

# Baccalaureate Services Stir Up Bitter Controversy

BY LOUIS CASSELS  
UPI Correspondent  
Should public high schools sponsor baccalaureate services?  
The question comes up every year at this time, and in some communities it leads to bitter controversy.  
The custom of holding a religious service for the high school graduating class is deeply entrenched in American tradition. Many Protestants and educators are anxious to retain it as one of the few remaining links between religion and public education. The viewpoint is expressed by the Rev. Ewart G. Watts,

pastor of the First Methodist church of Topeka, Kan. "I believe we should go right ahead having high school baccalaureate services as a great symbol of our religious heritage and faith," he said. "If there are those who conscientiously feel they cannot attend these services, let them stay home or attend services elsewhere. But for those of us who are willing to forget our theological differences and to join with others in this expression of faith in God, let us continue to give our young people this expression of our common faith in God."

On the other hand, there are many Catholics and Jews, and some Protestants, who feel that the baccalaureate service violates the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, creates community strife, and puts non-Protestant children on an embarrassing spot. Their viewpoint is expressed by Catholic Bishop Daniel J. Feeney of Portland, Me., who has forbidden Catholic pupils in Maine to participate in such services. "The format of these ceremonies is always that of New England Congregationalism," said Bishop Feeney. "The conscience of those who are not products of this tradition is thus violated in the name of non-sectarianism and even sometimes in the name of politeness and democracy."

**Issue Posed Sharply**  
The issue is posed most sharply when the baccalaureate service is held in a Protestant church — a situation that is not uncommon in communities where Protestants constitute a large majority of the population.

Catholic Archbishop William O. Brady of St. Paul, Minn., has stressed the significance of this point by saying that Catholic children may attend, and Catholic Clergy participate in, baccalaureate services only if they are "held in a purely public place." The committee on religion and public education of the National Council of Churches has also taken the position that baccalaureate services should always be held in public buildings, and that attendance should be strictly voluntary.

**Community Plan**  
This Protestant group acknowledged what many Catholic and Jewish parents have protested — that adolescent children have a tremendous urge toward social conformity, and it is painful for them to be "different" in staying away from a class service even though attendance is theoretically voluntary. Therefore, the committee suggested that it might be a better plan for "each church in the community to conduct religious exercises honoring its own graduates."

**GET RICH SWITCH**  
Fort Worth, Tex. — Mrs. Margaret Lucille Bunker, 24, testified Thursday that her husband, Jerry, wanted her to marry a millionaire and then divorce him so she and Bunker could live on the millionaire's money. Judge Fisher T. Denny granted her a divorce from Bunker.

**Newspaper 'Boy' Forgot a Customer**  
Newport, R.I. — Jim Coulter ended up with one spare newspaper after he took over his ailing son's paper route. The father retraced the entire route before he realized the paper was the one for his house.



**GRADUATION DAY**—It's graduation day at Barney Convalescent hospital in Dayton, Ohio. These three five-year-olds along with 24 other cerebral palsy victims received their diplomas for which they worked hard. They will attend Gorman School for Crippled Children next year.

## Reds Said Sending Weapons to Cuba

Pompano Beach, Fla. — The Pompano Beach Town News said in a copyright story Saturday night that Russian submarines have been seen landing Communists arms in Cuba for more than a year. The newspaper obtained its information from Ellis F. Rubin, a Miami and Fort Lauderdale trial lawyer who once investigated subversive activities in Florida as a special assistant attorney general. Rubin said his information came from a "crack undercover agent" of a friendly foreign power with whom he once worked. He said detailed accounts of the Red submarine landings and other arms shipments to Cuba have been in the hands of U.S. security agencies for some time.

## Baby-Sitter Sits With Bird-Sitter

Del Mar, Calif. — When a Del Mar woman goes out, she entrusts her parakeet to only one person, a teenage girl she hires to stay home with the bird. But the girl's mother won't allow her daughter to be out alone. And that's why a baby-sitter is hired to sit with the bird-sitter while she sits with the bird.

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