would teach if we were wise."

Are you willing to be wise??