P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: January 28, 1980

LAWSUITS ABOUT CHURCH AND STATE

For many years, a consortium of atheists, agnostics, and the American Civil Liberties Union has had a field day in our courts knocking out any shred of religious observance in public schools and public places. They've eliminated prayers from the schools, Nativity scenes from schools and public buildings, and replaced Silent Night with secular songs such as Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer and I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus Last Night.

The usual flurry of church-state lawsuits filed before this past Christmas will continue in the courts well into the new year. In Denver, the local chapter of the Humanist Quest for Truth, backed by the American Civil Liberties Union, protested a Nativity scene in the city's Christmas light display even though the scene was not paid for by tax money.

In Illinois, where the ACLU filed suit against Nativity scenes at Chicago's Water Tower Park and city hall, a federal judge ruled that they could remain there if the city posted signs disclaiming any government connection with them.

In Des Moines, the Iowa Civil Liberties Union has been carrying on a year-long battle to prevent city employees from depicting shepherds and wise men at the annual Nativity pageant at the Children's Zoo. The ICLU won out over the wise men when the city attorney ruled that the city "may not legally sponsor or endorse such a religious pageant."

In Traverse City, Michigan, the city fathers decided not to display the traditional Nativity scene in a town park after the local Human Rights Commission threatened a lawsuit. In Sioux Falls, S.D., an ACLU suit demanded that a federal judge ban Christmas carols in the schools, even though it is admitted that the religious content is less than one-third of the songs.

Now, however, the embattled Christians have shed their defensive posture and have gone on the offensive. They're making a footnote in liberal Justice Black's opinion

(more)

in Torcaso v. Watkins (367 U.S. 488, 1961) into a handle with which they hope to defeat the anti-Christmas litigators at their own game.

The footnote reads: "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God, are Buddhism, Taoism, ethical culture, secular humanism, and others." Therefore, it is claimed, if the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment prohibits the schools from giving any preferment to Christianity, Buddhism, or Taoism, then it must likewise prohibit giving any preferment to Secular Humanism, which Justice Black defined as a religion.

It is the contention of many concerned parents that, when prayer was ordered out of the classroom, Secular Humanism filled the vacuum which nature traditionally abhors. These parents are initiating lawsuits in the hope that the Supreme Court, applying the maxim inscribed on its beautiful building ("equal justice under law"), will hold that the First Amendment prohibits the teaching of Secular Humanism which, the parents assert, has become the state religion of the public schools.

To the concerned and litigating parents, Humanism (with a capital H) is a term of art which describes the dogmas proclaimed in the Humanist Manifestos I and II and in subsequent pronouncements in Humanist journals. Thus, the Humanist Manifesto II, signed in 1973 by many prominent educators, specifically rejects God ("As non-theists, we begin with humans not God. ... We can discover no divine purpose or providence.") and rejects eternal life ("promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.").

In January 1976, the Humanist Journal published a "bill of sexual rights" drafted by Dr. Lester Kirkendall, a Manifesto signer, which stated, "For the first time in history there need be no fear of unwanted pregnancy or venereal disease, if proper precautions are taken... Although we consider marriage, where viable, a cherished human relationship, we believe that other sexual relationships are also significant."

Four years later, "unwanted pregnancies" have resulted in three unborn babies being killed for every ten conceived, and venereal disease has grown to epidemic proportions, with millions suffering from two new varieties for which there is no cure.

The question the Supreme Court may one day be called upon to answer is: can the religion of Secular Humanism be taught in the public schools if the religions of those who believe in God, eternal life, and the Ten Commandments are prohibited?

(end)