



VOICE OF REASON

Spring 1983

No. 8

VOR Scores Voucher Parochial Plan

The Reagan administration's educational voucher plan is unconstitutional and unsound public policy, according to testimony by Voice of Reason executive director Edd Doerr to the House Education and Labor Committee on April 6. The administration proposal, a supplement to its tuition tax credit plan for federal aid to nonpublic schools serving more affluent families, would use a voucher plan to divert a portion of existing federal aid for disadvantaged children to parochial and private schools. Under the Reagan plan, vouchers worth about \$500 would supposedly allow eligible disadvantaged students to attend a local public school, a parochial or private school, or a public school outside the student's school district or attendance area.

Doerr's statement sketched the history of attempts to gain acceptance for voucher plans. Massive efforts by the Nixon and Ford administrations to induce local school districts to experiment with a voucher plan, to include parochial and private schools, were a complete failure. Only the Alum Rock District, in San Jose, California, agreed to the experiment and even then insisted on confining the program to public schools. Subsequent efforts to initiate a voucher amendment to the California constitution failed when the plan's backers could not get enough support from nonpublic school patrons, who evidently feared that acceptance of tax dollars would lead to public controls. A voucher amendment was put on the ballot in Michigan in 1978 by petition, but was defeated at the polls 74% to 26%.

VOR's statement to the House committee said that the voucher plan could not get around the Supreme Court rulings holding that even aid to nonpublic education routed through students' families is unconstitutional, in that it would have the impermissible effect of advancing religion and creating an excessive entanglement between religion and government.

VOR also pointed out that the plan

would aid schools which practice religious, academic, gender, and other forms of discrimination in student admissions and faculty hiring that are not allowed in public schools; that it would reduce public control over public spending, since it would channel public funds to schools not under any meaningful public control; that it would ultimately reduce federal aid to needy public schools.

Doerr told the committee that the administration plan "is unlikely to benefit very many of the children it is supposed to aid." It would not guarantee any disadvantaged child a place in a parochial or private school, fewer than 4% of which ever provide programs for handicapped children. Doerr added that a \$500 voucher would rarely cover the cost of tuition in or transportation to a nonpublic school or out-of-district public school.

The administration plan was also criticized sharply in testimony presented by the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the

National Coalition for Public Education, a coalition of more than 50 educational, religious, labor, and civic organizations, including VOR, with an aggregate membership of over 50 million.

The NEA declared that the voucher plan would further weaken and jeopardize proven successful federal programs for poor children that are already suffering from inadequate funding, and would result in further racial, economic, and social isolation for the nation's poorest children. The National Coalition for Public Education pointed out that the voucher plan would create an "administrative nightmare," undermine school integration, and be unconstitutional. The NAACP noted that the plan would not provide adequate protection against racial discrimination.

Secretary of Education Terrell H. Bell testified for the administration, but got little sympathy from the committee members present. Bell was unable to show that the voucher plan had any noticeable support outside the White House. The plan's prospects are much dimmer than those of the tuition tax credit proposal which the administration is also promoting.

Tax Credit Parochial Battle Heats Up

President Reagan, halted last year in his plan to provide massive federal aid to parochial and private schools, has had his tuition tax credit (TTC) parochial bill reintroduced in Congress this session—S. 528 in the Senate, H.R. 1730 in the House of Representatives. Sponsors of the Senate version are Senators Dole, Moynihan, D'Amato, Packwood, and Roth.

The so-called Educational Opportunity and Equity Act of 1983 would provide federal aid to nonpublic schools in the form of reimbursements for 50% of tuition, through federal income tax credits, up to a maximum benefit of \$300 per student—down from \$500 in last year's

bill to try to gain support for the bill from budget-conscious congressmen. In an effort to offset criticism that TTCs would favor the more affluent, the Reagan bill would cut off benefits to families with incomes over \$60,000, though this would do very little to alter the basic inequity of the plan.

In March, White House chief of staff Ed Meese met with representatives of groups supporting the bill, Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Council of American Private Education, the Knights of Columbus, Agudath Israel (Orthodox Jewish), and the radical right group Citizens for Education Freedom. In

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Supreme Court Hears Parochial Case

Minnesota's tuition tax deduction parochial law had its day before the Supreme Court on April 18. The plan, first enacted in 1955, has since 1976 provided state income tax deductions, \$500 for elementary and \$700 for secondary students, for school tuition, transportation, and textbooks.

The ACLU-sponsored suit, *Mueller v. Allen*, charges that the tax deduction parochial plan is constitutionally indistinguishable from the tuition tax credit plans already ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The state argues that the deductions are more akin to the income tax deductions allowed for religious contributions, and that public as well as private students benefit from the plan. ACLU lawyer William I. Kampf, however, told the Court that very little benefit goes to public school families, and that public school expenses, what few there might be, were added to the program to give it the appearance of constitutionality and equity. Kampf also argued that parochial school expense deductions differ from charitable deductions in that they are for services rendered and not for disinterested donations.

More than 60 educational, religious, parents, and civic organizations, including VOR, supported the ACLU case in an *amicus curiae* brief by attorneys Nathan Dershowitz and Robert Chanin. The brief points out that the deductions cannot be viewed as a public benefit "neutrally available to all," but as "a charge made upon the state for the purpose of religious education" and therefore unconstitutional, as the Supreme Court held in the 1973 *Nyquist* tax credit ruling.

The Supreme Court ruling, expected in June, will affect the course of the Reagan administration's tax credit plan in Congress.



Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC) and Rep. Tim Wirth (D-CO) accept petitions against tuition tax credits from Grace Baisinger, chairperson of the National Coalition for Public Education. (NEA photo)

Tax Credit Parochial, continued from page 1

April President Reagan addressed the National Catholic Educational Association conference and assured the parochial educators of his commitment to passage of federal aid for parochial schools.

The widespread opposition to the Reagan TTC plan—nearly all polls show that a strong majority of Americans oppose it—is being coordinated by the National Coalition for Public Education, which includes more than 50 educational, parents, religious, labor, and civic groups, including VOR. Opponents of the plan point out that it has already been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court (TTC backers urge Congress to pass the bill so that, as they put it, the Supreme Court will have a chance to reverse its earlier rulings), would divert badly needed financial support from public schools (the plan's first three years would cost over \$2.5

billion, while the administration is seeking to cut \$2 billion from public education programs in Fiscal Year 1984 alone), would benefit only a tenth of the total school population, and would aid schools which practice discrimination in admissions and hiring on the basis of religion, race, sex, social class, handicaps, ability level, and conduct. They add that only 3% of parochial and private schools provide vocational education or programs for the handicapped.

No hearings for this year's TTC bills have been scheduled yet.

Meanwhile, at a news conference on March 2 in the Russell Senate Office Building, representatives of the National Coalition for Public Education presented petitions against the TTC plan to Congress. Senator Ernest F. Hollings and Representative Tim Wirth accepted the petitions and made statements critical of the TTC plan. (In proportion to its size, VOR and its members gathered more petition signatures than any other group.)

In other action, President Reagan's Advisory Panel on Financing Elementary and Secondary Education, headed by radical right activist Connaught Coyne Marshner, has recommended both TTCs and vouchers. Even though the panel was stacked to favor the radical right point of view, 5 of its 12 members dissented from the recommendations and complained that the report of the panel was made without "any effort to get a balanced perspective."

The Voice of Reason Newsletter

The Voice of Reason Newsletter is published quarterly by The Voice of Reason, P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20906. (Telephone: 301-598-2447) The newsletter is sent to all contributors of basic membership dues to The Voice of Reason.

Editor: Edd Doerr

The Voice of Reason is a nonprofit public interest educational organization dedicated to preserving the American tradition of religious, intellectual, and personal freedom in a secular democratic state. Membership is open to all who share that purpose. Annual dues are \$15 for individuals, \$20 for families, \$5 for students.

President: Lynn Silverberg-Master; Vice-President: Donald Field; Treasurer: Stephen Fenichell; Secretary: Bruce Southworth. Executive Committee includes above officers and Edward L. Ericson, Sol Gordon, Sherwin T. Wine.

Executive Director: Edd Doerr

First Experiments on Our Liberties

The National Commission on Excellence in Education came out on April 26 with recommendations that public education be improved by stiffening requirements for high school graduation and college admission, extending the school day and year, requiring more study of English, math, science and foreign languages, and increasing public spending

for education. President Reagan's response to the recommendations: "We'll continue to work . . . for passage of tuition tax credits, vouchers, educational savings accounts, voluntary school prayer and abolishing the Department of Education."

In March Mr. Reagan addressed a conference of the National Association of Evangelicals. He reasserted his interest in

amending the Constitution to outlaw abortion and install government sponsored prayer in public schools. He tried to paint the First Amendment wall of separation between church and state as a "wall of hostility." He urged prayers for those "who live in totalitarian darkness" not that they achieve freedom but that they "discover the joy of knowing God," perhaps on the theory that "knowing God" will make life in "totalitarian darkness" more tolerable. He simplistically divided the world into black and white, believers and nonbelievers. He declared his interest in protecting the handicapped, while not mentioning his administration's slashing of benefits to the handicapped or his advocacy of federal aid to private schools which rarely provide for the handicapped. He said nothing to his fundamentalist audience about the real problems of poverty, environmental deterioration, civil liberties, social justice, or human rights in foreign policy.

In February, following passage of a congressional resolution requesting him to do so, Mr. Reagan proclaimed 1983 a national "Year of the Bible." While Congresses and presidents have in the past proclaimed National Bible Weeks, this year's proclamation has a decidedly fundamentalist cast, one out of sync with the views of many millions of Americans of various faiths. The Bible is called "the word of God," and "Biblical inspired concepts" are said to be contained in the Constitution. The proclamation speaks of "our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scripture." Only one Washington columnist, Jim Castelli, bothered to trace the Year of the Bible proclamation to fundamentalist Bill ("I Found It") Bright, head of Campus Crusade for Christ and active advocate of using public schools for fundamentalist proselytizing.

Although politicians in the past have found that tossing a few rhetorical bones to ultraconservative sectarians might have useful political payoffs, no president has ever plunged as recklessly or as deeply into the waters of theocracy as Ronald Reagan. A little of this may be shrugged off as politics as usual, but this administration's enthusiastic promotion of school prayer amendments, tuition tax credit and voucher plans for federal aid to sectarian private schools, and constitutional amendments and legislation to impose a particular "theology of fetal personhood" on all by law, plus its assiduous cultivation of fundamentalist extremists have gone much too far.

This administration has dragged religion

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VOR in Action

Texas VOR president Steven Schafersman, who is also president of the Texas Council for Science Education, has been deeply involved in efforts to break the Radical Right stranglehold on textbook selection in the state. A coalition effort led by People for the American Way won a significant victory in February when the state board of education voted to give proponents of particular textbooks an equal voice in commenting on which books are adopted for use in the state's public schools. Previously only book critics, usually ultraconservative and fundamentalist, had been allowed to comment on particular texts.

Schafersman is also involved in trying to get the state board of education to rescind its anti-evolution rule. A hearing on the rescission request has been scheduled for May 12.

Michigan VOR chapters in Jackson, Kalamazoo, and the Detroit area have been active in the creationism/evolution, reproductive rights, and other civil liberties controversies. The Jackson chapter in particular has focused attention on a creationism oriented course for seniors taught at a high school in Parma.

The Oakland County, MI, VOR chapter's January meeting featured an address by State Sen. Jack Faxon on Michigan Act 455, a new law to protect public schools and libraries from censorship. In March VOR and the Birmingham Temple cosponsored three consecutive Monday night programs on "The Constitution and You: Getting Ready for the Bicentennial Decade." Featured speakers were Detroit College of Law constitutional law professor Harold Norris, Michigan ACLU director Howard Simon, and VOR co-founder Sherwin Wine.

Kalamazoo VOR chapter president Dan Crampton had an op-ed article in the *Kalamazoo Gazette* in April on Ku Klux Klan and Nazi efforts to censor local libraries.

The Washtenaw County, MI (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan) VOR chapter

sponsored three forums in March on "The Politics of Sexuality," "Censorship," and "Threats to the Constitution." The chapter also got media attention for its listing of the ten most censored books in the U.S., which included books by John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, and Kurt Vonnegut.

VOR executive director Edd Doerr spoke on "Threats to Separation of Church and state" at the January 29 Bill of Rights Lobby Conference sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, Virginia, and the National Capital Area. In February Doerr spoke at meetings sponsored by the Kalamazoo, Jackson, and Oakland County, MI, VOR chapters. The tour also included nine radio and TV and newspaper interviews arranged by the three Michigan chapters. He also delivered a major address at the annual conference of the John Dewey Society in Detroit. Between January and April Doerr spoke at Unitarian Universalist and Ethical Society services in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Indiana. In March he testified at Maryland Senate and House hearings on a resolution to withdraw the state's 1975 resolution calling for a national constitutional convention.

In February VOR executive director Edd Doerr urged President Reagan to "cast your lot with the defenders of constitutional freedoms and not with the radicals who would repeal piecemeal the Bill of Rights." The VOR letter spelled out the reasons why the President should back away from his positions on tuition tax credits and on school prayer and anti-abortion constitutional amendments.

The Voice of Reason executive committee met in New York on March 14. Planned for October in Washington is a conference on moral values in public education (details in the next newsletter). The committee also began planning activities to use the upcoming bicentennials of the Constitution and Bill of Rights to stimulate public interest in defending civil liberties.

School Prayer, *continued*

In March the Tennessee legislature passed a bill to require the public school day to begin with a minute of silence. The new law replaces one ruled unconstitutional by a federal court last year which specified that the minute of silence was to be used for "meditation, prayer, or silent reflection."

New Jersey's 1982 minute of silence law was enjoined in January and was being tried on its merits as we went to press. The state law is being challenged by the ACLU, the New Jersey Council of Churches, the New Jersey Education Association, and the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Other developments: The Supreme Court has declined to review lower court rulings upholding the dismissal of Warren County, Pa., teacher Lloyd Fink, who had refused to heed school officials' warnings

that he stop reciting prayers and reading from the Bible to his students daily.

The Gideon Society has agreed to stop distributing Bibles in Illinois public schools after David A. Thompson, legal adviser to the State Board of Education, declared the practice unconstitutional.

Weekly Bible classes in Reidsville, N.C., public elementary schools were halted in February after 60 years. Following a threat to take the matter to court, the school board dropped the in-school classes in favor of classes taught in private buses off campus.

Virginia ACLU is in federal district court challenging the conducting of religion classes in public schools in Bristol, in violation of the Supreme Court's 1948 *McCullum* ruling. Eight other Virginia districts have ended the religious programs on school property during the past year in response to ACLU protests.

Anti-Abortion Amendment Moves

Although a constitutional amendment to directly outlaw abortion has no chance in Congress this year, a deceptive indirect amendment might. In fact, such a deceptive amendment, Sen. Orrin Hatch's S.J. Res. 3, was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on April 19. Action by the full Senate is expected by the end of June.

The "Repeal Roe" amendment was defeated on a 9-9 tie vote, but at the suggestion of Sens. Thurmond and Biden it was sent to the floor without recommendation, apparently to help Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker keep his promise to get an amendment to the floor. Voting for the amendment were Sens. Thurmond, Laxalt, Hatch, Dole, East, Grassley, Denton, DeConcini, and Heflin. Voting against were Mathias, Simpson, Specter, Biden, Kennedy, Byrd, Metzenbaum, Leahy, and Baucus.

The Hatch amendment is deceptively simple: "The right to abortion is not secured by this Constitution." While it would not directly outlaw abortion, it would, if passed by Congress and three fourths of the states, overturn the constitutional privacy right to abortion recognized by the Supreme Court in its landmark 1973 ruling, *Roe v. Wade*. Then it would allow Congress, state legislatures, and local government to outlaw or severely restrict abortion. Instead of taking abortion out of politics, the amendment

would insure endless controversy over abortion in Congress and state legislatures, and in every legislative election as well.

In other action, Rep. Henry Hyde and Sen. Roger Jepsen have introduced in both houses their so-called Respect Human Life Act, H.R. 618 and S. 467, which would permanently prohibit use of federal Medicaid funds for abortions, ban abortion coverage by federal employee health insurance plans, and bar federal funding of research on abortion and foreign population control programs promoting abortions. Hyde has filed a discharge petition to try to bypass committee consideration of H.R. 618 by the four committees to which it was assigned. If he gets 218 representatives' signatures on the petition, the bill is sent to the floor for immediate action.

On February 23 a Minnesota federal court ruled unconstitutional the state law prohibiting the advertising of abortion services. The ACLU suit had challenged the law after Northwestern Bell Telephone cited the law in excluding ads for the Meadowbrook Women's Clinic from its Yellow Pages.

The Arizona House of Representatives has defeated a resolution to have Congress call a national constitutional convention to amend the Constitution to outlaw abortion. Nineteen states have passed the resolution in recent years. If 34 states do so, Congress is required to call a Con-Con (see Winter 1983 *VOR Newsletter*).

Resources

Register Citizen Opinion, A Congressional Directory and Action Guide (1983) is a useful tool for the citizen who wants to influence public affairs. The 36-page booklet contains a directory of members of Congress (listing religious affiliation and committee assignments), a directory of committees and their members, and information on how to communicate with members of Congress. Available from VOR, P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20910, for \$1 to cover costs and mailing.

Texas VOR president Steven Schafersman recommends three new books on the creationism/evolution controversy: *Science on Trial*, by Douglas Futuyma (Pantheon Books, Random House, 400 Hahn Rd., Westminster, MD 21157, \$6.95); *The Creation Controversy, Science or Scripture in the Schools*, by Dorothy Nelkin (W.W. Norton & Co., 500 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10110, \$16.95); *Scientists Confront Creationism*, by Laurie Godfrey, Stephen Brush (both VOR Advisory Board members), and others (W.W. Norton, 500 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. \$19.50).

An audio cassette of Dr. Sol Gordon's address to the Oakland County, MI, VOR chapter last October, "Sex Education vs. the New Right," may be ordered from VOR, P.O. Box 16, Franklin, MI 48025, for \$10 (postage and handling included). Gordon, a member of VOR's national executive committee, is Professor of Child and Family Studies at Syracuse University and director of the Institute for Family Research and Education.

The Journal of Church and State is an excellent scholarly journal indispensable to serious students of church-state and religious liberty. It is edited by Dr. James E. Wood, Jr., a member of the VOR board. Annual subscriptions are available for \$10 (Box 380, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76768). Also useful is the *Interchange Report*, published by the Interchange Resource Center, an information clearinghouse on the Radical Right. Annual subscription is \$20 (Interchange, 1201 16th St., N.W., Suite 405, Washington, D.C. 20036).

American Freedom and the Radical Right, by VOR co-founder Edward L. Ericson, is still available from VOR, P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20906, for \$4.95 plus \$1 for postage and handling.

School Prayer Issue Heats Up

Religion in public schools controversies are threatening to crowd the abortion and parochial issues from center stage. Sen. Jesse Helms has reintroduced his bills (S. 784 and S. 785) to allow government sponsored or mandated group prayer in public schools by the device of denying the Supreme Court and lower federal courts jurisdiction over school prayer controversies (court stripping). Helms failed to get his plan attached as a rider to other legislation last fall, thanks largely to a filibuster by Sen. Lowell Weicker.

But more serious threats have loomed up. President Reagan's proposed school prayer amendment has been introduced in the Senate as S.J. Res. 73 by Sen. Strom Thurmond. It would provide that "Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer." Since individual private prayer in schools has never been outlawed, the amendment is clearly intended to authorize government sponsored or mandated group prayer, the sort the Supreme Court banned twenty years ago and the sort opposed by most mainstream religious bodies. Hearings in the Senate on the

Reagan amendment were scheduled for late April and early May.

Scheduled for Senate hearings in late April and sometime in June are bills introduced by Sens. Mark Hatfield and Jeremiah Denton in response to the Supreme Court's refusal on January 17 to review the federal appeals court ruling in *Lubbock Civil Liberties Union v. Lubbock Independent School District*. The lower court had ruled against the school board policy of allowing student religious groups to meet in school facilities before or after class hours.

The Hatfield and Denton bills, S. 815 and S. 425, respectively, are intended to overturn the Lubbock ruling. Hatfield's bill, the more moderate of the two, would allow plaintiffs to go to federal court to challenge a public secondary school's refusal to allow religious groups to meet. Denton's bill would apply to elementary as well as secondary schools and to teachers as well as students. Both bills are called "equal access" measures.

While religion may be discussed academically in class and while students are quite free to discuss religion or even pray together as freely as they may discuss anything else, special problems arise with "equal access" proposals. Many school districts do not allow any student initiated

meetings without some form of faculty supervision, and it is that minimal faculty supervision which could give rise to the reality or appearance of school or government sponsorship of religious activity or entanglement with religion, which the Supreme Court has said may be unconstitutional. Neither bill speaks to the problem of proselytizing in the school or the bringing in of clergy or trained missionaries by student group leaders.

Although the Hatfield bill is certainly preferable to the Denton bill, many civil liberties experts and educators believe that no legislation is needed to allow school districts to work out constitutionally acceptable ways for students to exercise free speech with regard to religion. The danger with "equal access" legislation by Congress is that it could open the way for serious sectarian intrusions into public schools and for community-splitting controversies over religion.

While the prayer battle heats up in Congress, federal courts have been busy with the issue elsewhere. The hottest case is *Jaffree v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile*, a parent's challenge to teacher led prayer in Alabama. Although federal district judge W. Brevard Hand originally ruled the state law authorizing the practice unconstitutional in August 1982 and issued an injunction against it, he reversed himself in January 1982 in a 66-page ruling which claimed that the Supreme Court's 1962 and 1963 school prayer rulings were decided incorrectly, that the First Amendment was not intended to bar government sponsored prayer, and that the Fourteenth Amendment, in any event, does not apply the First Amendment's establishment clause to state and local government. In February Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell stayed Judge Hand's January ruling and reinstated his earlier injunction, pending action in an appeal of the case to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

New Mexico's minute of silence law was ruled unconstitutional by a federal district court in February in *Duffy v. Las Cruces Public Schools*. The court rejected the schools' claims that the moment of silence was intended for "discipline" and nurturing "intellectual composure," and that it had produced "startling and dramatic educational benefits." Judge Juan G. Burciaga held that, "If the public perceives the state to have approved a daily devotional exercise in public school classes, the effect of such action is the advancement of religion."

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VOR Cosponsors Madison Conference

"Religion in American Politics" was the subject of a conference held in Washington on March 16, James Madison's birthday anniversary. Sponsored by *Free Inquiry* magazine and cosponsored by Voice of Reason and other groups, the conference featured addresses by Sens. Lowell Weicker, Jr., and Sam Ervin, Jr., *Free Inquiry* editor Paul Kurtz, historian Henry Steele Commager, Madison Papers editor Robert Rutland, historians Daniel J. Boorstin and Richard Morris, constitutional law expert Leo Pfeffer, biblical archeologist Gerald Larue, and theologians Robert Alley and James M. Robinson.

The speakers essentially agreed on the importance of the uniquely American principle of separation of church and state, and on the wisdom of Madison, Jefferson, and the other founders in placing that principle in the Constitution. They concurred with Sen. Weicker's conclusion that, "With



Sen. Lowell Weicker: "With church-state separation we are sheltered from the winds of intolerance."

[church-state separation] we are sheltered from the winds of intolerance. Without it our nation could hardly stand as it does today, a haven where people of all religions can live together in peace."

The conference papers will be published in the Summer 1983 issue of *Free Inquiry* (Box 5, Central Park Station, Buffalo, N.Y. 14215), \$3.50 plus \$1 for postage and handling).

News Briefs

• Within four weeks in April and May, three top Reagan administration officials trooped down to Lynchburg, Va., to visit Jerry Falwell's Liberty Baptist College—Vice-President George Bush, Interior Secretary James Watt, and Education Secretary Terrell Bell. Moral Majority PR honcho Cal Thomas described the visits as "personal." Spokesmen for the three officials also said the visits were not political but reflected the officials' "positive opinions" toward Falwell and his college.

• Jerry Falwell's Old-Time Gospel Hour and Moral Majority took in \$63.67 million in fiscal 1982, a decline of \$5.86 million from 1981. The drop was due to a single \$9.4 million bequest the right wing group received in 1981. Moral Majority itself took in \$6.69 million, an increase of 5.4% over 1981. The figures come from audits by the Washington accounting firm of Alexander Grant & Co.

• A ruling should be rendered shortly in Jerry Falwell's Old-Time Gospel Hour's lawsuit to avoid local taxes on 55 properties in Lynchburg, Va. City attorneys say the properties do not qualify for tax exemption, especially those properties which provide income. Meanwhile, Falwell's group conceded in late April that it should pay taxes on 33 of the properties.

• The Supreme Court agreed in April to decide whether government-sponsored nativity scenes violate the First Amendment. Lower federal courts had ruled that such sponsorship, in a Pawtucket, R.I., ACLU-sponsored suit, *Lynch v. Donnelly*, amounted to government endorsement of a particular religion, in violation of the First Amendment.

• Having been burned trying to censor books out of libraries, Moral Majority has now announced a campaign to make sure that libraries have right wing and fundamentalist books, such as a biography of Phyllis Schlafly, Schlafly's own *The Power of the Positive Woman*, Falwell's Moral Majority reports, and Francis Schaeffer's book attacking humanism, *A Christian Manifesto*. Records of Virginia's libraries indicate that they already have 36 of the 38 hardbacks on Falwell's list.

• A new survey by the *New York Times* has found that 81% of Americans surveyed say they would be willing to pay higher taxes to improve public education. The poll also showed that 36% of respondents said that the schools are better than when they went to school, while another 36% said they are worse.

First Experiments on Our Liberties, *continued*

into politics and politics into religion to an unprecedented degree, something the Founding Fathers sought to prevent by separating church and state in the federal and state constitutions. This administration has contaminated the political waters with the poison of sectarianism, which can only damage the political process itself and the President's party and, very possibly, the constitutional protections of all religious liberty.

Mr. Reagan's predecessor, Jimmy Carter, was clearly a more religious man and a more religiously informed man. He understood and appreciated that religious liberty and church-state separation are essential to the preservation of all Americans' freedoms. Would that Mr. Reagan would learn at least that much from the man from Plains.

President Reagan and all the rest of us need to be reminded of Madison's warning that, "The same authority which can establish Christianity, to the exclusion of all other religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christianity." We must all join with Madison in "taking alarm at the first experiment on our liberties."

What to Do

Supporters of church-state separation and religious, intellectual, and personal freedom can help preserve our basic liberties in the following ways:

Renew your dues and/or make a special contribution to Voice of Reason to help us expand our operations.

Write your senator, representative, or state legislators on pending legislation. Be courteous, brief, and stick to one topic per communication.

Write letters to editors in response to news items, editorials, or columns. Again, be brief, courteous, and stick to one subject. Or send VOR the item and we will write a response.

Contact VOR's speakers bureau about getting an expert speaker for your church, synagogue, university, club, or other group.

Send us clippings of news items, editorials, columns, cartoons, etc., on our areas of interest. Indicate source and date on each clipping.

Censorship/Creationism

Thousands of People for the American Way members have signed petitions protesting the pre-censorship of the word "evolution" from the biology textbook *Experiences in Biology*, published by Doubleday Publishing Co.'s textbook division, Laidlaw Brothers. Protests of Doubleday's deletion of all mention of evolution from its only high school biology text may be sent to Robert Laidlaw at Laidlaw Brothers, 8020 Madison, River Forest, IL 60305, with a copy to Nelson Doubleday, Doubleday Publishing Co., 245 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10167.

THE VOICE OF REASON

P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20906

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