3/2007

Re: Reason and Evidence

Dear Editor,

Should Americans care about reason and evidence in public discourse? Should we care about whether something is more likely to be true or less likely? Should we care whether a person is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt or not? In other words, should we care about truth and justice?

We all have our political inclinations, but let us avail ourselves of the best data at hand without twisting it to suit our ideological notions. Though this country put a man on the moon, we might be mindful that this seminal event in human history wasn't accomplished by ignoring scientific reality.

Most disingenuous are the actions of those who give lip service to evidence by carefully selecting or deliberately misrepresenting science in an effort to bolster their political agendas. The scientific question is: are humans contributing significantly to global warming, not whether "big government" is a problem. The best scientific evidence suggests that global warming is strongly dependent on fossil fuel consumption, livestock cultivation and forest reduction. That is a separate issue from what steps we might consider taking to mitigate these human contributions. Maybe we should just learn to live with it or maybe we should just plant lots of trees- those are entirely different questions.

What if smallpox "deniers" had carried the day in the 1960's by claiming that such diseases are not a problem because the then proposed (and completely successful) solution of the World Health Organization is just more "big government"?

John Donovan
Eugene, OR