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Appeals Court Affirms Students' Free Speech

PHILADELPHIA, PA — A Feb. 14 decision by the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Pennsylvania held that the State College Area School District's (SCASD) anti-harassment policy is "overbroad" and violates the First Amendment right of free speech. The suit was filed by David Saxe, a member of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education who is also an unpaid volunteer for the 7,423-student SCASD. Saxe acted as legal guardian for two Christian student-plaintiffs, who feared punishment under the policy for speaking out against the "sinful nature and harmful effects of homosexuality." Because the policy prohibited negative speech about another's "values," the students further feared censure for engaging in "symbolic activities" reflecting their religious beliefs and for distributing religious literature.

In ruling for the plaintiffs, the three-judge panel unanimously found no "harassment exemption" to the First Amendment's free-speech clause. The court specifically objected to the policy's inclusion of a "catch-all" category called "other personal characteristics," which covered appearance, clothing, hobbies, values, and social skills.

"By prohibiting disparaging speech directed at a person's 'values,' the policy strikes at the heart of moral and political



Brian Brown

discourse — the lifeblood of constitutional self-government (and democratic education) and the core concern of the First Amendment," the court ruled in its 29-page opinion. "That speech about 'values' may offend is not cause for its prohibition, but rather the reason for its protection: a principal function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. No court or legislature has ever suggested that unwelcome speech directed at another's 'values' may be prohibited under the rubric of anti-discrimination."

Saxe was represented by Attorney Brian J. Brown of the American Family Association Center for Law and Policy in Tupelo, Miss. Brown told the *Washington Times* (2-16-01) after the ruling: "This is a resounding bell of freedom ringing in Philadelphia, reaffirming that indeed, students do not leave their First Amendment rights at the schoolhouse gate. It's hard to get more Orwellian than the speech code that was struck down."

The decision is binding in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but is expected to have national implications since many school districts across the country have adopted anti-harassment policies.



Colorado School Board Rejects STW

DENVER, CO — The Colorado School Board adopted a resolution in December rejecting the national School-to-Work policy enacted by Congress in 1994. Approved by a vote of 5-2, the resolution declares that "schools are primarily institutions of learning and shall not be diverted from this noble mission by attempting to meet every non-academic need of students." (See text, page 4.) The resolution was drafted by board member Patti Johnson, who left the board in January after serving since 1995.



Patti Johnson

boards charged with predicting the jobs of the future in local communities, which meet the needs of the community and local businesses rather than the needs of students, have been established in Colorado"; and "Whereas, work-based learning and integrated learning based on career pathways chosen by workforce development boards violate the student's constitutional right to liberty. . . ."

"The initial draft 'resolved' that graduation shall not require volunteer service or any type of free labor and that students shall not be required to choose a career pathway whether college-bound or not," Johnson explains, "but those statements were softened."

A number of Colorado elected officials have praised Mrs. Johnson's work. Three Congressmen and one Senator endorsed her STW resolution in writing: Congressmen Bob Schaffer, Joel Hefley and Tom Tancredo, and Sen. Wayne Allard. Sen. Allard wrote: "This resolution promotes the idea that state and local officials should have the authority to

(See Resolution, page 4)

Wyoming Supreme Court: Parents Rule!

CHEYENNE, WY — The Wyoming Supreme Court ruled March 14 in *LePage v. Wyoming* that the state has no right to require proof of "sincerity" from parents who exempt their children from certain vaccinations on religious grounds, as allowed by state law. The court declared: "Any [state] agency decision that falls outside the confines of the statutory guidelines articulated by the legislature is contrary to law and cannot stand."

In March 1999, the Wyoming Health Department denied a four-page written request from Susan LePage to exempt her daughter from the hepatitis B vaccine based on the family's religious belief that this mandatory immunization condones immoral behavior. The Health Department asked Mrs. LePage to further "define" her beliefs and explain "how she acted upon them in a consistent manner." After a second letter of explanation, the LePages' request was denied, and they were told that their daughter would not be allowed to continue attending school without the vaccination.

Mrs. LePage requested a hearing, and the matter was referred to the Wyoming Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), which also denied her request. The OAH decided that the LePages' objection was



Wyoming Supreme Court ruled in favor of parents.

"based on personal, moral or philosophical beliefs rather than on a principle of religion or a truly held religious conviction."

Attorneys for the Rutherford Institute appealed this decision to the Wyoming Supreme Court, asserting the right of Mr. and Mrs. LePage to direct the medical treatment of their children according to their beliefs. The court found the Health Department's requirement of a review and formal hearing on the sincerity of the parents' objection, in addition to their initial letter of explanation, clearly beyond the agency's authority under state law. The court ruled that "construing the statute as the Department of Health does raises questions concerning the extent to which the government should be involved in the religious lives of its citizens."

"We . . . are confident in our presumption that parents act in the best interest of their children's physical, as well as their spiritual, health," the justices stated. In a warning to the legislature to avoid infringing on parents' rights in the future, they declared: "It is the legislature's responsibility to act within the constraints of the Wyoming and United States Constitutions."



Homeschoolers Scuttle Test Maine, other states attempt regulation

AUGUSTA, ME — Homeschooling advocates in February scuttled a bill that would have required homeschooled students to take the Maine Educational Assessment test (MEA). The test is aligned with new state standards called "Learning Results." According to the *Portland Press Herald* (2-22-01), about 500 home-schooling parents and students packed a hearing on L.D. 405 to convince members of the House Education and Cultural Affairs Committee that "homeschooling in Maine is working well with existing state regulations and producing high-achieving, successful students."

Twenty-year-old Lindsay Soule-Hinds, a homeschooled student who graduated summa cum laude last spring from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana, told the committee: "Let us agree not to expend our efforts fixing things that are not broken."

Kathy Green, of the group, Home-

schoolers of Maine, noted that, "If you control the test you control the curriculum. Homeschoolers want the greatest amount of flexibility in designing, choosing and planning their own curriculum. That's why they're homeschooling."

L.D. 405 also would have provided state funding for the tests. Bettina Dobbs, a leader of the pro-homeschooling group Guardians of Education for Maine, exclaimed: "Under the guise of a new school funding formula, Maine

would be the first state to force their home-and private-schooled children to take state assessment tests at three grade levels—and to pay for them!" She added that passage of the bill "would disrupt the relative harmony presently existing in Maine between public, private, Christian and homeschooled."

(See Test, page 2)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

A new federal law requires schools and libraries that receive e-rate funds to install pornography-blocking software on their computers. This requirement is contained in HR 4577, the fiscal 2001 appropriations act for the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. Congress passed the law in December and President Clinton signed it although he opposed the filtering mandate. The deadline for schools and libraries to draw up internet safety policies, including the filters, is April 16, 2001.

Praising children to increase self-esteem is becoming less esteemed among experts. Many educators and child psychologists now say that praising children for ordinary actions and accomplishments can have a negative impact, such as making them less motivated and causing them to feel undue pressure or to fear failure. They say that offering encouraging statements and asking questions that prompt children to think about solutions to problems are more likely to motivate them in a positive way.

An advertising slogan posted on 75 city buses in Washington, DC contained a grammatical error. The signs were part of a \$41,000 ad campaign developed and funded by the Washington DC public school system earlier this year. Designed to discourage dropouts, the campaign signs read: "DC Public Schools Wants You!!! Go to Class — It's a Blast!" Many observers say the error is a reflection not only on the DC public schools, but on the flawed philosophy of Whole Language, which fails to teach proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Utah becomes 6th state to enact paycheck protection. Signed into law on March 19, the "Voluntary Contributions Act" prevents Utah employers or unions from deducting monies from workers' paychecks without written permission. The measure also prohibits the use of public employer resources for collecting political contributions. Other states with paycheck protection laws include Idaho, Michigan, Ohio, Washington state, and Wyoming.

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Test

(Continued from page 1)

After the hearing, Education Committee Chairwoman Shirley Richard admitted, "there is no doubt that the MEA is out and the funding issue is out." The committee did plan, however, to consider recommending a state study on homeschooling to address Sen. Peter Mills' contention that homeschooled children "are being left behind." (Sen. Mills was the sponsor of L.D. 405.)

Homeschool Legal Defense Association Attorney Scott Woodruff, who traveled from Washington DC to represent Maine's homeschooling families at the hearing, stated: "If Sen. Mills wants to study homeschooling, all he has to do is go to the library and start reading. It's been done before." Woodruff cited studies showing that homeschoolers across the country (including Maine) perform better on national achievement tests than their public school peers.

Proposals in Other States

Bettina Dobbs suggests that homeschooling and private school parents across the country check on proposed legislation in their statehouses "before it is too late." She cautions that such mandates will bring "many undesirable results."

In Mississippi, legislators are considering a bill that would require homeschooling parents to submit a detailed description to the state of every subject they teach. American Family Association Center for Law & Policy Attorney Steve Crampton says a provision in the bill refers to "legitimate" homeschool instruction, which raises frightening questions. "What is the definition of 'legitimate,'" he asks, "and who defines it?"

Crampton calls the Mississippi bill "a

setup for further intrusion." "It seems to open the door for government authorities to decide for themselves what's legitimate and what's not," he observes, "thereby setting homeschoolers up for harassment or prosecution." Crampton believes that the purpose of such bills is to allow the government to gradually take control, "ultimately to the point of requiring homeschoolers to use public school curriculum."

In South Dakota, a bill described by opponents as "a huge step backward" for homeschooling families passed the House but was stopped in the Senate Education Committee. H.B. 1181 would have changed state law to require a 30-day waiting period after filing an exemption application before parents could begin homeschooling their children. (South Dakota considers homeschooled private schools and parents must obtain a state exemption certificate.)

Attorney Scott Woodruff stated that "There was no verifiable need for this legislation. The bill was backed only by the slenderest of anecdotal evidence, and the Senate Education Committee understood that."

Sponsors of H.B. 1181 claimed that the bill's purpose was to discourage parents from pulling their children out of public school because of disciplinary action, homeschooling them for a time, then returning them to the system. Homeschool supporters counter that the bill more likely had a funding motive, since school districts receive state funds based on attendance.

"A child who has been suspended or expelled is clearly not thriving in the government schools," notes Woodruff. "If a family wishes to remove a child from public school, it makes no sense to put up roadblocks simply because the child has been suspended or expelled from the system."



More Briefs

Schools in Chicago are handing out parent report cards. About 30 schools are giving parents letter grades on their involvement with their children's education. Teachers grade parents in 14 areas, including whether they ask about their children's school day, send appropriate notes to explain absences, or supervise homework. Failing parents can expect a "home visit" every 10 weeks from representatives of the school system. An additional 210 schools are giving parents checklists, which are similar to the report cards without the letter grades.

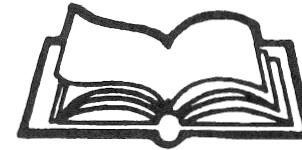
California Court of Appeals ruled that religious groups can meet on public school property. In reversing a lower court ruling, the three-judge panel decided unanimously that student Bible clubs have an equal right to access school facilities as other extracurricular clubs. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Mission Viejo brought the suit in 1997 against the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Last month, the district

voted to appeal the decision to the California Supreme Court.

Researchers at North Carolina State University found 12 popular middle school science textbooks riddled with errors. These included factual errors, such as giving the wrong formula for calculating the volume of a sphere (found in *Glencoe: Science Interactions*, published in 1998 by Glencoe/McGraw-Hill). According to *Education Week* (1-24-01), the two-year study supports the findings published in 1999 report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that middle school science textbooks fail to adequately teach the fundamentals of science.

Alabama's state board of education has unanimously approved new science standards, which contain the following statement in the introduction: "Explanations of the origin of life and major groups of plants and animals, including humans, shall be treated as theory and not as fact."

Book of the Month



The State Against Religion, The Case for Equal Protection, Gus R. Stelzer, Acorn Press, 2001, 192 pps., \$19.95.

Of the millions of pages that have been written about America's disastrous moral decline over the past four decades, few summarize the causes and offer a solution with the engrossing brevity of those in *The State Against Religion*.

An accomplished author, former General Motors senior executive, and former member of many prestigious organizations, Stelzer explains that the core philosophy of America's government schools is based on Karl Marx socialism, the Communist Manifesto, and John Dewey's *Humanist Manifesto*

of 1933, which defines Humanism as a "religion" no less than 13 times. This "religion," Stelzer writes, which has no respect for a Supreme Being or a moral authority, "has brainwashed two generations of students to the degree that a majority of them are unable to tell the difference between right and wrong. As adults, they are unable to make proper judgments in many social, economic and political matters."

The book demonstrates that government, by propagating the euphemism of a "global economy" with free trade as its operating agenda, has caused millions of "family disorders," including forcing both parents to work, which leaves millions of children without adequate parental guidance and places added burdens on teachers and schools.

Subsequently, taxpayers are forced to pay increasing taxes to fund a morally bankrupt education system that is "incapable of coping with a society in which 80% of the citizens are in a virtual state of semi-financial bankruptcy."

Stelzer's solution? Establish a "no-strings-attached" voucher system so that parents can send their children to any school of their choosing.

"Taxpayer money should not be used to subsidize anti-religion in government-run schools," he writes, "which function as giant adversaries against parochial schools via massive government subsidies at a rate of \$350 billion per year. The contention that taxpayer funds may not be used for any school system other than a government-run system that stifles freedom and choice is not only arrogant, discriminatory and bigoted, "it violates the 'equal protection' clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the 'free exercise clause' of the First Amendment."

Available from Acorn Press, 461 Layside Dr., Winchester, VA 22602, 800-32-BOOKS.

FOCUS: School-to-Work & Other Unworkable Ideas

By J. Martin Rochester, Ph.D.

During the 1980s, when my wife and I had two children in elementary school in the University City School District in the metropolitan St. Louis area, I noticed over time that the newsletters sent home by the school principal contained fewer and fewer references to "rigor," "homework," "standards," "merit," and "discipline."

Instead, I saw increasing references to "equity," "diversity," "self-esteem," "inclusion," "multiculturalism," and all the buzzwords that we now hear ad nauseam. At first, these buzzwords sounded innocent enough — after all, who could be against equality and diversity? Gradually, I realized that the buzzwords represented a sea change in K-12 thinking that was moving the schools away from a commitment to academic excellence toward mediocrity.

We decided to move to the neighboring Clayton school district (where we assumed they still knew what academic excellence looked like), and yet we continued to fight the same battles over the next decade. In many ways, Clayton is a wonderful, world-class district that served my kids well (they graduated from Clayton High School in 1993 and 1997 respectively), but I saw how even the best school districts can get caught up in the worst sort of nonsensical "pack pedagogy" associated with progressive/constructivist ideas. I should stress that these nonsensical ideas are not confined to public schools but are increasingly finding their way into private and parochial schools.

What is obviously needed is *balance*, i.e., blending the best of the traditional pedagogy with the best of the newer pedagogy, but unfortunately, the reformers do not understand the concept of balance — it is not in their vocabulary.

My own analysis of what ails K-12 education boils down to two problems: First, there is an inadequate focus on academics in our schools — that is, there is a growing "social" mission as schools are increasingly assuming functions traditionally performed by family, church, and other institutions. Second, to the extent that academics are still the stuff of schooling today, there is a systematic dumbing down — a dilution of quality due to declining expectations and standards. School-to-Work is a manifestation of the convergence of these two trends.

It is true that School-to-Work and the other garbage in place today is simply the latest incarnation of progressive educa-

The buzz-words represent a sea change in K-12 thinking that moves the schools away from a commitment to academic excellence toward mediocrity.

tion that has dominated our schools for a century. But what is new and different is that this dumbing down now extends to *all* kids, including the best and the brightest and the most highly gifted. The bottom is admittedly being raised up somewhat by the emphasis on "standards," but in the process we are lowering the ceiling for the middle and top as part of a giant leveling project. Look at the anti-textbook, anti-lecture, anti-homework pedagogy being prescribed for the St. Louis Career Academy, a local alternative, vo-tech school,* and you will see that it is the very same model being pushed in world class and college prep districts.

A former assistant superintendent for curriculum in the Clayton school district once told me that her goal was "mass excellence." I had to explain to her that mass excellence is an oxymoron. Here are a few examples from my own experience to illustrate how mass excellence works:

1) At Wydown Middle School, a School-to-Work consultant was brought in to talk to a class of students, 99% of whom will go to college, including Harvard, Yale and other elite schools, and proceeded to tell them they should not necessarily consider going to college, that there are many ways to have a productive life.

2) The school board recently approved a "violence prevention" curriculum, although we've been told there is not enough time to teach grammar and multiplication tables. I wrote the board a memo saying: "Let me state in the strongest terms possible that I did not spend megabucks to buy a home in the Clayton school district so that my kids could receive instruction in violence prevention aimed at curbing their killer instincts or turning them into amateur Mahatma Ghandis."

3) In an Honors English class at Clayton High, my son did a juvenile cut-and-paste scrapbook as the capstone project for a Greek mythology unit where he cut out things like Nike shoe ads from the newspaper. When a parent asked the teacher how she could have high school students, especially honors students, do such juvenile work, she reportedly responded: "Haven't you ever heard of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences?" She was referring to the nonsensical theory — now so popular — which says schools should not just focus on the two traditional intelligences (verbal/linguistic intelligence and mathematical/scientific/logical reasoning intelligence), but also musical, spatial, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and bodily kinesthetic intelligences (what I call scribbling, dribbling, musing and schmoozing), as if there are enough hours between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to do all this. We can't even get kids to master one skill, like writing a complete sentence, but we are supposed to have drawing, singing, dancing and prancing across the curriculum.

4) In an 8th-grade English class, my son used Play-Doh to express his feelings about prejudice.

5) Perhaps the kicker was a Clayton High English teacher who actually had her students produce a Cliff Notes version of stories they were reading, complete with the famous or infamous bright yellow covers, and had them proudly submit the crib sheets to Cliff Notes, Inc. for possible publication.

I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture. Many of the teachers were brilliant teachers who had been sucked into the dumbing down currents of our time.

The operative principle among K-12 reformers is, as the ad in the Chris Farley "Tommy Boy" movie put it: "If at first you don't succeed, lower the standard." If you can't spell, no problem, we have inventive spelling and spellcheck. If you think the Concert of Europe is a rock band, no problem. All you have to do is "locate" and "access" information on the internet. If you don't know that $2 \times 2 = 4$, no problem. You can use a calculator. I find it ironic that trendy types tend to put down students who respond well to lectures and traditional pedagogy as "dependent learners," yet the reformers are producing an entire generation of students who cannot function without a machine next to them at all times.

How is this affecting *higher* education? There is lots of fallout, but, in all fairness, K-12 is not entirely to blame for the problem. It is partly a product of society at large — notably an MTV pop culture that substitutes sound bites and jazzy visuals for thoughtful deliberation and substance.

We in higher education are ourselves part of the problem and may indeed be the root cause, since most of the nutty ideas emanate from academia. I do not have to tell you about the role played by schools of education — read Rita Kramer's *Ed School Follies*. The leading standards-setting bodies in the disciplines, such as the National Council of Teachers of English (which gave us whole language) and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (which gave us fuzzy math) are heavily populated by university faculty. Constructivism itself, which is the main paradigm dominating K-12 education today, is an offshoot of postmodernist thought which has taken over the academy and which rejects the existence of any true, objective body of knowledge (with the sole exception of its own theories).

We are at fault, also, because so many universities have such lax admission standards that high school students have few incentives to perform well prior to entering college. Students suffering from "test anxiety" can now take as long as they want on the SAT exam; once on campus, they can claim "lack of concentration" and assorted other disabilities as grounds for forcing professors to relax standards. Grade inflation is rampant, and we now have courses of study such as "popular television," offered by my alma mater,

Syracuse University, so that students can major in "Beavis and Butt-Head" or, for the more hi-brow types, "Melrose Place."

So I submit that there are lots of folks to blame for what is happening, although I would argue that K-12 education remains the number one culprit. For many years I have witnessed a decline in academic preparation on the part of students entering my own university, and I have heard similar complaints expressed by colleagues at other institutions throughout the country, including elite schools.

What is evident in today's student body is a poor work ethic, an aversion to reading and listening, an inability to write polished prose consisting of complete words and sentences using standard English conventions, an ignorance of history, an entitlement mentality regarding good grades, a devaluing of traditional notions of scholarship, and a disrespect for the teacher/student relationship and for learning itself. Kids learn all this first in K-12, where "rigor" and "merit" are now four-letter words.

We in higher education are having to devote ever more time and energy to remediation, euphemistically called "academic development." The U.S. Department of Education reports that more than 80% of all public colleges and 70% of all private colleges, including Ivy League schools, now feel a need to offer remedial instruction.

There is a profound anti-intellectualism in our culture. Schools have been the one place in the past where the intellect has been allowed to flourish, but that is now at risk with recent trends, especially the proliferation

America's universities have until now been the envy of the world. . .

of School-to-Work consultants who, in pushing for so-called "practical skills," send a message to students that they should not be interested in any intellectual pursuits other than those that translate instantly into making a buck. Free market corporate interests are no less to blame for this than the social engineers.

America's universities have until now been the envy of the world, but if present trends persist, there may be little worth envying anywhere in American education. However, I close with the plea that you continue to fight for academic excellence against those who would destroy it. I would not be fighting this battle if I did not think it was ultimately winnable and well worth waging.

(* See *Education Reporter*, July 1998.)

Dr. Rochester is Professor of Political Science and a Fellow in the Center for International Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where he has taught since 1972. He has authored several books and published numerous articles in newspapers and scholarly journals.



Resolution (Continued from page 1)

decide how federal funds are best used to prepare today's children for the future. Federal financial support should not encumber local programs with federal mandates. . . ."

Rep. Tancredo stated: "As a former public school teacher, I believe all students should have access to a quality education and that these students should not be steered into jobs or duties that are against this fundamental right."

Rep. Hefley's letter noted: "The School-to-Work plan being implemented in our state has many disturbing elements that I believe go too far in 'career tracking' students. I do not like curriculum development where work-based learning and occupational learning are coupled with academic instruction for all students."

Congressman Schaffer promised to work with colleagues "to return more decision-making authority in education to the state and local levels." He cited the Education Flexibility Partnership Act and the Academic Achievement for All Act, which he indicated have been passed to that end. "In addition," Schaffer wrote, "we are fighting to make sure the federal School-to-Work program is defunded for FY 2001."

Patti Johnson's supporters describe her as a tireless champion of parents' rights during her five years on the Colorado State School Board. At her instigation, the board in 1999 became the first in the nation to pass a resolution warning of the possible negative effects of mind-altering prescription drugs, such as Ritalin, on children. (See *Education Reporter*, Dec. 1999.) Last September, Mrs. Johnson testified before a congressional subcommittee on this issue, and Rep. Schaffer credited her testimony for the hearing's success. "The hearing gener-

ated much interest among the public, causing committee members to schedule additional hearings in the future on behavioral drugs," Schaffer said.

Colorado State Board of Education RESOLUTION

Whereas, schools are primarily institutions of learning and shall not be diverted from this noble mission by attempting to meet every non-academic need of students, and;

Whereas, children are not a resource for the state; and

Whereas, business should not be required or pressured by incentives or disincentives to participate in career programs, and;

Whereas, government controlled economies have historically failed and free market economies have flourished; and

Whereas, diplomas shall be determined at the local level;

Be it Resolved that graduation shall be based on completion of study of core academics and non-academics shall be of a voluntary nature. Vocational directions shall be exclusively the free choice of individual students.

Be It Further Resolved that the Colorado State Board of Education uphold the American Free Enterprise system and support a strong well-rounded academic education which offers all students the foundation to succeed in whatever post-secondary education or vocation they should choose to pursue.

Adopted Dec. 14, 2000

School Tragedies Reveal Media Bias Selective reporting aids gun control agenda

SANTEE, CA — The tragic March 5 shooting at Santana High School in suburban San Diego, which resulted in two dead and a dozen wounded, grabbed front page headlines and received round-the-clock national TV and radio coverage. The 15-year-old perpetrator, Charles "Andy" Williams, was described as a "scrawny" kid who was picked on by bullies; a child of divorce whose mother lives in South Carolina and who, classmates said, "didn't get along" with his father.

A week before the shooting — on Feb. 26 — another troubled youth, a college student in Isla Vista, California, rammed his car into a crowd of fellow students at 60 miles per hour, killing four and critically injuring one. As he was arrested, the 19-year-old shouted: "I'm the angel of death!"

In stark contrast to the Santana tragedy, accounts of this rampage were relegated to page two in newspapers and received scant attention from the electronic media. National Libertarian Party spokesman George Getz, commenting on the reporting discrepancy, asked, "What's the explanation, unless journalists are almost 100% against the Second Amendment — and jump on any opportunity to demonize guns and exploit gun-related tragedies, while ignoring other, equally tragic crimes?"

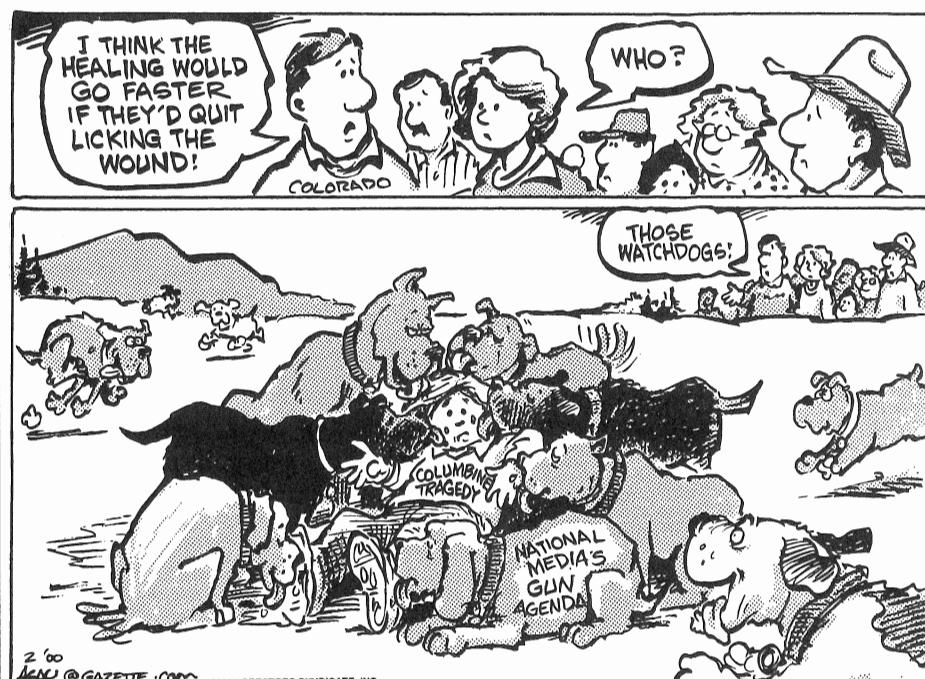
"Journalists are taught to revere the

First Amendment and scorn the Second Amendment," Getz stated. "So they use their First Amendment rights to slant and distort the news to attack the Second Amendment."

Supporting Gun Control

Observers note that the media's trumpeting of gun violence sets the stage for increased efforts by the gun control lobby, as occurred in the wake of the 1999 tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado. In a commentary on Newsmax.com (3-12-01), *Medical Sentinel* Editor-in-Chief Miguel A. Faria Jr., M.D. noted that, while President Bush asked Americans to "pray for the children" at Santana High School and called Williams' heinous crime "a disgraceful act of cowardice," "demagogic politicians like U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) once again used a tragic occasion to renew their gun prohibitionist efforts."

According to Dr. Faria, Schumer and Feinstein were joined by "the usual suspects," Sarah Brady and Handgun Control Inc. "HGI immediately called for the passage of a number of anti-gun proposals for the nation, most of which are already in place in California," he wrote. Dr. Faria pointed out that, ironically, HGI had awarded California the highest "grades" on its state gun control report card for "laws protecting children from gun violence."



Memorizing & Testing Gibberish?

◆ "A deblet is a parade; a merim is a young chicken; a mert is a bonnet; a hoyjet is a thick liquid; a bloy is an explorer; an alpern is a necktie; a tocket is a napkin; a paylok is a wagon; a hoosley is a light bulb; a whister is a jar. . . ."

A similar test (which does not identify the publisher) also requires students to memorize gibberish, including:

◆ "A lep is a ball; a korf is a tiger; a pillot is a shoe; a tay is a hammer; a flix is a comb; a wogsin is a gift; a trink is a wastebasket; a hillett is a window; a rayble is a swampy place; a dectrin is a facial expression. . . ."

Some parents question the purpose of such nonsense. One education activist, who is also a mother and grandmother, asked teachers who have administered the tests "why it is so important that children memorize nonsense words." She suggested that students instead be taught foreign language words which they might actually use some day. One of the teachers responded that the nonsense words may serve as a means of "being politically correct." Using a real language, she explained, might give some students an unfair advantage over others.

Letter to the Editor of *Education Reporter*

School-to-Work

Dear Editor:

Just wanted to thank you for being a strong voice for righteousness. I read your School-to-Work info and want you to know you are on the money.

I work for a school-to-work program here at Valdosta State, and you would not believe some of the things going on. From the wasted monies to just the brainwashing of our students, School-to-Work is helping to damage our great educational system.

In this area, parents are doing more to give STW control over their kids. How?

By placing them in such a materialistic environment; many of the kids need jobs to pay for those new cars, new apartments, new clothes, new cell phones, etc., and we (educators) wonder why the average GPA is now 2.4 or less.

Please be strong and courageous on this issue. After all, our kids are worth it!

Mike McKinley, Academic Coordinator Cooperative Education Valdosta State University P.S. Freshmen can no longer be called "freshmen." The new, politically-correct term is "First Year Student."