

ACLU SUIT OVER “MINUTE OF SILENCE” LAW SHOWS BIAS

On July 1, a new law will take effect in Virginia that requires public schools to begin each day with a minute of silence. Students will be allowed to “meditate, pray or engage in other silent activity.” The ACLU chapter in Virginia is suing claiming that the law is an unconstitutional violation of separation of church and state.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, described the anti-religious bias that colors the ACLU’s thinking on this subject:

“Kent Willis, the executive director of the ACLU’s office in Virginia, has said that ‘A true minute-of-silence law that did not mention prayer and had no religious intent would be constitutional. Every student who has ever attended public schools knows that they can pray to themselves.’ Willis suggests that somehow the government, in its benevolence, is allowing students to pray to themselves, when in fact no means has yet been found to monitor private thought. The founder of the ACLU was even more explicit.

“In 1978, I interviewed Roger Baldwin, the founder of the ACLU. I asked him ‘Whose rights are being infringed upon if there is a silent prayer voluntarily said by a student?’ He said ‘they’ve tried to get around it even further than you by calling it meditation’; to which I replied, ‘what’s wrong with that?’ His answer had an Orwellian ring to it: ‘I suppose you can get away with that but it’s a subterfuge, because the implication is that you’re meditating about *the hereafter or God or something.*’ (My emphasis.) I answered, saying ‘Well, what’s wrong with that? Doesn’t a person have the right to do that? Or to meditate about popcorn for that matter?’

"Baldwin was an honest man. His objection to meditation in the schools was based on his deep-seated fear that young boys and girls might actually be meditating about the hereafter or God. And that is the real reason why the ACLU is opposed to the minute of silence law in Virginia: they sincerely believe that a free society is at risk if it allows the prospect of school kids meditating in the classroom. Now if the ACLU knew in advance that the kids were meditating on how best to put condoms on a cucumber in a sex ed class, all their fears would be allayed."