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# COMMENTARY

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## EDITORIAL

# Attempted 'evolution' ban entirely misguided

Here we go again.

Every year some hysterical backwater administrator in some Southern state manages to wield the Bible like a scepter in a futile battle against — get this — the word "evolution." It seems that these people would rather our public schoolchildren be exposed only to the notion that God created all, affectionately labeled "creationist theory," and that science is all just a bunch of bunk.

Laughably, these people don't see the irony in proclaiming that evolution is an aberrant, sacrilegious theory and that their personal beliefs — their faith, if you will — are inarguable, concrete fact.

This year, the state of Georgia played host to the latest debacle. In a semantic battle not unlike the flap over whether certain people are entitled to use the word "marriage," a dozen science teachers rallied to change the word "evolution" to "biological changes over time" in the state's science curriculum, according to The Associated Press.

Apparently, the word "evolution" has become so loaded that to even utter it could be tragically blasphemous — perhaps sending all the schoolchildren straight to hell in one fell swoop? — and thus reducing the argument from a scientific debate to a religious and moral squabble. The whole affair reeked of Orwellian Newspeak, and the suggestion was eventually dropped after legitimate professors, educators and politicians spoke out.

At its heart, the evolution-creationism debate revolves around differences in microevolution, in which a series of small genetic changes can form new subspecies, and macroevolution, wherein large-scale evolution can form new taxonomic groups (i.e. apes to humans). Opponents of the word "evolution" generally tend to accept the tenets of microevolution. Experiments, such as Darwin's work with finches, show that populations can change in small ways to adapt to their environments, and opponents rarely dispute these findings.

The contention lies in macroevolution. Opponents of the word "evolution" say it has no scientific legitimacy (read: no proof that any species used to be something completely different) and therefore should not be mentioned in a public school setting.

But most scientists disagree with the alleged lack of evidence for macroevolutionary principles. In fact, Douglas Theobald, Ph.D., of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Colorado at Boulder, cites 21 different pieces of evidence for macroevolution. His paper is posted at <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/comdesc>, a Web site dedicated to the evolution debate.

As the late Stephen J. Gould, a paleontologist from Harvard University, wrote in a May 1981 issue of *Discover*: "... evolution is a theory. It is also a fact. And facts and theories are different things, not rungs in a hierarchy of increasing certainty. Facts are the world's data. Theories are structures of ideas that explain and interpret facts. Facts don't go away when scientists debate rival theories to explain them. Einstein's theory of gravitation replaced Newton's in this century, but apples didn't suspend themselves in midair, pending the outcome. And humans evolved from ape-like ancestors whether they did so by Darwin's proposed mechanism or by some other yet-to-be-discovered."

Humankind relies on science for progress and understanding about our origins and the world around us. This is the socially accepted means of public scholarship in a country where the church and state have been explicitly separated — although this fundamental aspect of our society seems to suffer assault on a daily basis. Because science is so accepted and so ingrained in nearly all elements of life, it is only reasonable that it be taught in public schools. If religious administrators have a problem with that, they can join private religious schools where the accepted dogma is not science but faith.

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Eric Layton Illustrator

## It's about oil

Last week at the 129th Meeting of the Conference of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC member nation ministers decided to reduce crude oil production from the current rate of 24.5 billion barrels per day to 23.5 billion barrels per day, a reduction of 4.08 percent.

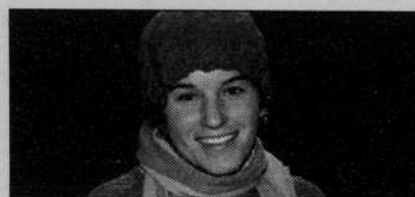
In response, the U.S. government, under orders from President George W. Bush, issued a statement to the world:

"It is our hope that the producers do not take actions that undermine the American economy ... and American consumers."

What Bush is failing to see is that if the 2002 worldwide rate of consumption of crude oil continues, decreases in production won't matter in 38 years because there will simply be no recoverable oil left. The well will have run dry, and our economy will have to find another measure of success.

We are an oil-dependent country. We pour it into our cars, our heating systems, our plastics and our hair gels. We go to the pump, hand over our credit cards and say, "Fill it up." We have no remorse, no vision for the future.

In 2002, the United States imported more than 1.49 billion barrels of oil



**Aimee Rudin**  
Five feet of fury

from OPEC; that's more than 4 million barrels of oil every day of the year. And that's just from OPEC. Total, the United States imports 9.14 million barrels of crude oil per day and produces 5.7 million barrels per day from its own reserves, all of this to feed our hunger for industry.

We consume 2.9 gallons of crude oil per person per day for every man, woman and child living in America. Oil runs through our world like blood through arteries. In our economy, oil seems more important than food.

OPEC currently produces 41 percent of the world's crude oil and exports 55 percent of crude oil traded internationally. It's no small thing that of the 11 member nations of OPEC, five — Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya and Saudi Arabia — have been involved in recent military action with the

United States.

The current United States involvement in Iraq is not about terror, as the television might have us believe. It's about oil. To steal a line from folk singer Amy Martin, "It is about rich white men getting richer."

Bush is right — a drop in oil production does have the potential to disrupt the American lifestyle. If he sends more soldiers to war in order to secure oil, the deaths of our fellow citizens and of the people they would battle will be on our shoulders as the consumers of the oil.

We as a society need to move away from the question of how much oil can we get and toward the idea that soon, within our lifetimes, we will run out of oil.

We need to begin looking at alternatives to oil. We must examine biodiesel, solar and wind power, mass transit and other alternative transportation. We need to look beyond economic projections and prices per gallon. Tomorrow the pump could go dry. We need to start thinking about what happens next.

Contact the columnist at [aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com](mailto:aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com). Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Measure 30's failure means lost hope

Since the fall of Measure 30 I've been struck with a feeling of lost hope. As statistics prove, a large majority of voters are college-educated. Among other statistics, this stands out the most to me in light of the surcharge tax increase proposition because those in opposition to the measure were the ones most affected by it, those with money to lose.

Currently being enrolled at the University, I've tried to view my education as something more than a means to

future financial stability. Each class has something to offer me as I begin to take part in the sculpting of not only my future, but the future of every generation to come. With that I find that I am directing my studies more towards the good of humanity than personal success as defined in our current materialistic media. I had hope that others who have graduated from colleges all over the United States have discovered this same attempt at generosity, at directing individual efforts towards the community, city and nation as a whole.

This idea has been kicked down, and my gut aches as I slowly understand

that even a college education doesn't produce advocates of a progressive society, not in large part anyway. I thought that maybe a college education helped people understand inequality and lack of equal opportunity, and encourage people to help out when they have the means.

Not only am I questioning the purpose of this education, now I'm even questioning whether I have the right priorities ... maybe achievement is defined in monetary value.

**Nicholas Wilbur**  
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