PS for 10/5/89

Spooks and Witches in the Classroom

Parents and taxpayers are winning nearly half their local curriculum battles to restore responsibility to our nation's public schools. That's the good news from the annual survey of parent-school confrontations published recently by People for the American Way (PAW).

That's not the way PAW summarizes its findings. But then, one person can look at half-filled glass and say it's half full, while another can say it's half empty.

PAW reports the same facts as bad news. "The censors," PAW says, "were successful in banning educational materials or restricting their use in nearly half of the challenge to instruction." "The censors," of course, are those exercising their rights of free speech and trying to assert their parental rights to protect the faith and morals of their children.

PAW's state-by-state survey reports on challenges to classroom instruction, and that involves schools' forcing reading or visual materials on an involuntary captive audience of other people's minor children. The notion that school personnel have some "right" or "academic freedom" to do this, in contravention of parental wishes, was invented by liberal anti-parent pressure groups such as PAW, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the National Education Association (NEA).

According to the PAW survey, the subject area that drew the largest number of complaints during the last year was witchcraft, satanism and the occult. Let's look at some of these complaints by parents, each in a separate school district, as reported in the PAW booklet called "Attacks on the Freedom to Learn."

In Colorado, parents objected to the book *Halloween* because of its "satanic overtones." In Florida, parents objected to *Devils and Demons* because it "might lead children to a life of devil worship."

In two districts in Georgia, parents objected to the excessive number of books in school libraries dealing with the occult and satanism. In Iowa, parents objected to middle-school children being given *Unnatural Talent* because it promotes satanism.

In one Illinois district, parents objected to the classroom use of *The Charming* because its stories of "demonic power and possession" are unsuitable for sixth graders. In another part of Illinois, parents objected to giving seventh graders the guide for the London Dungeon, a museum depicting torture practices.

In one Kansas district, parents objected to *The Headless Cupid* for "teaching witchcraft." In another Kansas district, parents objected to *Halloween ABC* because it subjected elementary school pupils to "satanic influences," and elsewhere in Kansas, parents objected to using *The Witch Grows Up* with elementary school pupils because it makes "witchcraft look like a viable lifestyle."

In Maine, parents filed a complaint against *Stars, Spells, Secrets and Sorcery* because it features "step-by-step instructions to set up an occult group." In New Hampshire, parents objected to the use of "Dungeons and Dragons" in a junior high school course because it promotes satanism.

In New Jersey, parents complained about *Devils and Demons* because its discussions of witchcraft and satanism are inappropriate for elementary school students. Elsewhere in New Jersey, parents objected to *Halloween ABC* because it contains "an offensive, evil, satanic theme which is inappropriate for younger children."

In Ohio, parents of middle school children objected to *Curses, Hexes* and *Servants of the Devil* for containing "satanic material." In Wisconsin, parents objected to the film *Children of the Corn* because it promotes "the occult and rebellion by children."

In Oregon, parents objected to *The Restless Dead* for being "demonic" and "totally preoccupied with the occult." In another Oregon district, parents complained about *Bumps in the Night* for teaching elementary school pupils about the occult.

In a third Oregon district, parents objected to *The Magic Grandfather* because of its preoccupation with magic and *The Devil's Piper* because it encourages your minds to "pursue the occult," and to *The Prince in Waiting* because it promotes "positive attitudes toward the occult and ridicule toward Christianity."

Those who object to this type of classroom abuse apparently must endure being called "censors" by PAW. But parents should consider that label a badge of honor; it shows their concern about Halloween witches scaring children in the schools.