

**Step out and speak up.**

The occasion was a banquet at the Sheraton-Southfield last week, celebrating the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. The ancient pagan celebration of this event is regarded by some scholars as the inspiration for the Christmas celebration, given that the actual birthdate of Jesus is unknown.

She has been the country's leading proponent of atheism since the early 1960s, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld her lawsuit to stop public schools from conducting prayers in the classroom.

**FROM THE AMERICAN** Atheist Center, which she established in Austin, Tex., Mrs. O'Hair crisscrosses the nation, speaking out against discrimination, religious programs in public schools and phrases such as "In God We Trust" on coins and government buildings.

"America is the only country founded on separation of church and state," she told her audience of about 150 persons. "We have to stand up for our heritage."

She describes atheism as a philosophy of persons who are "free from religion," basing their life on experience, with no faith in or dependence on a "supernatural" being.

As outlined in "The American Atheist," Mrs. O'Hair's magazine, the purpose of the American atheist movement is to promote the complete separation of church and state and to maintain a secular educational system. And while Mrs. O'Hair feels contempt for religious persons, she said her organization doesn't aim to suppress religious activities.

**MRS. O'HAIR** maintains that fear of losing one's job and social pressure keeps persons who espouse the atheistic philosophy from speaking out. The Michigan Chapter has just 32 members.

She praised a 24-year-old police officer from the Lansing area, who admitted to having the "heebie-jeebies" about openly coming to a meeting of atheists.

"Simply come out and help," urged Mrs. O'Hair, who was dressed in a flowing black and gold robe. "Everybody has to do his part to get rid of this monster called religion."

That goes double for atheists who still attend church. 20 per cent of all non-believers, according to Mrs. O'Hair. She wants them to quit.

"Stay out (of church) and stop contributing," said Mrs. O'Hair. "If every atheist in this nation would quit going to church tomorrow, they (organized religion) would be damaged, because atheists go to church for business and professional reasons."

"You have to stand up and fight," she continued. "From the point of view of the American Atheist Center, we feel sure that (the United States) can be atheistic by the year 2000."

Nationwide, atheist activism is being directed against the motto, "In God We Trust," which appears on coins and government buildings.

A federal suit filed by Mrs. O'Hair's organization is being reviewed by an

"Symbols are extraordinarily important," said Mrs. O'Hair. "We live and die for our flag, and yet we allow the corruption with 'One Nation Under God.'"

The Board of Oakland County Road Commissioners has adopted a \$37.4 million budget for 1979 as proposed by Managing Director John L. Grubba.

The budget includes four road construction projects sought by members of the audience during a public hearing Nov. 15 as part of the \$12.5 million construction program.

Another major change from the pre-hearing proposal substitutes \$4 million of bond revenue for \$4 million that had been anticipated from proceeds of the two-cent state fuel tax increase and vehicle weight tax increases adopted by the Michigan Legislature.

"It appears that petitions to repeal the rate increases will be filed and certified, meaning the tax won't be collected until at least after a statewide referendum in 1980," said Road Commissioner John R. Gnau Jr. He said bonding would therefore be necessary to meet county needs as budgeted. "However, bonds will not be

sold if the gas and weight tax petition drive fails, we decided to budget from bonding because of the time necessary to complete arrangements, should bonding be necessary," said Gnaul.

**INCLUDED IN** the budget are an \$18.5 million construction program; \$9.8 million for maintenance, which includes winter snow and ice removal; \$2.7 million for traffic services, \$2 million for engineering; \$5.5 million of fixed costs and \$1.9 million for administration.

Revenue anticipated include: \$18.5 million of state-collected gas and weight taxes; \$8.5 million of other state and federal funds; \$4.8 million of local (project matching) funds; and \$1.5 million of fees and other revenues.

"Without the two-cent gas tax increase and weight tax increases averaging 30 per cent, revenues from the state collections are expected to be only \$1 million greater than we budgeted for 1978," said Grubba.

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