Bible Babble Banned By Bench

Fifty years after the Scopes monkey trial, a federal judge and the Tennessee Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a 1973 Tennessee law requiring textbooks to provide equal space to biblical and scientific theories on the creation of the universe.

U.S. District Court Judge Frank Gray Jr. declared that the Tennessee law violated First Amendment guarantees of freedom of religion. Tennessee's high court affirmed a ruling by Davidson County Chancellor Ben H. Cantrell that the law violated both the U.S. and the Tennessee constitutions.

The federal judge found the law unreasonable. "Every religious sect, from the worshipers of Apollo to the followers of Zoroaster, has its belief or theory," Gray said. "It is beyond the comprehension of this court how the legislature, if indeed it did, expected that all such theories could be included in any textbook of reasonable size."

Less Education— for More Money

More students are graduating high school nowadays, but fewer of them are going on to college, reports the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

"The most important single reason for this decline in higher education opportunity since about 1968 is student fees," the Association says in its report, "Low Tuition Fact Book."

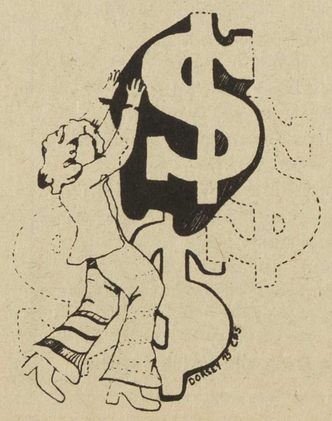
Between 1969 and 1973 there has been about a 10% drop in the percentage of 18-24-year-olds from families earning less than $15,000 a year going to college full-time.

Median American family income is about $13,000. A Bureau of Labor Statistics study shows "median" families have only a few hundred dollars a year left over after meeting living costs. But the cost of a residential public college may be $2,500 to $3,000 a year.

What about student aid programs? The Association says that aid programs are far below the amounts needed to help poor students, much less middle class students.

Copies of the Fact Book are available from the AASCU, Suite 700, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036.

—Information from LNS



Detention Centers: More Harm Than Good

Juvenile offenders may be better off with no treatment at all, at least until better supportive and rehabilitative programs are developed. Many kids have known that for a long time, but now they're getting official confirmation from the University of Michigan's National Assessment of Juvenile Corrections (NAJC).

In a major study of the U.S. juvenile justice system, Robert Vinter and his colleagues at NAJC analyzed the three types of most commonly used juvenile correctional facilities: institutions, group homes and day treatment centers. They also made statistical studies of the young people, staff and administrators involved in juvenile justice.

Their findings:

- The traditional "lock 'em up" institutions are still being used to handle large numbers of young people who have committed only minor offenses, such as running away, drinking and having trouble in school;
- There are a disproportionately large number of younger children in the most restrictive programs;
- Girls are more likely than boys to receive harsher treatment (being sent to an institution) for the same type of offense;
- Third world young people are overrepresented in juvenile corrections programs. Blacks, who comprise about 12% of the U.S. population, make up 33% of the juvenile corrections population, and American Indians, who comprise less than 1% of the U.S. population, make up an astonishing 8% of juvenile prisoners;
- Even though 50% of juveniles are third-world people, over 80% of juvenile administrators are white;
- Group homes, the least restrictive form of punishment, are more likely to contain whites, females and upper- or middle-class young people.

The study findings also indicate that many juveniles who have committed relatively serious offenses are being handled successfully in day treatment centers and group homes. This indicates that many young people who are now being institutionalized could be handled in less expensive, less restrictive community programs.

In fact, the study suggests that placing juveniles in prison-like situations may be counter productive. The largest proportion of young people who feel resentful about the harshness, unfairness and likelihood of punishment and control are those found in detention centers, while those in group homes express the most satisfaction with the kind of punishment they get. Unfortunately, most states don't have a good system of group homes or day treatment centers.

In the view of Vinter, until more supportive and rehabilitative facilities are made available to juveniles, the best alternative may be to do nothing at all. He feels that a child who is guilty of nothing more than truancy or promiscuity is better off in her own community setting, no matter how difficult it may be, than locked up in a system which doesn't know how to help her

THE HIGH COST OF REPRESSION

Most states continue to send most juvenile delinquents to correctional institutions rather than use cheaper and more effective community-based rehabilitation programs.

Community-based programs were recommended by a 1967 presidential commission on delinquency because of the failure of institutions to rehabilitate young people and because it is more expensive to institutionalize them.

Community-based programs nationally averaged $5,501 a year for each child in 1974, while institutional costs averaged $11,657 per child each year.