

EDITORIAL

The Growing Debate: Prayer in Public Schools

The question of prayer in public schools has been debated for more than a decade. President Reagan's proposal in May to constitutionalize voluntary prayer in public schools has started the Congress Battle up again.

In 1962 and 1963, a decision was made by the Supreme Court that has caused great controversy. The Supreme Court decided that the use of non-denominational prayer in New York State was unconstitutional. Citing a portion of the 1st amendment, Justice Hugo L. Black declared that school prayer was a violation of the 1st amendment clause that in effect, allows us to practice any religion we believe in.

Should prayer be included in a normal school day? Many believe so. Prayer to God is part of our history and our tradition. There is certainly nothing profane about prayer in public schools -- we acknowledge God's presence on our coins, in our pledge of allegiance, at football games. There is another side, though.

What about children who do not wish to pray? Or, children of atheistic parents? Or children belonging to other faiths? Do they have the right not to pray? They do have the right to not pray, but how many children would walk out of a classroom that is getting ready to pray? Peer pressure existed back in the 60's, and it still exists today. Children might feel that it is easier to sit through "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependance upon thee, and we beg thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country," than leave the room.

I believe in the right to pray in public schools. I also believe in the right not to pray. One solution would be a moment or two of silence at the beginning of the school day. Students could use this minute to suit their beliefs and necessities. Parents could advise their children to use this minute(s) in a way they feel best. A moment of silence is a more democratic answer. Teachers could monitor the period of silence.

America cannot agree on this issue. Forcing students to recite a freeze-dried prayer is not the answer. Neither is no prayer at all. We must find a middle ground, we are too diverse to settle for one answer. Lets hope it is found soon; for the children's sake.

MGB

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

One of the biggest complaints I've heard since I've been here at St. Mary's is not the food nor (surprisingly) the curfew, but it's been about the bookstore. Being a "New Girl," I accepted the tales as fact, having no chance to prove otherwise ... I have since then had the chance.

After a brief interview with Mrs. Parker, manager of our Little Bookstore, I have learned that most people are complaining about trivialities (as is usually the case). Having done some comparative shopping I learned that, yes, there is a moderate savings at Kerr Drugs. This follows the most

cliche phrases that I've heard since I've been here at St. Mary's: "Compare and save?!!! Yeah! Compare here and save somewhere else!" If it is that important to save 5 to 25 cents on shampoo, then I suggest you shop elsewhere, although you'll spend at least a dollar more on gas to get there. On that same note, I wonder about the girls who drive BMW's, use Erno Lazle soap, sport forty-two dollar designer jeans, and quibble because they paid \$2.09 for creme rinse when they could have gotten it at Kerr for \$1.98.

The bookstore is not a consumer warehouse for us to save our pennies in; it is there for our convenience. If we get

the munchies, we can go to the bookstore and get M&M's; if we have a big date and no shampoo, we can just run to the bookstore--not to mention the items found there that simply cannot be bought elsewhere. Items which, by the way, are less expensive than equivalent products found at bookstores at N.C. State and Chapel Hill.

Then I heard the squawking over school books. Well kids, we're in college now (high school readers excepted) and when you go to college you have to pay for grown-up books written by intelligent people who know, believe it or not, what they're talking about. We are supposed to learn from them and (since this is an editorial) in my opinion, you can not put a price on a good education.

For those who are "concerned" that the bookstore makes a phenominal profit Yes, the bookstores does make a "profit," but it is far from phenominal. Actually it makes approximately an eighteen to twenty per cent profit. Anyone who knows anything about retailing will tell you that a really substantial profit must be at least 100 percent; and usually in stores like Thalheimer's, Miller & Rhodes, and Belk-Leggett's the profit margin is even higher. The 20 per cent profit that the bookstore makes has to pay for electricity, maintenance, and salaries.

I am not assuming that you are going to take my word as gospel, nor do I expect you to. If you have any questions, complaints, or suggestions, please go see Mrs. Parker; she is more than willing to answer or listen to anything you have to say.

