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"Pay a visit to the Biologic Institute and you are liable to get a chilly reception," Celeste Biever [wrote](#) [4] in *New Scientist* (December 15, 2006). The Biologic Institute, as *The New York Times* reported (August 22, 2005), is "a new research center in Seattle that looks at the organization of biological systems, including intelligent design issues," with significant funding from the Discovery Institute, the institutional home of "intelligent design" creationism. Investigating, Biever found it difficult to obtain comment. "The reticence," she reported, "cloaks an unorthodox agenda."

George Weber, a director of the Biologic Institute and the head of the Spokane chapter of the old-earth creationist ministry Reasons to Believe, told *New Scientist*, "We are the first ones doing what we might call lab science in intelligent design. ... The objective is to challenge the scientific community on naturalism." After he spoke to *New Scientist*, however, Weber left the board of the Biologic Institute, and Douglas Axe, the lab's senior researcher, told *New Scientist* that Weber "was found to have seriously misunderstood the purpose of Biologic and to have misrepresented it."

Instead, Axe said, the lab only seeks "to show that the design perspective can lead to better science," although he puzzlingly contends that it will nevertheless "contribute substantially to the scientific case for intelligent design." Axe told *New Scientist* that the Biologic Institute was currently conducting research on "the origin of metabolic pathways in bacteria, the evolution of gene order in bacteria, and the evolution of protein folds" as well as research on computational biology, where he claimed "we are nearing completion of a system for exploring the evolution of artificial genes that are considerably more life-like than has been the case previously."

In the past, previous scientific research of Axe's was misleadingly inflated in "intelligent design" propaganda, as detailed in a sidebar to the *New Scientist* article (and see also Matt Inlay's ["Bill Dembski](#)

[and the case of the unsupported assertion](#) [5] at the Panda's Thumb blog). Barbara Forrest suggested that the Biologic Institute's research would provide additional grist for the mill. The historian of creationism Ronald L. Numbers offered a further rationale: "It will be good for the troops if leaders in the ID movement can claim: 'We're not just talking theory. We have labs, we have real scientists working on this.'"

In the same issue, *New Scientist* offered its editorial opinion under the title "It's still about religion" (not available on-line), writing, "The Biologic Institute's research agenda includes topics of current interest to science, and so their studies should be welcomed. It is not the findings that worry scientists and educators who want to keep God out of science classes, but the way they are interpreted. The intelligent designer is likely to show his hand not in the scientific literature, but in outside commentary by the proponents of the anti-evolution movement, who will cite in their support any study that highlights biological features whose evolutionary origins are not well understood."

"The ID movement has gained the public support it has because of just this kind of ambiguity over what is and isn't science," the editorial continued. "One year on from the Dover trial, the ID movement has grown cagey. Its strategy appears to be to keep a low profile while building up an arsenal of literature that may give ID scientific credibility in the courtroom or government committees. In using science to this end, the movement would be following a tactic previously employed by the tobacco and oil industries. Whether it squares with the idea of improving science is highly doubtful."

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