

opinion

Riders of the right

There were these three riders. One got stuck onto a defense appropriations bill and made it. The second rider got successfully filibustered and fell off an appropriations bill. The last rider recently tumbled off a debt-ceiling bill.

The use of "riders" to senate bills, hooking bizarre pieces of legislation to essential bills, is as archaic as the senators who promote them. In the case of these three riders, they are particularly bad pieces of legislation.

As of next July, a rider to a defense appropriations bill will make anyone who hasn't registered ineligible for financial aid — the successful rider.

In August, Senator Jesse Helms began his first race to incorporate social legislation via amendments to important bills by tacking an anti-abortion bill to the Senate Appropriations bill.

This time some young blood decided to fight the old senator with some of his dusty practices. Senator Bob Packwood successfully filibustered the amendment. An aid to Packwood said that this was the first time our senator has used the ol' filibuster, but the improper use of procedure not to mention the cloaked court-stripping implications of the bill was enough to force Packwood onto the floor to talk the Helm's rider to death.

But the righteous North Carolina Senator decided to try again and attached another rider — this time an amendment to establish organized school prayer in the public schools — to a debt-ceiling bill. Filibustering again, the senate managed to stop this latest rider of the Right.

Traditionally the use of the rider has been to promote controversial, special interest, or poorly researched pieces of legislation. There is no rule against the attachment of non-germane amendments to a bill.

But why should the American public have to put up with such outdated and wasteful politics?

joan nyland

suitable for comment

Sen. Jesse Helms (Republican, North Carolina) recently lost his rider to get prayer put into the public schools. His amendment to the debt ceiling bill was filibustered by, among other people, Sen. Bob Packwood and conservative Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater. It was a bill which just hadn't reached its time — or perhaps had passed it.

Needless to say, I find Helm's bill a rather intriguing challenge to the doctrine of separation of church and state and if one is willing to look beyond the escapist tactics of the New Right, a rather intriguing idea — praying in public school.

I'm in rather a unique position to comment on this subject. I've had seven years of parochial school and nine years of public education. So I've prayed and studied and studied and prayed. I'd like to tell Helms a few things I've learned in the processes.

You cannot ever force anyone to pray. It is an ex-

remely personal activity. If one allowed or mandated communal prayer in the public schools it would have to be so generic as to be meaningless — a spaghetti sauce to please all those who hate oregano, garlic, fennel, and basil.

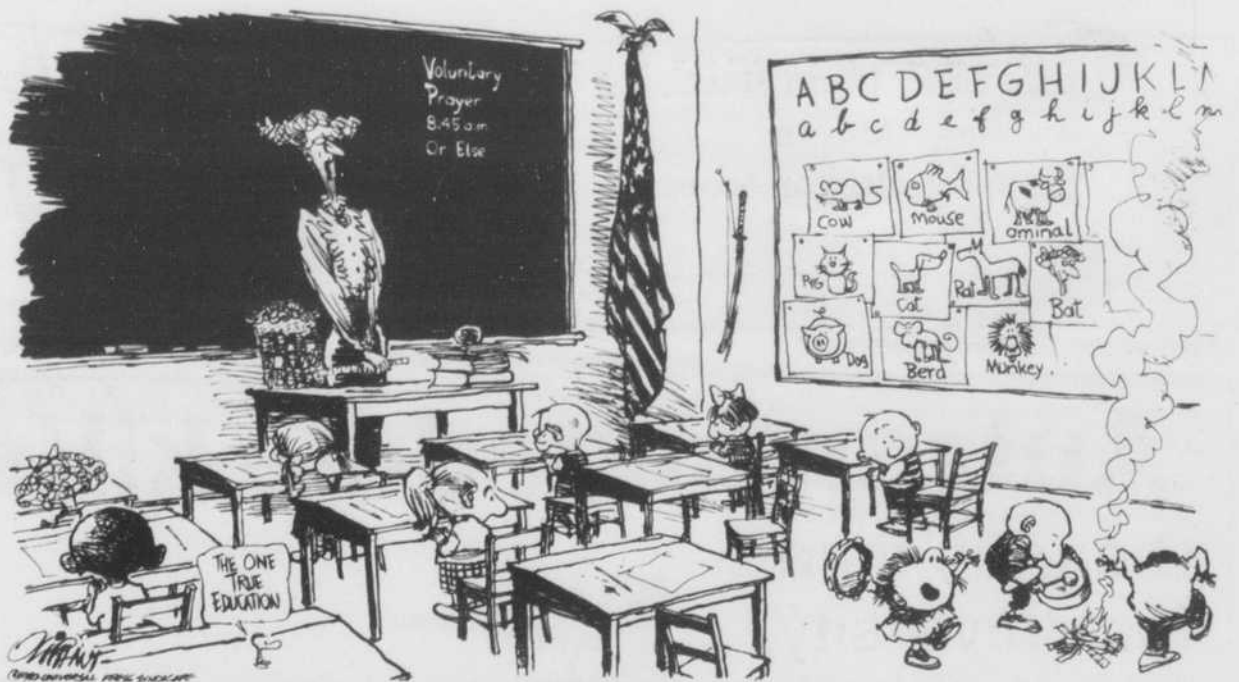
One assumes (ugh) that the public school system functions to teach literacy and encourage thinking. In the United States, the school also functions to enculturate immigrants and instill patriotism — at least teachers used to lead the class in the flag salute. If test scores and the need for remedial courses before students enter the University are any indication, the schools already have more tasks than they can properly handle.

Prayer does not necessarily have to do with religion, but it often does. Religion is and should be taught at home. Even Helms, I think, would agree that parents should direct the religious and moral education of

their children, not teachers or, oh my god, school boards.

The supporters of the Helm's bill, including Pres. Reagan, contend that we lose a freedom by not allowing organized prayer in our public school system. The argument goes something like, "One atheist dictates to the majority what they can do." Reagan calls the prevention of prayer, an "outrage" and has been seen lately lighting candles in support of school prayer, explaining the school prayer issue is "as vital to the future of the country as any we face."

Well, I don't know whether Helms prays out loud, down on his knees or with Reagan in the Oval Office but, the majority out there wishing to pray could foil the atheists by praying silently. I know that might not fool Big Teacher who wants control of our minds every waking moment of the classroom, but once in a while civil disobedience is good for the soul.



'CLASS WILL CONFINE ITS STYLE OF CLASSROOM PRAYER TO THE NORMAL, PROPER, ACCEPTED, CONSERVATIVE, ALL-AMERICAN, RIGHT-WING CHRISTIAN VARIETY!'

letters

Condemnation

The recent massacre of about 1,200 people in a Palestinian refugee camp in West Beirut deserves outright condemnation of all decent people.

The slaughter of innocents is nothing new to the Israelis. Judging by their own Talmudic

accounts of how they conquered Palestine after their release from Egyptian slavery, they firmly believed that they have divine sanction of their genocidal campaigns against non-Jewish, indigenous populations. Apparently, this belief is still in vogue among Israeli leaders for one can almost hear Begin replacing the names of the earlier peoples destroyed by the Jews with words like "Palestinians, PLO, terrorists" and so on.

But, times change. Indiscriminate mass slaughter in the furtherance of political goals is no longer a viable option, if it ever was. The murderous assault of Lebanon has been met with world-wide outrage and some soul-searching among some decent people in Israel itself. The United States enjoys a unique position with the Israelis and it is time to put an end to their madness in Lebanon. Enough is enough!

Essa Musa
Muslim Student Assoc.

Destructive

Many people have worked diligently for a number of years to create a sense of community among the people of Eugene and Springfield and to improve the climate for students and faculty in these communities. Your article, "The Other City," went a long way toward destroying that effort.

The citizens of Springfield, many of whom are University faculty, staff, and students, have

been important allies in our battles for better treatment by the state legislature. They saw themselves as important advocates for you and for other students here. In matters where support from the county was vital, the Springfield commissioner has always been helpful.

One of the results of the closer cooperation that had been built was an increase in projects involving the two cities, the county, LCC and the University. These projects have been very beneficial to the University. One example is the Cooperative Museum Commission which operates WISTEC and the planetarium, used often by University faculty. Within that complex rest our hope for a new Museum of Natural History facility to house our collections, many of which are now stored away. This partnership, as with many such consortia, is delicate because all participants must give up something which is the basis for cooperative endeavor.

I regret that you failed to highlight the many positive aspects of Springfield. Its residents have worked hard to build an attractive and vital city. Under the constraints of a devastating economic climate, they have added a new city hall, a senior activity center, a museum, and made additions to their hospital. They should be applauded, not censured.

Perpetuating destructive stereotypes, even under the guise of satire, does a disservice to us all.

Curtis Simic
University Relations

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