S. to the NEWS

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\"hen **public** schools become intolerable because of crime, drugs, immorality, teenage pregnancies, VD, failure to teach moral values, lack of discipline,or failure to teach basic skills such as reading and writing, the rich and the well-to-do have an alternative. They just take their children out of public schools and put them in private schools. They can afford to assume the double financial burden of paying school taxes for public schools plus tuition payments for private schools.

The poor, the minorities, and the middle-class pupils are trapped. Their parents have no alternative because they cannot afford the financial penalty of paying for schooling twice.

Senator James Buckley and Congressman James Delaney developed a plan to establish the e,onomic right of parents to send their children to the school of their choice, without tax discrimination. It was a plan to grant an lncome tax deduction of up to Sl,000 a year for each child's tuition paid to any school.

When Senator Buckley proposed this as an amendment to the Tax Il.eform Act of 1976, the Senate rejected it, choosing instead a substitute version which would allow a tax credit for college tuition only, but not for elementary and secondary school tuition.

This so-called compromise was a cheat on the American public because it limited the benefit to a favored few instead of making it available to all. It would make the discrimination against parents who send their children to private grade and high schools even more

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intolerable than it is now.

It was particularly disappointing to note that some of the Senate's most prominent conservatives voted 'no' on the Buckley Amendment. No wonder conservatives sometimes get the reputation of having no compassion for the little fellow!

While some parents are transferring their children to private schools in order to give them religious and moral training, a group of parents in St. Louis County has chosen to keep their children in public schools and fight a court battle to eliminate the anti-religious atmosphere there. Those parents are suing 23 school districts for allegedly teaching a religion called "secular humanism" that denies the existence of God.

Many people believe that secular humanism is the religion of most public schools and governmental institutions and agencies in the United States today. It denies God, the Bible, and divine revelation, and teaches that man's reason is all we need to accomplish everything.

The St. Louis parents are basing their case on the 1963 U.S. Supreme Court decision on Abington v. Schempp. Although this is the famous case that prohibited Bible reading in the public schools, it also held that the state may not establish a "religion of secularism" by affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, or by "preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe."

The Burleigh-Delaney bill to assert parents' economic rights in private education, and the St. Louis lawsuit to assert parents' legal rights in public education, are hopeful signs that alternative approaches to the problems in the public schools are in the making.

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