

# Scopes Trial for Teaching Theory of Evolution is a Test Case for Nation

"Greatest Question Ever Raised," Says Wm. J. Bryan. "Cannot Legislate a Limit for Human Mind in Inquiry After Truth" Says Opposition. Comments From the Press of the Country.

Written Specially for News By Edward Percy Howard

Tennessee's battle over the right to teach the theory of evolution in the public schools has now engaged serious attention of all civilized thinking peoples. It is contended in some quarters that the whole question of human freedom and development is wrapped up in the issue. The question is of importance not only in Tennessee or Florida or Oklahoma or any other state. It is regarded even as more than a national issue.

Of course it is accepted that no legislative body can alter natural law by statute. It is just as impossible to prove by legislative enactment the truth or falsity of evolution as it would be to pass a law that would definitely establish the truth or falsity of gravitation. What is, is, and no legal pronouncement can make otherwise. The question raised involves the right of the human being to try to learn the truth regarding the origin of life. Of course in so far as au-

quiry presupposes doubt, the issue embraces the question of agnosticism

in that the theory of evolution necessarily runs counter to the Genesis story of the creation.

Judge John Randolph Near, of Knoxville, Tenn., states his position in the controversy in this way: "We regard it as equally un-American and therefore unconstitutional, whether it is kingly or ecclesiastical authority or legislative power that would attempt to limit the human mind in its enquiry after truth."



John T. Scopes, professor of biology at Dayton, Tenn. high school, on trial there for violating the "monkey-law" — or, charged with teaching the theory of evolution. It is a test case watched with a great deal of interest throughout the country.

## He Is "IT"

ment: Even though the theory of evolution be true and be finally accepted by the people as against the story of the Genesis those who might accept the truth could not be considered atheists. They point, too to the wide divergence between atheism and agnosticism.

Another viewpoint; there does not appear to be any particular quarrel with Mr. Bryan's theory that the taxpayers have a right to set up schools, and to govern the school curriculum. It is only when this is coupled with legislation making education compulsory that the right of the individual to seek truth becomes abridged. On the one hand it is said compulsory education does not necessarily involve study only in public schools. Parochial and sectarian and private schools are still left as the unhampered media through which evolution or any other

On the other side of the fence stands the statement of William Jennings Bryan, arch foe of the evolutionary theory. "This" says Mr. Bryan, "is one of the greatest questions ever raised—the question of the right of the people who created and support the schools, to control them. If not they, then who? The fundamentalists are trying to establish the doctrine that the taxpayer has a right to say what shall be taught—the taxpayers and not the scientists—Can a handful of scientists rob your children of religion and turn them out atheists?"

## "Monkey Law" Judge



Judge John T. Raulston of Rhea County, Tenn., who is presiding at the trial of Prof. Scopes, charged with violating the state law, in teaching the theory of evolution in Dayton, Tenn. high school. Wm. J. Bryan aids the prosecution and Clarence Darrow the defense.

## Some Interesting Opinions

**THE NEW YORK WORLD SAYS:**  
If the Oregon law stands, any majority of a legislature may compel all children to attend the schools it establishes; if the Tennessee law stands, any majority of a legislature may determine that the world was created out of nothing in 144 hours, or that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, or that blank verse is blasphemy."

**THE LOUISVILLE COURIER SAYS:**  
The truth or falsity of the Darwinian theory does not enter into this case. The constitutionality of the Tennessee law should be tried at once. It is intolerable that such a prohibition should be on the statute books of any American Commonwealth. It smacks altogether too much of the edicts of government where church and state are not disovered."

**THE NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT SAYS:**  
There is no more reason for regulating the right to teach evolution than there is for regulating the right to teach bee culture or political economy. Any effort to throw legal safeguards around the teachings of specially selected studies is on unwarranted lay intrusion and a step in the direction of obscurantism and intolerance.

**THE PHILADELPHIA NORTH AMERICAN SAYS:**  
The issue is not whether the Bible or Darwin is right, or whether the teaching of the latter's theory endangers young minds, but whether the people of a state are entitled to say how their money is to be spent for education. So long as they make public schooling compulsory for all children; so long as they permit individuals and private school to teach what they please, and deny no the privilege of writing or speaking on evolution, it does not appear they are interfering with "freedom of thought" as some maintain.

**FINALLY, GEORGE BERNARD SHAW SAYS:**  
"What William Jennings Bryan calls Fundamentalism, I call Infantalism."  
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theory of life or conduct may be taught. Other controversialists say this is not a practical answer in that it would create a monetary standard of education. Were evolution demonstrated or accepted as the true principle of life, then such knowledge would be barred to the poor; indeed they would be compelled to learn only the story of Genesis, correct or incorrect.

The crux of the argument appears to hang on the natural right of the human species to seek the truth, to be informed on the thought of the world and be given the liberty then to exercise their own judgement in the forming of opinions, and whether the Tennessee statute allows that right. This applies to economics, to religion, to history, indeed to all bases of human knowledge, including the theory of evolution.

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