

Tennessee School Official Vows Personal Fight Against Ruling

As perhaps might have been expected, reaction to the high court's ruling was mixed outside the 11th Circuit. In Greenville, Tennessee, Chuckey-Doak High School principal Jack Kilday viewed the Supreme Court decision as "a shame and a disgrace." "We will have no other recourse but to obey the decision. However, I personally plan to continue the pre-game prayer until our school board and superintendent order me to quit," he vowed. Neighboring North Greene High School principal, Richard Morrison said he felt the decision was a "terrible one." "We personally feel that the pre-game prayer is probably our most important function at a football game," he said. "I realize it is the law of the land and we must obey," he added, "but I personally will be saying a prayer for our youngsters prior to every kickoff. The ruling sure is a terrible one."

"Pizza Evangelism" — Premeditated, Purposeful, and Profitable

The June/July issue of *Freethought Today* reports a 1983 survey conducted by *Education Week*, indicating that 4,500 professional missionaries were operating in the public schools. Young Life had more than 400 paid missionaries; the high school program of Youth for Christ had 800 missionaries. In addition, there was Campus Crusade for Christ, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Youth with a Mission, Athletes in Action, and countless smalltime evangelical groups. While many continue to operate today, when evaluated in terms of their aggressive exploitation of the public schools, most pale by comparison with the Kansas-based Jerry Johnston Association, Dallas Baptist evangelist Jay Strack, or Sports World Ministries of New Tazewell, Tennessee.

Pizza Evangelist #1 — Jerry Johnston — Man of Two Faces

Freethought describes evangelist Jerry Johnston as a man of two faces. One is the allegedly secular "Jerry Johnston Association" (PO Box 12193, Overland Park, KS, 66212). The other is the overtly religious "Jerry Johnston Ministries" (PO Box 12193, Shawnee Mission, KS, 66212) founded in 1979. In 1980-81, Johnston launched his "LIFE" school assembly lectures on drug and alcohol abuse and teen suicide. Today, in addition to those topics, his lectures include teen pregnancy and

Satan worship, as well. Literature circulated by Johnston touts him as "North America's No. 1 Speaker to the High School and University Campus. . . addressing up to 30,000 students weekly" and boasts his appearances at over 1,800 public schools nationwide.

Not advertising any formal training in counseling, psychology, adolescent development, or any of the four topics on which he lectures, his main claim to expertise is as a former teen drug addict who once contemplated suicide. . . until he found Jesus. Nor does his literature mention any degrees. Rather, Johnston's PR material emphasizes that his main goal is not so much "suicide prevention" as it is to prevent people from "entering eternity never knowing Jesus Christ as Savior." He is paid at least \$250 per appearance, usually clustering school assemblies so as to hit as many in an area as he can and time them with evening crusades. In his remarks at school assemblies he practices discretion regarding religion, but invariably hands out fliers and "free tickets" inviting students to a pizza party which is actually a crusade for Christ, complete with altar calls, instructions to pray, and the open solicitation of donations (an envelope is placed on every chair). Frequently, costs are underwritten or donated by local churches and businesses. Thus, Johnston has a very lucrative ministry, with schools paying him honoraria, and the community picking up his expenses.

How does Johnston manage such a scam in the public schools? First of all, by being "discreet." Following recent complaints lodged against Johnston's methods in San Bernadino, California, the *San Bernadino Sun* asked him that very question. His response: "Look, you know and I know that if I go into a school administrator's office and the word 'evangelistic' or 'ministry' is mentioned, I'm out the door. . . I wouldn't call what we're doing deceptive. I'd call it discreet."

Of course, the following endorsement by President Ronald Reagan doesn't hurt either: "One of the most promising signs that America is awakening to the harm of these substances [alcohol & drugs] is the activity of organizations such as the Life Assembly with Jerry Johnston." Life Assembly endorsements also include school officials, Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, government officials, and the Christian entrepreneur, Zig Ziglar.

Are You on Johnston's List?

An incomplete Fall 1989 list of tentative Life Assembly bookings include Asheville, North Carolina, Sept. 17-22; Tempe, Arizona, Oct. 1-6; Louisville, Kentucky, Oct. 8-13; and, Lake Charles, Louisiana, Oct. 22-26.