

Following complaint

Bible distribution is ended in Dover

By SANDY STEWART

Religion in the public schools, always a controversial subject, lived up to that reputation Monday night at the Dover board of education meeting.

The topic was raised after a parent, unhappy that Gideon Bibles were distributed to 5th grade students, wrote to Supt. Bill Kinneer asking if the action was sanctioned by the board and if the practice would continue.

Kinneer told board members that Solicitor Dennis Traver advised him that similar cases in three other states had been taken to court and the distribution of religious literature was ruled unconstitutional. Kinneer added that Traver felt the same ruling would result in any case initiated locally.

BOARD MEMBERS noted during a review of board policy that there is to be no dissemination of religious liter-

ature of an indoctrinal nature in the schools. Distribution of the Bibles is considered such, and the board agreed to follow its policies, accept the solicitor's opinion and abide by the court decisions.

"This is my personal feeling," said board member Isabel Moore. "I invite them to take us to court. I think the public should know who's putting the pressure on this board in this and religious matters.

"I think it's too bad if three families can influence the board, and their feelings can take precedence over the rest of the community."

Neither the protesting parent or the three families mentioned by Mrs. Moore were identified.

ED WEST, another board member, responded: "I feel pretty much the same way, but I think it (the law) is pretty clear cut."

"You get threatened and you bow down," Mrs. Moore replied. "I think the rest of the people in this community should have a say."

"As far as I'm concerned," West said, "the issue already has been decided. The law already has been determined, and I think we're aware of what the law is."

Shirley Miller, also a board member, stated: "I think this is where personal opinion must stop and we must become a board. This is the law."

LaVerne King, board president, addressed Mrs. Moore: "I feel the same as you, but I also feel we lost something a long time ago when religion was taken out of the school, but that's my own personal opinion."

"I guess I lost, so I will graciously accept my defeat," Mrs. Moore conceded.

Board member Jim Zifer replied: "You didn't lose," and West added, "We lost a long time ago."

KINEER AND Don Peters, administrative assistant, said no official board action on distributing the Bibles had ever been taken to their knowledge. Kinneer explained that at one time a superintendent apparently had given permission and the practice had continued.

He noted that this was the first formal complaint, and that is why the matter was presented to the board.