

editorial

Courts keep church and state separate

The Supreme Court and a federal appeals court saw the light. During this year, the courts have maintained the wall of separation between church and state. After allowing a Pawtucket, R.I. nativity scene to slip through the cracks, and ruling that parents of children attending parochial schools can receive tax credits, the Supreme Court, to the dismay of the Reagan administration and some church leaders, halted the seepage of religion into public affairs.

An Alabama law that called for a moment of silence for prayer or meditation in public schools was condemned by the Supreme Court by a vote of 6-3.

Next, the high court ruled that states cannot force private employers to allow employees to refuse to work on their Sabbath day. This, the court decided, would give an advantage to religious employees over their non-religious counterparts.

The next two decisions eliminated programs in New York City and Grand Rapids, Mich. in which teachers paid by the taxpayers taught classes in parochial schools.

And a Louisiana law that required that creationism be given the same emphasis in public schools as evolution, was struck down by a federal appeals court Monday. The dissolution of the law, which was the last of its kind, puts an end to the use of public funds to teach creationism as a science.

The rulings were based on interpretations of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from the "establishment of religion."

However, the wall may start to crumble if Attorney General Edwin Meese III is appointed to the Supreme Court, which he may be, if a vacancy arises during the Reagan administration. In an address to the American Bar Association's House of Delegates Tuesday, Meese attacked the Supreme Court's decisions on religion. He said that the purpose of the Establishment Clause was to "prohibit religious tyranny, not to undermine religion generally."

Meese's potential appointment is significant because both rulings on whether or not teachers paid with tax dollars should be allowed to teach in parochial schools were decided by a slim 5-4 majority. If given the chance, Meese could be instrumental in swinging the pendulum back towards the right.

The rulings indicate that the courts, particularly the Supreme Court, want no part of the Reagan administration's desire for "accommodation," in which the administration has asked that the government extend itself to cooperate with religion. The Supreme Court will have the opportunity to reiterate its rejection of the right-wing policy when it decides during its next term whether or not high school students should be allowed to meet in public school classrooms to read the Bible and pray.

Keep up the good work.

Ban of weapons research was wise committee decision

A University Campus Planning Committee decision Tuesday to ban research at the proposed Riverfront Research Park in which the results, direct or indirect, would serve "to destroy human life or incapacitate human beings," was a wise one. The wording of the decision, even though it does not prohibit classified research, eliminates military or weapons research.

The decision appears to be a response to community dissent expressed against the park during a city council hearing Monday night. Many of those opposed to the park feared that it would become a haven for military research.

We hope that the committee decides to include the decision in its final recommendations, which are expected to be presented to University administration in about 10 days, and that the park, which could foster economic growth, will not be tainted by military research.

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.



IF WE'RE GOING TO HAVE PRAYER IN THE SCHOOLS, SOMEONE'S GOING TO HAVE TO SEE IT'S DONE RIGHT.

commentary

Science and technology should not serve weapons development

Some people, facing the overwhelming threat to humanity posed by weapons technology and by the massive applications of other technologies, such as pesticide spraying and nuclear power, before their long term effects are understood, feel that science is a criminal activity. They are right, but have rarely thought through what it is that is criminal, and in what sense.

Today more than half of the scientists, engineers and technicians of the world are working in some phase of weapons development. Most of the rest are working to enhance the profits of various corporations.

This is not because weapons and corporate profits are the most interesting things around, or the most socially useful, but because that is where the money lies. The scientific community has sold itself to the merchants of fear, greed and death. Even those of us not working in weapons development share in this guilt insofar as we tolerate this kind of work among our colleagues, and allow them a respected place in scientific associations, and in our society.

Selling oneself has traditionally been termed prostitution. Today's prostitution of science is far more immoral and damaging to society than is prostitution in the usual sense.

It puts into the hands of weak, flawed, all too human, individuals, and even into the hands of error prone computers, the power to exterminate humanity, and render our planet unfit for higher forms of life — a power and responsibility no one should have.

The most universal mark of criminal activity is secrecy, or, as we so euphemistically call it in more sophisticated circles, classification.

No scientist should even consider participating in any classified activity, whether governmental or private. Those who are doing such work should be shown no respect by their colleagues or anyone else.

As our power to change the world and to destroy ourselves increases, the necessity for conducting all major activities in a completely open and ethical manner becomes ever more critical, as does the need to restructure all authoritarian power structures that operate from the top down for the benefit of elite minorities.

Science, as now practiced, is the most criminal activity yet to manifest itself among people.

Human attitudes are the all important critical element in the world crisis we face today — our attitudes towards ourselves, towards others,

towards other living things and towards the world we live in. No technology can save a society riddled with pathological attitudes such as fear, hate, arrogance, selfishness, distrust, lack of concern for others and lack of good humor and patience. High technology will only insure a more prompt destruction of such a society.

A society with healthy attitudes can be a viable society and a satisfying society with or without high technology.

Science, guided by fear and selfishness, and directed largely toward personal, corporate, national, or racial aggrandizement, will certainly destroy us and foreclose forever the dream of a good life on earth.

Science, guided by love, patience, good will and concern for the well being of all peoples and all living things, by a sense of curiosity, adventure, wonder and excitement, and carried on in a completely free open manner, can liberate humanity from most of the woes which beset it. It can free the human mind and spirit for adventures and achievements now hardly dreamed of.

By Bayard McConnaughey

Bayard McConnaughey has been a biology professor at the University for the past 35 years.

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