

## PE1530/R

Andrew Strachan Email of 9 November 2014

Dear members of the Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee

There are two points I wish to raise regarding petition PE1530 which you will be considering on Tuesday. By creationism I assume the petitioner is referring to the Bible's description of creation found in the early chapters of Genesis. It is interesting that the petition does not define creationism as far as I can see so the scope of the petition could end up being very wide.

Firstly, I object to the aims of the petition. The petition is raised on behalf of the Scottish Secular Society. The history section of their website <http://scottishsecularsociety.com/about-the-scottish-secular-society/a-history-of-secular-scotland/> is written by their founder and current secretary, Garry Otton, who states that he hates religion. An organisation which states these things should have no place making demands on how children in Scotland are educated.

They also subscribe to the Secular Charter <http://scottishsecularsociety.com/about-the-scottish-secular-society/constitution/> which states that they want religion to play no part in state-funded education. Extreme aims such as this should not be tolerated in a diverse country such as ours.

My understanding is that currently the science curriculum does not include creationism anyway so there is currently nothing to bar. However, if this petition was to proceed it could deter any teacher from even answering questions about creationism. By legislating on this issue it could result in students with creationist beliefs avoiding teaching as a career. While this may please the petitioner it would not be conducive to the diverse and inclusive country Scotland is claimed to be.

Our children deserve, indeed are entitled to, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The petition does not specifically address this but if you allow it to proceed the outcome will be that children with creationist beliefs will end up being discriminated against and disadvantaged. There are those within the Scottish Secular Society who have experienced and fought against discrimination so it is amazing to see how soon they forget and now seek to discriminate against others.

I note that there have been emails in support of the petition and I'd be interested to know if those who support it are aware of the true aims of the Scottish Secular Society and if they also have the same beliefs and aims.

There have also been submissions against the petition so this confirms that the

matter is not quite as cut and dried as the Scottish Secular Society would have you believe. This is a complex issue with many valid points on both sides of the debate. To deny children the opportunity to hear one side is unacceptable and I believe that you should reject the aims of the petition.

The petition also claims that there is established science of evolution, common descent, and deep time. If this is the case will the Scottish Parliament legislate to state how life originated? There are so many thoughts about this. Even the Scottish Secular Society's education officer, Mark Gordon, at one time (and maybe still does) subscribed to the controversial idea of abiogenesis. This idea itself has many different possible models, so if they are all able to be presented as apparent fact (even though they can't all be right) there should be room for other ideas which are just as viable for the origin of life.

Overall, this petition should go no further. By rejecting the petition you'll go some way to ensure that young people in Scotland are able to see the whole picture so that they can make informed choices and decisions in line with the aims of curriculum for excellence and that those with these beliefs are not disadvantaged. This will ensure that young people in Scotland grow up to be responsible citizens able to respect others and understand different beliefs.

I'd appreciate if the above points are considered as a formal submission to the committee.

Andrew Strachan