

The church crosses the line

COUNT ON IT. With the holidays approaching, you're going to be hearing the annual cries for "separation of church and state."

As soon as a crèche scene (or maybe a menorah) pops up on some bill of government property, someone is going to start yelling the magic phrase.

Between September 1989 and August 1990 — according to information compiled by a group called Americans United for Separation of Church and State — the issue was the subject of 192 court cases in 46 states, up from 118 cases in 38 states the previous 12 months.

The disputes ranged from complaints about prayers at graduation ceremonies in public schools to state aid to parochial schools or tuition tax credits.

In the greater scheme of things, most of the cases were more petty than important — a crèche scene on city property, a cross on a government-owned water tower. Still, they ended up in court.

But there is an area in which the line between church and state is being crossed more and more . . . and nobody's raising a ruckus about it because it's a very hard one to



Jack Gladden

focus on.

The latest example came this week when the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a four-page letter to the Bush administration calling for American restraint in the Persian Gulf crisis and outlining the limits that Catholic teaching considers essential for warfare to be considered "moral." On the surface, that seems like a reasonable enough thing for a group of religious leaders to do.

Yet there were disturbing undertones to some of the comments made in discussing the action.

BISHOP MICHAEL Kenny of Juneau, Alaska, thought the letter was too timid and that the bishops should offer Catholics specific "moral directions" on the Gulf crisis.

" . . . we don't hesitate to tell people what to do in regard to abortion

or in regard to use of a condom," he said. "Are we willing to be so clear in reference to weapons of incalculable destruction?"

If the bishops are simply offering their collective opinion on the matter, fine. But when they start putting the squeeze on Catholic public officials to follow the teachings of the church when performing their official duties, that's crossing the boundary.

And Kenny's reference to abortion, whether it was intentional or Freudian, raises an issue where the church has more than once crossed that line.

Last year an auxiliary bishop in New York said publicly that New York Gov. Mario Cuomo was taking "a very serious risk of going straight to hell" for supporting abortion.

And last fall in California a woman running in a special election for the state Senate was barred from taking communion for her stand on abortion rights.

Not all the anti-abortion pressure on public officials comes from Catholics, but most of it does come from religious groups. In New Hampshire a state representative was barred from membership in the charismatic

American Baptist Church after she sponsored a bill to put a woman's right to abortion into state law.

THESE PUBLICIZED cases, of course, were ones in which the people involved did manage to separate their roles as church members from what they saw as their roles as public officials. And the churches weren't happy with them.

What you don't read about are those public officials who, like good Christian soldiers, do go along with the church's doctrine and vote their "conscience" when such issues arise. And, whether they even recognize it or not, "conscience" is generally synonymous with "religious beliefs."

It's a difficult area to focus on, but as more and more legislation is introduced to deal with essentially moral issues, it's something we need to start taking a good, hard look at. As the church gets more politically active, that line between it and the state is starting to get awfully blurry.

Jack Gladden is a copy editor for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. He lives in Canton Township.

'Budget buster' awaiting Engler



Tim Richard

THERE'S A scoffing tone in the legal brief of Bill Hampton and John Donohue, the Farmington Hills lawyers who represented Oakland County last week before the Michigan Supreme Court.

"They (state Department of Mental Health) forecast dramatic reductions in spending for all the good things the state does or huge increases in state taxes to comply with the constitution," they told the seven justices.

"The fiscal armageddon prophesied by defendants appears improbable."

But Tom Casey, assistant solicitor general in the attorney general's office, argued Oakland's suit could, too, be a budget buster: \$1.5 billion if applied retroactively from 1981-88.

Hampton and Donohue say Oakland is seeking a remedy "prospectively" — only about \$400 million a year in the future.

THE CASE involves mental health money and the 1978 Headlee amendment to the Michigan Constitution.

The state turns over that money to community mental health boards. The Headlee amendment requires the state to use 41.6 percent of its budget to aid local units of government. The state counts that as a payment to local units.

Oakland Executive Dan Murphy says it isn't — the state dictates the process so rigidly that it's really a state program.

Hampton, Donohue et al. heap scorn on Casey's arguments, saying the state juggled its books to make itself look good.

A circuit judge and the Court of Appeals agreed with Oakland and its friends. The betting odds are that the Supreme Court will agree.

Moreover, Gov.-elect John Engler wants the state to halt its appeal, fess up and get it over with.

BUT ON ONE point, Casey is correct. This suit could be a budget buster.

It's not that this suit alone will bust the budget.

Rather, this suit — combined with a suit against the Headlee II property tax cut and a bunch of other lawsuits — can bust the budget, currently \$7.6 billion a year.

Engler has endorsed the Headlee II proposal — to cut property taxes

by 20 percent over two years. The state would have to reimburse the lost \$1.5 billion to local units, not the nickel a week outgoing Gov. Jim Blanchard promised taxpayers.

Either the Legislature will pass Headlee II or it will go to the voters in 1992. If it passes, the day of reckoning must inevitably arrive.

The rumor mill says the economic downturn will throw the current revenue picture out of focus by maybe as much as \$1 billion. I think that's high. Let's say a mere \$500 million.

Add those three items, and you're talking about \$2.4 billion.

SCHOOLS HAVE two lawsuits pending against the state over "categorical aid" — the money they used to get for special education teaching and busing, Social Security and other mandated programs. Current price tag is \$72 million.

That case was disrupted when Macomb Circuit Judge George Deneweth died Nov. 5, the day the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of one school district.

Deneweth had handled the legal hearings in that case. The appeals court ordered him to handle the assessment of damages.

The lawyer representing all 56 districts in a second suit had wanted the appeals court to assign Deneweth their case, too, because he was so familiar with the law.

Well, sooner or later that suit will be settled, and the budget will be \$2.5 billion out of whack.

And one of these decades, the \$400 million court financing suit will be settled, and the budget will be nearly \$3 billion out of whack.

On Nov. 8 the question on everyone's lips was, would Blanchard seek a recount?

I have a hunch John Engler may be the guy seeking the recount. Or big new taxes.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events.

Whole language approach is sound

Q: The Whole Language Approach for reading is being introduced in elementary schools throughout the area. Some parents and a few teachers in our district don't seem too enthused. What is the difference in the Whole Language Approach to teaching reading and the way reading has been taught? Is the Whole Language Approach good or bad for children?

A: The major goal of the Whole Language Approach is to teach children to understand, comprehend and apply what they read.

It is a literature-based approach to reading, as opposed to focusing primarily on developing isolated work development skills as a lead-in for reading.

And it, like any "new" educational movement, can be controversial, especially among those parents and teachers who believe more in what they consider the tried-and-true methods such as drill and practice.

Some of those opposed to the whole language approach would tend to rely heavily on the phonetic (sounding out words) approach. An

example would be the flash card with a single word on it that a student or the entire class responds to in unison.

THE ADVOCATES of the whole language approach believe that writing and reading and speaking should be integrated into a more singular process. Relying heavily at first on phonics, flash cards and word reading is not inherent in their philosophy.

It is through reading and writing about the literature-based story — and learning the correct phonetic pronunciation of words during this total experience — that the thought process is stimulated for greater comprehension according to the whole language approach advocates.

The whole language approach movement obviously is not the drill and practice experience that some parents and teachers believe essential. These people might say it is a matter of what comes first — the chicken or the egg. Children have to learn the correct pronunciation, spelling and master word recognition one way or another.

YOU ASK if whole language approach is good or bad for children. Children must learn to read for comprehension. They also must master the fundamentals, which includes mastering word recognition and proper phonics. My experience cautions a blank endorsement of any new educational movement.

And although I believe the whole language approach is sound in theory, there also must be a clearly articulated core skills curriculum in place. There must be clearly stated and expected basic skill outcome; that is, skills to be mastered so that we don't lose some kids "through the cracks."

THE BASIC classroom textbook, the basal reader, still has a role. The worksheet or ditto can be an aid to some children who need numerous diversified and repetitious experiences to master basic skills.



Doc Doyle

The integration of reading and writing as in the whole language approach works together as an automobile's steering wheel works with the front wheels.

Let's make sure the children master the basic skills necessary for future success be it the whole language approach or the Abe Lincoln approach in the cold, dark attic under a flickering candle.

James "Doc" Doyle is a former Troy Schools administrator. His column on educational issues appears periodically.

Men, if you're about to turn 18, it's time to register with Selective Service at any U.S. Post Office.

It's quick. It's easy. And it's the law.

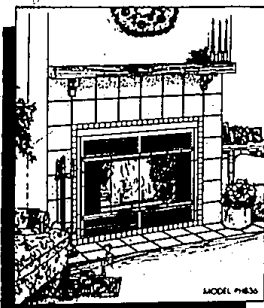
Fine Jewelry Manager

Immediate full time position available for a Fine Jewelry Salon Manager. Experience is necessary. Benefits include competitive pay, employee discount, medical and life insurance, retirement plans including pension and profit sharing, attractive hours, opportunity to work in pleasant surroundings with fine merchandise.

Apply in person
336 W. Maple Avenue
Birmingham, Michigan

Jacobson's
Equal Opportunity Employer

ENJOY THE WARMTH AND CHARM OF A FIREPLACE FOR THE HOLIDAYS...



It's more affordable than you think...

Let us help you plan and install a beautiful fireplace for your home. Or provide the materials for the do-it-yourselfer. Material packages start at \$515.51 (tax included), with installation starting at just \$225. We also carry a full line of mantels, accessories and gas fireplace logs. Call today for a FREE consultation.

MODEL PHASE

AS ROMANTIC AND RELAXING AS YOU'VE IMAGINED! AND IT'S A **WILLIAMS**

PAVILION

1000 E. Grand River • Redford • 638-6633

Hours: M-W-F 9-5, Th-Sat 9-5, Sun 10-5
Free Door-to-Door Service Available
Saturday, Nov. 17 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. Call 638-6633

SAVE 40%-60%

Erika
SILK/ANGORA
SWEATERS
\$19⁹⁹
DEPT. STORE \$45

Lee David
WOOL
PANTS
\$29⁹⁹
DEPT. STORE \$50

Famous Label
BETTER
SUITS
\$69⁹⁹
DEPT. STORE \$145

Plain Jane
KNIT
DRESSES
\$29⁹⁹
DEPT. STORE \$68

DRESS BARN

NOBODY SELLS FASHION FOR LESS!

• JACKSONVILLE • WESTLAND • • SOUTHWEST • CLAWSON • FARMINGTON • ELK • ROSELAND •

• CLEVELAND • FARMINGTON HILLS • • LIVINGSTON VILLAGE • LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR •

• MIAMI • CLEVELAND • • LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• FARMINGTON • ELK • ROSELAND •

• INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• ROSELAND •

• ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

• CLEVELAND •

• LANSING • INDIANAPOLIS • ANN ARBOR • CLEVELAND •

FOR SIZES 14-24, SHOP DRESS BARN WOMAN • SOUTHFIELD • TROY • FARMINGTON HILLS

*OFF DEPT. STORE PRICES - NO SALE IS EVER FINAL • OPEN 7 DAYS • NIGHTS • MAJOR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED