

Ferdie J. Deering

12-9-75

U.S. Schools Mixed Up on Religion

THE First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is appropriate reference for the hassle that has developed in Norman concerning religion in public school buses.

Nine drivers recently resigned to protest orders forbidding them to have personal conversations concerning religion with pupils riding their buses. Perhaps drivers should not have conversations at all while buses are in operation, for safety reasons, but they have raised a double-barreled question of freedom.

The First Amendment, which founders of this nation obviously considered to be of high importance, says:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

The matter of teaching religion in public schools has been raised and put down many times, most notably in 1963 when the Supreme Court up-

held a protest against prayer in the schools.

Numerous efforts have been made and have failed in Congress to establish the right of pupils to participate voluntarily in prayer and other religiously oriented activities. The question hinges mainly on the matter of voluntary versus required participation, but not entirely. Anti-religionists often oppose even voluntary activities.

The Supreme Court ruling has been applied to create a number of ridiculous rules. In some school systems, Christmas carols may no longer be sung and religious holidays are being cancelled or their meaning is being distorted. Yet, other court decisions have upheld required use of obscene textbooks in schools.

Because of differences in beliefs, few people would favor teaching of religious catechisms in public schools, but to bar conversations growing out of the natural interest of young people concerning spiritual values is about as logical as barring conversations relating to their concerns about morals and sex.

Positive religious beliefs may not

be taught in schools, but anti-religious theories are allowed and even required. For example, the theory of evolution without direction by the mind of God may be taught as a negative religious belief, while the positive interpretation may not be presented at all.

Similarly, teachers have largely concluded that teaching of morality is a responsibility of parents and does not belong in the schools. Many teachers make little effort either to teach or to demonstrate basic ethics.

Much of the increase in juvenile crime may be traced directly to lack of moral training given either at home or at school, and millions of children do not receive any at churches. They do not learn to distinguish right from wrong, and grow up possessing no appreciation of the rights of others and without moral or ethical precepts to guide them.

It may be right to bar the teaching of religion, but it is not right to prohibit belief in religion. And if religious teaching is barred, so should anti-religious teaching be barred from public schools.

LETTERS

Schools should share moral upbringing of our children

12-23-75

TO THE EDITOR:

For sometime now, I have had strong feelings on this issue of religion in school. I have not had the words to express those feelings. A column by Ferdie J. Deering has done so admirably!

The schools have our children from 6 years on, much more than we do. While the responsibility for moral instruction truly belongs to the parent, it is a shared responsibility with the schools. I remember more than one teacher who had a lasting influence on me of which they may or may not have been aware.

M.G. Mainord, Moore

OKLAHOMA FARMERS UNION

1141 WEST SHERIDAN
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73106
TELEPHONE 239-6011

GEORGE W. STONE
PRESIDENT

December 10, 1975

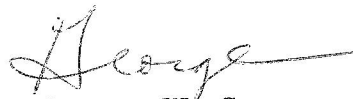
Mr. Ferdie Deering
3232 Whipperwill
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73161

Dear Ferdie:

I want to commend you on the fine editorial subject, "U.S. Schools Mixed Up on Religion." You told the story in a direct and understandable manner, and I agree with you 100% plus.

I would appreciate receiving permission to run this in the next issue of our Union Farmer, if it is possible to do so.

Sincerely,


George W. Stone
President

GWS:jb