

# Letters on the Smithsonian Institution and Intelligent Design

23 June 2005

*Following are letters received by the WSWs on the article “An attack on science: Smithsonian Institution to show film on Intelligent Design”*

This is in appreciation of your exposure of the shenanigans at the Smithsonian and the political spinelessness (at the very least) of the National Museum.

I also wanted to add that Intelligent Design cannot be understood as the antithesis of evolutionary science, for that supposes ID to be a legitimate scientific position. Instead, it is the opposite of Haphazard Design, the position that things are just thrown together, possibly by a creator. In this context, one can better understand the social vector in ID, and how it comes to be anchored in class interests (identifying, as you point out, Marx as one its antagonists). For it is the position that things are as they are intended to be, by some benevolent will, and that we had best not inquire too closely into matters, since, without a doubt, we will only find evidence at every turn that things as they are have been designed ... intelligently.

DK

21 June 2005

It is sickening to learn that the Smithsonian Institution is showing a film on “Intelligent Design.” This sort of creeping theology has also found a place at the Grand Canyon, where pamphlets are available at a gift shop that provide a religious “explanation” for the creation of the Canyon for the benefit of religious visitors to the park who complained about the biological explanation. It was explained that the park received complaints of one-sidedness from religiously conservative visitors and therefore had to “balance” the content of its pamphlets to accommodate the beliefs of the backward and anti-science crowd. This is the thin end of the wedge.

I think it is past time for a volley of complaints to come from the other side, i.e., from the side of atheists and other rationalists, at the promotion of the idea of “intelligent design,” an idea that is in no way intelligent, and for government-supported institutions to remember that the

money they get from the government came from the citizens of the United States, among whom are a great many who don’t subscribe to Christian (or any other) mythology.

CZ

San Francisco, California

20 June 2005

I am definitely not a believer in intelligent design, but I take issue with the quote: “The Seattle-based Discovery Institute is the country’s most prominent advocacy group for the ‘theory’ of Intelligent Design, a quasi-religious teaching that seeks to undermine the science of evolution.” Science is based in the fundamental belief that a reaction or behavior or physical principle is observable, explainable, measurable and most of all, able to be reproduced. Evolution does not meet a single one of these requirements and so it is, and will always be, merely a theory entrenched in the same kind of dogma that surrounds religious fundamentalism. Show me a biology professor at a major university who questions Darwinism and I will show you a person on his or her way to the unemployment office.

PK

20 June 2005

Voltaire once said that if you can get people to believe in absurdities, you can get them to commit atrocities—and the fundamentalists most certainly have atrocities on their minds, especially against other religions, and to aid in the coming of the end of the world. I am hoping, with the world being saturated with science from stem cell research to the TVs people watch, that this twelfth century mentality will hang itself with its own rope. The US is presently leading the way with its absurd administration; I am not suggesting that these people be ignored, rather that it is time for rational people to take a stand on all fronts against this terrible theocracy from the workers to professors. Ultimately what the world is facing is fascism; we all know that Hitler said his government needed

“believers,” and he was himself a crazy religious nut dabbling in the occult. Do we need this again? No. Are we getting it again? Yes. If workers do not gather to form a strong front against this the fundamentalists will be correct about one thing—the coming end of the world.

SN

British Columbia, Canada

20 June 2005

Nice piece. I have some observations though. Your response to Smithsonian’s “intelligent design” presentation was not made in a spirit flowing from the pure belief of science. I shall explain this: The Smithsonian does not present a thesis to contradict. It washes somebody else’s hypothetical linen and in doing so claims part of the dirt that belongs there. It seems that’s what you are taking issue with. Fair as far as that goes. But not enough to hang Smithsonian.

So rather invite Smithsonian to present its views in the way it would like to prove its thesis. And then we take it from there. That would be quite interesting. Science is its own argument, its own judgment. Does it need defenders? Maybe it does at times like these.

I think Smithsonian fundamentally suicides itself by resorting to an anti-intellectual proposition that belittles science and reason. It should know that of course. But it doesn’t seem to care two hoots about the scientific method. Really unbelievable. I think this is what needs to be addressed. The debate needs a new method. The old one is done with. Clarence Darrow took care of it quite well.

Don’t get me wrong. I am in complete agreement with your views. I just think we need to open another style to challenge the neoconservative fundamentalists no different from Al Qaeda, it would seem.

LS

Shipai, Taiwan

20 June 2005



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