PS for 6/28/90

Playing Politics with the First Amendment

It looks like the start of a long, hot summer of politicians' posturing about the First Amendment. It's time we separate what is and what is not a First Amendment issue and take a look at the liberals' double standards.

The Supreme Court is up to its old tricks of inventing new rights. Five Justices have now invented the notion that the First amendment includes the right to desecrate the American Flag.

For 199 years, nobody else ever saw that "right" in the First Amendment, and 48 states enacted laws to punish such desecration. Even that great liberal Justice and First Amendment absolutist, Justice Hugo Black, wrote in a dissenting opinion in 1969 "It passes my belief that anything in the Federal Constitution bars a State from making the deliberate burning of the American flag an offense."

The majority of Americans agree and that's why they support a constitutional amendment to protect our flag as a precious symbol and to deliver a needed comeuppance to the Supreme Court. But the liberals are not content with saying that the First Amendment should protect those who desecrate the flag.

They have gone overboard in arguing that the First Amendment **requires** us to subsidize the desecration of the flag and our other precious symbols! One of the obnoxious items funded by taxpayers' money though the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was an exhibit by an alleged artist named Dread Scott called "What Is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?" which spread an American flag across the floor and invited viewers to trample on it.

The NEA awarded other grants of taxpayers' money to materials and performances that desecrate religious symbols, such as the $15,000 paid to exhibit Andres Serrano's depiction of a crucifix submerged in urine. Do you think for a minute that the liberals would have tolerated this travesty if it had been a picture of Martin Luther King dunked in urine?

The liberals pretend that the First Amendment protects everyone's right to say anything anytime anywhere, no matter how obscene, blasphemous, harmful to children, degrading to women, or offensive to people's religion or sacred symbols. But many current restrictions on free speech rights arouse no liberal outcry.

Nearly every day's news brings strident demands from the liberals to restrict political speech by limiting the way we can express ourselves about candidates for public office. In hundreds of op-ed articles and TV talk shows since thee 1988 election, the liberals have complained incessantly about the successful TV spots that exposed Michael Dukakis's dismal record (such as the fact that Massachusetts is the only state where Willie Horton could have received his notorious furlough).

The liberals want to limit our right to spend money to disseminate political views in support of political candidates of our choice, and instead have the government appropriate tax money for "approved" political advertising. Uninhibited speech about politics should be the most protected of all kinds of free speech; that was the number-one purpose of the First Amendment.

Traditionally, a great deal of political communication in America has been transmitted by the door-to-door distribution of handbills, fliers, pamphlets, and election-related materials. But, federal law makes it a criminal offense for anyone but a United States letter carrier to deposit a letter or communication in a mailbox.

This is a most curious interference with the rights of free speech since the mailbox is not even government property. It's also a terrible nuisance and interferences with our ability to communicate speech about politics because it's not easy to make sure that your flier gets into a recipient's hands without using the mailbox.

What about the laws that prohibit demonstrations on the steps of a courthouse? Go ahead and desecrate the flag and protest all you want against other parts of our government, but no siree, the judges will not allow anyone to demonstrate against **them** or their decisions!

When it comes to schools and colleges, the liberals' idea of First Amendment rights depends on the content and not the principle. On many colleges campuses today the liberals are setting up though police who threaten to censure or even expel any student who says anything deemed "insensitive" about some minority or other group. One of these campus codes even forbids "inappropriately directed laughter."

Finally, let's look at the liberal double standard about people expressing themselves by boycotts. Boycotts are to be condemned if they are conducted by the American Family Association against stores that well obscene magazines, but to be

praised if they are conducted by the abortion advocates against Idaho potatoes in order to blackmail the Governor into vetoing an anti-abortion bill.