

# Parents Have Say on School 'Values'

**R**EPORTS of a national study by publishers, librarians and school officials on "censorship pressures in 1980" could be misleading. They imply that public schools ought to stock books regarded as obscene, profane or immoral, regardless of local attitudes.

Most of the books cited in the news stories as "censored" have been so classified. A few appear to be rather innocuous, but, if local people don't want them, they should have a right to reject them.

No mention was made of Supreme Court censorship of the Ten Commandments as a teaching of morality or of the Holy Bible as literature. Complaints about censorship vary according to subject matter.

When Oklahoma public schools open soon, parents will have a prerogative given them by law to exercise some control over teaching materials and methods used. Senate Bill 132 was enacted by the Legislature and signed by Gov. George Nigh in June.

Sometimes referred to as the "values clarification bill," the new

law allows parents to apply some values of their own. The bill got its start in Stigler about three years ago when some parents began comparing notes on school procedures they considered improper.

The movement swept across the state with help from Oklahoma Farmers Union, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, women's groups and newly formed associations of "concerned parents." The Legislature listened.

The law provides that "all instructional material, including teachers manuals, films, tapes or other supplementary instructional material which will be used in connection with any research or experimentation program or project, shall be available for inspection by the children's parents or guardians."

This gets to the heart of the matter. Supplementary teaching materials are not subject to review by the Oklahoma Textbook Commission and in many cases such materials are selected solely by teachers.

Many parents have objected to "values clarification" studies which inquire into personal aspects of stu-

dents' lives, claiming that such projects constitute undue invasion of the pupil's privacy.

The new law provides that without prior written consent of parents or guardians, pupils may not be required to participate in programs for psychiatric or psychological examinations, "or any treatment of a psychiatric or psychological nature."

Similar prior consent is required for projects delving into political affiliations, potentially embarrassing mental problems, sexual behavior and attitudes, illegal, anti-social or self-incriminating and demeaning behavior, income or critical appraisals of students' families. Recognized privileged relationships with lawyers, physicians and ministers are specifically protected.

This law places responsibility directly upon parents to find out what teaching materials and methods are used. If parents do not like what they see, they may simply withhold "prior consent" in order to withdraw their children from the objectionable program.

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**Humanistic Education**

TO THE EDITOR:

Since Oklahoma schools have already started, I hope that Mr. Deering's article "Parents Have Say on School 'Values'" is correct. The Oklahoma Legislature spoke clearly on this subject with the passage of SB 132. Whether or not the state department of education will implement it remains to be seen (the federal counterpart hasn't).

As parents from all over the state came to testify at the public hearings, legislators had a look at what state money was promoting. As a result, all but three senators and seven representatives voted that parents should have the right to withhold consent from having their children's values changed to this "no right or wrong philosophy."

Many parents are not aware that "values education" does not mean Christian values, but rather humanistic ones — that is, no right or wrong to moral questions. "Values" or "moral" education is referred to as the "hidden curriculum" since it is never identified nor listed as a part of curriculum although students are required to participate.

Material used in the Oklahoma schools such as Kohlberg's five moral stages, Glasser's Reality Therapy and especially the seven steps of "values clarification" are to the atheist (humanist) what the Ten Commandments are to the Christian community. The latter is banned from our public schools, and our tax dollars are used to promote the other. We can be grateful to those legislators who took this small but important step to correct this imbalance.

**Myrtle Kelly, Stigler**