PS1 for 3/3/88#STRANGE COURSES IN NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

A resolution passed by the New Mexico State Legislature is making waves in the public schools of that state, with school administrators resisting what they consider an interference with their authority. Any outsider reading the resolution would think, of course the schools should obey this rule, but why in the world did the legislature feel a need to pass it?

New Mexico Senate Memorial 45 reads as follows: ""Whereas, the utilization of mind-altering techniques for public school students is highly objectionable; and whereas, the teaching of or counseling by certain psychological techniques in New Mexico's public schools should be entirely eliminated; and whereas, these psychological methodologies can involve such techniques as Transcendental Meditation, altered states of consciousness or the occult;

""Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate of the State of New Mexico that the teaching of or counseling by certain mind-altering psychological techniques be entirely eliminated in New Mexico public schools.'' Other paragraphs require appropriate notification, the issuing of guidelines, and reports to the legislature.

It would seem self-evident that the same First Amendment that prohibits prayer in the public schools should, without any further legislation or litigation, also prohibit practices of various eastern religions and of the anti-religious or occult. But parents all over the country have discovered that many public schools have gone heavily into the practice of teaching the exercises and the language of such beliefs under the guise of ""counseling.''

We are not talking about guidance counseling of individual children who have problems or a demonstrated need. We are talking about courses given indiscriminately to an entire class, a practice that should be described as group therapy, by unlicensed, amateur

psychologists.

The New Mexico story started when a first grade boy at Sierra Vista Elementary School in Albuquerque came home and told his mother that he was hearing frightening stories. Upon investigation, Mrs. Susan Gurule discovered that the first graders were taken out of the classroom every other week, sent to the school counselor's office, made to lie down on the floor, and told stories.

This treatment was part of the DUSO program (""Developing Understanding of Self & Others'' published by American Guidance Service, St. Paul, MN). After listening to the DUSO tapes, Mrs. Gurule learned that the program contains 42 guided fantasy exercises, subliminal messages, and techniques commonly associated with so-called ""New Age'' practices.

Mrs. Gurule's discussions with the school got nowhere. The first grade teacher said she didn't even know what was going on in the counseling sessions to which her pupils were sent.

Another parent who is in the New Mexico State Legislature also has a child whom the school had subjected to the DUSO program. After meetings with school personnel were unsatisfactory, State Senator Joe Carraro sponsored and successfully guided to passage Senate Memorial 45.

This Senate resolution is not actually a law, but it has officially exposed an objectionable practice in the public schools and they have a moral obligation to obey it. Unfortunately, the public schools are resisting what they consider parental encroachment on their authority to treat public school children like guinea pigs.

The New Mexico experience is not an isolated one. Transcendental Meditation is often brought into public schools in ""stress'' courses for the early elementary grades, and even in spelling!

An entire chapter in a spelling course used in a fourth grade

Pennsylvania public school teaches the children to spell words associated with TM, as it is called.

The workbook prepares the schoolchildren for their spelling lesson on TM by having them study this passage: ""Several years ago a teacher from India brought the secret of TM, or Transcendental Meditation, to North America. His name is Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He teaches how to meditate and relax your mind. ... Twenty minutes of TM can be as helpful to you as several hours of sleep! ... TM has taken North America by storm. ... Every day, more and more people are turning on to TM.''

Several years ago, some New Jersey parents of public school students who were taught TM took this issue to court. In the 1978 decision of (BF)Malnak v. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi(end BF), the Federal District Court found that TM is religious in nature and that the teaching of its techniques in New Jersey public schools violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

But that hasn't stopped the schools that are entranced with using psychological practices on unsuspecting children. Parents should be on guard against such classroom abuses.