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Toward Religious Freedom

The Supreme Court decision last Monday that the daily recital of an official prayer in public schools is unconstitutional has started editorial typewriters (as it has this one) clicking across the land.

It was a landmark decision, easily the most significant to more people since the school desegregation opinion that it handed down several years ago.

And we would expect the emotional reaction to it to rival if not surpass the hue and cry that was raised following that earlier decision which gave legal sanction and impetus to the whole integration movement.

WE ARE sure, too, that with certain groups in the country this is going to seem yet another instance in which the court has grossly exceeded its vested authority.

As before, there have been congressional outcries, designed mainly for home consumption, that this or that ought to be amended so as to cut the court down to size.

Doubtless this will be construed as another decision reflecting the "liberal" tendencies of the judicial body, which have been under such heavy attack in recent months by groups calling, at the very least, for the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

But the nation is deeply fortunate that the court, in full knowledge and awareness of the violent reaction its ruling would cause, had the high courage, and the dedication to the philosophical and political principles upon which this nation was founded, to go ahead and make the right decision anyway.

THE ruling is least vulnerable to those rabble-rousers and fanatics who will scream that it violates the Constitution. Anyone who makes that statement is really in denial of a refresher course in American history, for the decision coincides perfectly with the original spirit and intent of the men who drafted and adopted that remarkable document.

They were acutely aware of dangers inherent in a state-enforced or state-supported religion. Several of the signers, particularly those from the New England states, had grandparents who had come to this country in the first place to escape religious suppression in England.

TWO of the men most closely associated with the writing of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, had struggled for years to insure the complete separation of church and state. They were almost single-handedly responsible for Virginia's Statute for Religious Liberty, and both regarded its adoption as among the major achievements of their lives. Jefferson even decreed that his tombstone be inscribed with the words: "Author of the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia."

There can be no question that the men who hopefully set their names to the Bill of Rights intended to guarantee forever that there should be religious toleration in this country.

IT WAS in that intent that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Constitution. It is a ruling, Justice Black, who wrote the majority opinion, said this: "By using its public school system to conduct religious exercises of the Regents' Prayer, the state of New York has adopted a practice wholly inconsistent with the establishment clause (of the First Amendment)."

That clause was clearly violated, Black wrote, because the prayer was "composed by government officials as part of a governmental program to further religious beliefs."

Justice Black correctly anticipated that the court's ruling would be misunderstood and attacked. He wrote:

"It is neither sacrilegious nor antireligious to say that each separate government in this country should stay out of the business of writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people themselves and to those the people choose to look to for religious guidance."

THAT it was such an innocuous, non-denominational prayer, seemingly incapable of conflicting with the beliefs of any Christian regardless of his church affiliation, has perhaps beclouded the central issue for some. It read:

"Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessing upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country."

Seems harmless, doesn't it? And on the face of it, doubtless the great majority of Americans would have no objection to having their children repeat it.

BUT that is not the point. Encroachments on freedoms usually begin in such an innocent, insipid way that any negative reaction appears to be totally unreasonable and ill-founded.

It is no strain on the imagination to speculate how over a period of time this 22-word prayer, if it had been allowed to stand by a less vigilant court, might have been, by the skillful use of pious pressure, expanded and amended over a period of time until suddenly a positive threat to religious freedom might exist.—G.H.B.

(Editor's note: A sampling of editorial opinion on the Supreme Court's school-prayer ruling appears elsewhere on this page today.)

"Leaving Religion To Private Initiative Is Un-American!"



Editors Eye Court's Decision on Prayer

Following are selected quotations from newspaper editorials regarding the recent Supreme Court decision banning an "official" prayer in a public school.

"Really, now. There are plenty of places and times to pray without doing it in school. Praying, we were taught, was something personal, something that had to be done in private or before a crowd." — Syracuse Community (Syracuse) Journal.

"The question before the Court was constitutional, not religious. For all that the Register-Guard thinks the intervention was unnecessary, it is still better that the court should have ruled in favor of the Constitution." — Oregonian.

"Every man has the constitutional right to believe and worship as he sees fit without undue influence or interference from the government or from any other person or group of persons." — Coast Star.

"The court was protecting something which should be held sacred in America. It is not that we are a religious nation, but that we are a nation of religious people. This is the religious freedom which we have inherited from our forefathers." — Oregonian.

"The Supreme Court... does not bar prayer as such in the public schools. It doesn't forbid the mention of God in the classroom. It merely says that no state government or any other branch of government can 'direct' the saying of any prayer. In fact, it bars 'official' prayers. It sees no objection to voluntary prayers, but does ban any religious 'exercise'." — David Lawrence in Oregon Journal.

"The doctrine of separation of church and state isn't INAUSPICIOUS DEBUT Bayonne, N.J.—(AP)—Francis J. Fitzpatrick may have stated his new term as mayor on the wrong foot. At his inaugural Sunday Fitzpatrick said rising expenses probably would mean an increase in taxes.

"Our country has attracted the most heterogeneous population on earth. Our beliefs in the field of religion are more varied than in any country. There are some 114 million participants in 270 different religious bodies. To those for whom religion is important, a non-sectarian prayer can only be a watered-down recitation that offends few but has no relevance." — Portland Reporter

Try and Stop Me

By BENNETT CERF

A DISTINGUISHED professor at Yale rented a new apartment in New Haven and the moving man had to lug fourteen cases of books up five flights of stairs. When the task was completed he mopped his brow and asked testily, "Hey, Prof, why didn't you read all these books before you moved?"

Mrs. Philip Long tells about the determined effort made by a minister to raise funds for a new chandelier in his country church. A deacon—richest self-made man in the tiny community—objected vociferously to this frivolous "squandering of resources." "Who needs a chandelier?" he thundered. "First, no one can spell it to order it. Second, no one can play it. And third, what we really need is more light."

A huge woman, wearing a violently red dress, with green shoes and orange gloves, lumbered into a clothes designer's boutique and asked what new ensemble he would recommend. "When the Lord created the butterfly and the humming bird, He gave them brilliant coloring. But when He made the elephant He made it gray." © 1962, by Bennett Cerf. Distributed by King Features Syndicate

Foreign News: Algerian Take-Over In Difficulty; Kennedy-De Gaulle; Berlin

By PHIL NEWSOM UPI Foreign News Analyst

Notes from the foreign news cables:

Algerian Takeover The nationalist exile government's takeover in Algeria may be less smooth than originally expected.

There already is a serious split between the Nationalist leaders in Tunis, with Mohammed Ben Bella leading a "hard line" revolt against Premier Ben Youssef Ben Khedda and the "moderates." Now that the independence referendum is out of the way, it also is not certain how things will go inside Algeria itself. It is not certain just how far the exile leaders will find they can control the mass of Moslems when they return to Algeria after seven years of absence.

Kennedy-De Gaulle There still is diplomatic talk of a Kennedy-De Gaulle meeting later this year. However, the French made it clear to Secretary of State Dean Rusk during his recent visit that De Gaulle is in no hurry for it.

Internal problems and the common market are likely to keep the French president preoccupied for some time, although he probably will visit West Germany toward the end of this year or early next year.

Berlin Talks It now looks almost a certainty that the Western foreign ministers will hold Berlin talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in Geneva in the second half of this month. There will be no formal negotiations. But the ministers will have informal exploratory talks on the lines

of their consultations in Geneva last March. Disarmament also will be discussed in a new effort to get nuclear test ban talks going again. Unless the ministers find some "gimmick" over Berlin, informed believe the "probe" may collapse.

Border Guards Communist border guards are expected to become more wary over shooting into West Berlin territory and setting off gunfights with West Berlin police. The strongly-worded protest by the three Western allies to Moscow over border clashes along the Communist-built Berlin wall and the proposal for a meeting of the four commandants in Berlin is believed to have brought Khrushchev orders to East German Red boss Walter Ulbricht to keep his anti-refugee bullets on his side of the wall.

Washington Report

By William S. White (c) United Feature Syndicate

COMMUNICATION NEEDED Washington—There is one—and only one—constant and certain factor in an otherwise fast-changing and highly fluid national political and economic situation.

This is that the gulf between the Kennedy Administration and the business community is widening rather than narrowing.

The efforts of President Kennedy personally to reassure business are showing no signs of real success. The attempts of many business leaders to ease matters on their side by privately urging a less skeptical attitude toward the President among their own associates are likewise having little visible effect.

The conclusion of this observer, therefore, is that no matter how great may be the issues as between businessmen and the President, an even greater factor of difficulty lies in the lack of a truly effective channel of communication between them and him.

Of course, there are various official devices through which business is supposed to talk to the President and he to business—through formal advisory councils and so on. But the fact is that nearly all of the talking now going on in this way is more a matter of public relations than of down-to-earth and purposeful conversation.

Those who might be called the working business people—the actual managers of plants and mills and transportation—feel that their points of view are nowhere getting through to the President.

Rightly or wrongly, they are not merely doubtful of the practical capacity of some of "the men around the President." They are also convinced, again rightly or wrongly, that these "men around the President" are not in any event prepared to listen to them with sympathy or understanding.

THIS is the central present problem—and it cannot be solved by public addresses by the President or by the adoption of resolutions in business conventions. Nearly everybody would agree that if progressive estrangement between the government and business is to no sensible person's gain and poses a threat to an American economy which every sensible person wants to see go up and not down.

This being the case, what is to be done? To this columnist, it seems that the first necessity is to find a means through which the President personally can learn what is really troubling business and through which men down in the active cockpit of business life can learn at first hand what they can expect and not expect from the President.

This sort of thing will never be done through formal meetings at which both sides

speaking in large generalities and issue statements to the press to score points against each other. It can only be done in privacy, where neither side feels any necessity to go out to justify itself to the country.

WHY cannot the President invite one or two business people at a time to a purely private lunch or dinner, both sides forgetting all about the formality and publicity and talking cold turkey in the advance assurance that it all is off the record and that the exchange of information, and not propaganda, is the sole purpose?

It would be naive in the extreme to suggest that such exchanges would make business simply wild about the President and vice versa. But it seems a perfectly reasonable forecast that they could clear away some misunderstandings and at least leave each side fully aware of just where the other really stood and why. Even this much would be a gain.

For while major differences are going to persist between the President and business, there is no need to add to these a good many wholly unnecessary and pointless divisions which, upon head-on examination by the parties involved, would be shown to be simply nonsense.

"The Supreme Court has made its judgment, and a good many people obviously will disagree with it. Others will agree with it. But I think it is important for us, if we are going to maintain our constitutional principle, that we support the Supreme Court decisions even when we may not agree with them."

"In addition, we have in this case a very easy remedy, and that is to PRAY OURSELVES, and I would think it would be a welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home and attend our churches with a good deal more fidelity, and we can make the true meaning of prayer much more important to the lives of all of our children. That power is very much open to us."

"I would hope that as a result of this decision all American parents will intensify their efforts at home and the rest of us will support the Constitution and the responsibility of the Supreme Court in interpreting it, which is theirs, and given to them by the Supreme Court—by the Constitution."

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IT DOES NOT, as the President pointed out at his news conference last week, prohibit private prayer. It prohibits no parent from praying each morning that his child may throughout the school day conduct himself or herself in such manner as to gain the utmost in the way of learning, sound moral conduct and good citizenship.

It prohibits no child from bowing his head and offering a little prayer that during the day it may so conduct itself as to gain the most from the day's work. It prohibits no parent or no child from attending any church or adhering to any faith.

That's the long and the short of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

PRESIDENT Kennedy's comment on the Supreme Court decision is wise, sound and tolerant. If those of us who call ourselves conservatives have any comment to make on what he had to say to his news conference questioner, it would go something like this:

We wish his views on public finance and public spending were as sound and wise as his views on the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

Strictly Personal

By Sydney J. Haavis (c) Field Enterprises Inc.

ONE major reason for both the relative and the absolute growth of crime in America during the last few decades is rarely considered by any of the critics of the police departments and law-enforcing agencies.

Just as we expect the school system to take over many of the jobs that we, as parents, should be doing for our children, so in the same way do we expect the police system to take over many of the jobs that we, as citizens, should be doing for our community.

In their new book, "Man, Crime and Society," the authors point out in conclusion that "the time and energies of the police, which should be reserved for law-enforcement activities, become hopelessly caught up in a wider variety of activities which are not, strictly speaking, of a police nature."

Recent survey data show that "while police are engaged in the inspection of buildings, services and utilities, attendance at parades, operation of boys' clubs, traffic control (including giving drivers' tests, inspecting motor vehicles, lecturing on safety at schools, and so on), conducting lost-and-found departments, etc., less than one-half of the allotted manpower hours available in a police department may be devoted exclusively to law-enforcement activities."

In one Mid-western city of 100,000, the authors found, it was estimated by the Chief of Police that as much as 50 per cent of the time and energy of his department was devoted to the performance of activities unrelated to law enforcement.

A few American cities, for instance, have begun to hire Meter Maids to check parking violations at meters; but in most communities the police are used for this trivial task. Some forces still use policemen as secretaries and stenographers, as ushers and glorified floor-walkers, as window-dressing and "image making" for public occasions.

Many, if not most, of the functions arrogated to the police department "properly belong to society as a whole, especially such agencies as the family, the school, the church, and various character-building institutions," the authors remark.

By our default as citizens, and by the abdication of our traditional responsibilities, we not only expect too much of the police department—we also, quite dangerously, invest too much power in it.

Given the dubious quality of men who are attracted to police work in America, given the inadequacies of recruiting and training; given the low pay-scale and exposure to danger; given the political interference and public apathy—given all these it is surprising that the crime figures are not even higher than their present rate.

Communications

Letters to the Editor must bear the name and address of the writer, although under certain circumstances the use of a pen name or initial for publication is permissible. The Mail Tribune reserves the right to edit all letters with an eye to clarification and condensation. Letters submitted for publication must not exceed 400 words.

A Plea To the Editor: Failure is a quality we hate to admit is part of our life, personality, but we'd rather tell others of our success than failure.

Since my parents died, it seems that failure has been a prominent chapter in my life. Most of my relatives think I am a hopeless case, so I stay away from them and gradually cease to keep in touch. Strangers have their own friends, so I'm a sort of third party. That doesn't mean I don't have friends or can't make any. In a place you're not well acquainted with, people generally judge you by your actions rather than words.

So I put this in writing as a sort of last-ditch stand. If the Salvation Army can raise money for their benefits, I should be assured of a steady job in this area. If I go broke here, I can go to Camp White as a veteran. But I've been there twice and last worked at Sawtelle Center, Los Angeles. That was over two months ago and I'm anxious to get to work.

I can prove to anyone who knows me I'm reliable and don't drink, so why can't some employer hire me as a general office clerk which I'm qualified? A classified ad in this paper failed with any results, but this article must not.

Franklin H. Oakes 14 South Bartlett St. Medford.

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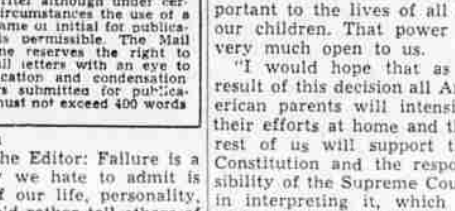
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