PS1 for 3/12/87#THE ALABAMA TEXTBOOK DECISION

At last! A federal court has held that children who believe in God have the same rights in a public school classroom as atheists. All children now have the right to attend a public school without having somebody else's religion crammed down their throats by textbook or teacher.

The court held that the First Amendment's Establishment Clause not only prohibits teaching children to believe in God and His eternal moral commandments, but likewise prohibits teaching children NOT to believe in God and NOT to believe in eternal moral values. The judge ordered 45 textbooks removed from the Alabama public schools because they engage in an unconstitutional establishment of the religion of ""secular humanism.''

This case, (BF)Smith v. Mobile School Board(end BF), started in 1981 as an attempt by the atheists to ban a moment of silent prayer from the Alabama public school classrooms. The atheists won in 1985 in the U.S. Supreme Court case of (BF)Wallace v. Jaffree(end BF).

The district court then restructured the case to hear the complaint of other parents who asserted that THEIR First Amendment rights were interfered with because the textbooks were teaching the religion of secular humanism. The parents asserted that ""a man-centered belief-system, which they know by the appellation 'secular humanism,' is promoted in the public schools to the detriment of their children's First Amendment right of free exercise, all in violation of the establishment clause.''

The Mobile case answers the question, ""what is humanism?'' It denies a Creator, asserts that the universe is self-existing, that man is the product of evolutionary forces and has no supernatural component, that man's purpose is to seek personal fulfillment, and that the rules governing conduct are founded only in man's situation and environment.

This case was not an attempt of narrow-minded or fanatical proreligionists to force a public school system to teach only those opinions and facts with which they agree. This case is about the ""improper promotion of certain

religious beliefs, thus violating the constitutional prohibitions against the establishment of religion.''

The parents did not seek to impose their own religious beliefs on the schools, nor did they seek to keep their children from mere exposure to contrary beliefs or ideas. The court found that the parents simply sought ""objective education, not partisan indoctrination.''

The U.S. Supreme Court has never defined religion, but has shifted over the years from monotheism to a broad notion of ultimate concerns and equivalent beliefs. The scope of the term religion was first carefully examined by the Supreme Court in the 1965 (BF)Seeger(end BF) draft exemption case, wherein the Court refused to limit the First Amendment right to theism only.

Two bodies of evidence were presented to the court and set forth in the Alabama textbook decision. First was the overt teaching of the tenets of secular humanism. Second was the omission of ""significant facts about religion and religious contributions to American history'' to the extent that the textbooks ""conveyed an historical picture biased against theistic religions.''

The result was that ""religion was so deliberately underemphasized and ignored that theistic religions were effectively discriminated against and made to seem irrelevant and unimportant within the context of American history.'' The court said that ""the factual inaccuracies are so grave as to rise to a constitutional violation.''

So, the court held that ""the challenged textbooks violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution'' and issued an injunction to prohibit further use of the listed books.

The Alabama textbook decision concluded that the First Amendment's requirement of religious neutrality means that the Constitution protects every religious belief without regard to its theological foundations or idiosyncrasies. There is much more evidence that secular humanism is taught in textbooks today than that religion can be taught by a moment of silence in which God's name is never mentioned.

The secular liberals, who have been imposing their peculiar religion on schoolchildren for the last 30 years, are having tantrums in the media about Judge Hand's decision. What they are really angry about is that this decision has brought Secular Humanism out of the closet for the public to see and to learn why the public schools have produced so many children who are incapable of telling right from wrong.