

Parochialism Is A Threat To Public Schools

EDITOR:
Really a letter to the supporters of parochialism. It is possible that the supporters of parochialism are not aware of the benefits of an improving public school system to our nation?
Is it possible that the supporters of parochialism are not aware of the proliferation of private school systems which have accompanied dual educational systems supported by the state?
Is it possible that the supporters of parochialism are not aware of the sectarian bitterness which will result if we do not keep church and state separate . . . especially in a nation such as ours which has numerous proud sects?
Is it possible that the parochial supporters are insensitive to the basic profundity of the American tradition of separation of church and state?
It might be interesting to reflect on the origin of this insensitivity.
It seems incredible to me that anyone reared in the tradition of our American history and politics can conceive of asking others to support their particular religious philosophy. And please do not tell me about the poor parochial situation. The public school system is also their school system.
If you feel exclusive about your faith, this is your privilege; and it is your privilege to use your parochial system. But it is not your privilege to ask others to support this exclusivism.
The American public school system is the greatest unifying institution our country has. There are very few other countries with a public school system which offers the masses so much. In addition, it is that place where young people of various backgrounds and beliefs work, study, and play together. Remember, this is one of the reasons we have tried to eliminate racial segregation in the schools.
At its best the public school system in the United States could be the most positive contributing factor to our nation's life. We should be working to make it at its best. Instead of threatening its existence.
Is it possible that the parochialism of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Dutch Reformed Churches has so isolated the membership of these congregations that they are not aware of the success other religions have had in instructing their children of the tenets of their various faiths. Certainly, the purpose of religious schools must be the indoctrination of a particular faith. There is only one thing available to the parochial student which is not available to the public school student and that is a specific religious indoctrination.
Proponents of parochialism have suggested that the public school system is godless and without moral instruction. The origin of this "holier than thou" attitude is an obvious symptom of the exclusive religious philosophies of the faiths proposing parochialism.
I certainly do not deny anyone the right to possess exclusive religious philosophies, but I do object to being asked to have state funds used to support such institutions. (Would parochial supporters have any objection to the John Birch Society establishing their own schools to teach anticommunism and anti-catholicism?) This is a definite violation of the principle of separation of church and state. Have the parochial supporters

stopped to reflect over the Pandora's box which they are helping to open?
Not only do the proponents of parochialism propose to ignore this basic American principle, but in their zeal threaten the future of the public school system. Wherever I have read of the establishment of a dual educational system, supported by the state, the public school system becomes the second-rate institution. But then what does that matter? Just go the Catholics have their Catholic schools; the Lutherans and the Dutch Reformed churches theirs.
The origin of racial segregation is racial prejudice. Many dollars, hours, effort, and even lives have been spent during the last 10 years to bring about the decline of racial segregation in housing, business, and schooling. It has been a difficult fight, but experience has shown us the injustice of and the lack of wisdom in racial segregation and the difficulty of bringing understanding between people whose place of residence and education is determined by their race.
Yet, in the face of this, parochial supporters propose that the state finance parochialism which is in fact religious segregation, the origin of which rests with religious prejudice, the most hypocritical of all our human prejudices.
Is it possible that the critics of religion are correct when they claim that religion divides more than it unites?
ROSEMARY E. OLSON
LIVONIA

Hunt Auditorium Is Suggested Tribute
EDITOR:
The very sad news of the death of James Hunt of the music department of North Farmington High School has just reached me.
It is doubly sad to think that Mr. Hunt will never put one of his excellent musicals in the new auditorium now in the process of being built at the school. He has done remarkable things with the students in the past under almost impossible circumstances from a theatrical point of view, and I'm sure that he was keenly anticipating what could be done when the odds would be on his side for a change.
The musicals at North have become quite famous for the quality of their productions. The school, as well as the community, will sadly miss Mr. Hunt.
I should like to suggest that the school board give serious consideration to naming the new auditorium at North Farmington the Hunt Memorial Auditorium. I feel sure that all of the students and parents who knew and worked with Mr. Hunt, as well as those who spent many delightful hours in the audiences, will agree that this would be an appropriate memorial to a very fine man.
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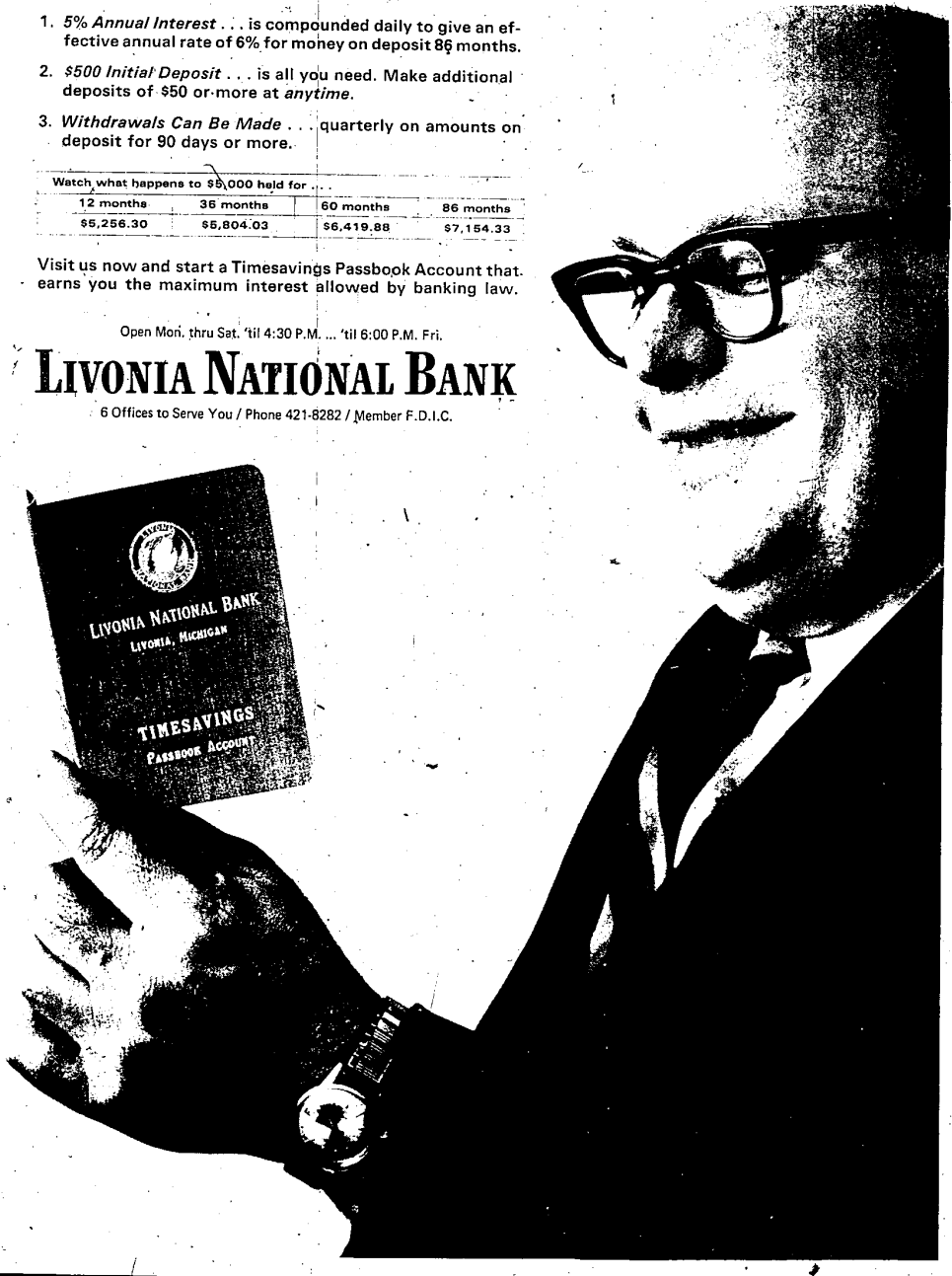
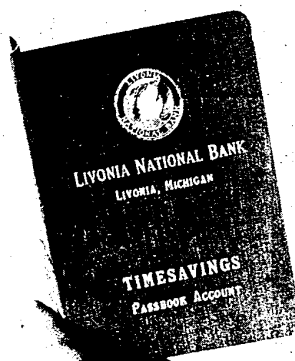
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