In parental rights cases

Legal help not mandatory for poor

The Supreme Court ruled this week that poor people have no absolute right to a court-appointed attorney in hearings where they may permanently lose parental rights over their children.

The justices—rejecting arguments from the American Bar Association, civil libertarians and a public defenders group—concluded in a 5-4 decision that states are not always obliged to provide an attorney to represent a father or mother when local officials want to revoke their rights as a parent.

"The Constitution does not require the appointment of counsel for indigent parents in every parental status termination proceeding," said the opinion written by Justice Potter Stewart.

Chief Justice Warren Burger, and Justices Byron White, Lewis Powell and William Rehnquist joined in the majority.

The ruling upheld a North Carolina Court of Appeals decision that allowed the Durham, N.C. social services department to take away the parental rights of Abby Gail Lassiter.

In the case in question, the high court held that "the presence of counsel could not have made a determinative difference."

Dissenting from the ruling, Justice William Brennan said that the majority of the Court had avoided "the obvious conclusion that due process requires the presence of counsel for a parent threatened with judicial termination of parental rights."

Ms. Lassiter's appeal to the Supreme Court was supported by the ABA, the North Carolina Civil Liberties Union, the National Center on Women and Family Law, and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.

NAACP 'Tag Day'

"The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has proclaimed June 12th and 13th as "National Tag Days."

"NAACP FREEDOM DAY — FREEDOM ISN'T FREE" is the theme for the nation-wide effort to raise funds.

Blacks, according to NAACP officials, are facing serious problems, including vast budget cuts that impact adversely on the poor and needy, a threatened constitutional amendment against affirmative action the perilous future of the Fair Housing Act and the extension of the Voting Rights Act.

Dr. Emmett Burns, Region 7 director and coordinator of Local Tag Days, said that the "extremely difficult challenges demand an increased response from the NAACP.

Burns said that "the commitment to wage these battles has placed the Association in a serious financial deficit."

In an effort to continue the fight for freedom, a major thrust to solicit funds will occur during the Tag Days.

All contributors will receive an NAACP Freedom Tag.

NAACP volunteers will canvass neighborhoods, shopping centers and other designated sites to collect contributions from supporters.

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'Deliberate sabotage?'

Fight expected over proposed Reagan cuts

Despite reports of "flexibility" on the part of the Reagan administration and its austerity budget, Reagan aides say they will fight "deliberate sabotage" by Democrats seeking to make major changes in the president's spending cuts, budget director David Stockman said this week.

At a news conference held in the nation's capital, Stockman said that the administration is willing to allow committees to make minor changes in details of the spending cuts, but he warned that when the package reaches the House floor for a final vote, "any major deviation from the overall budget targets must be considered deliberate sabotage of the expressed will of Congress and of the American people."

At issue is whether or not Democrats will have an opportunity to pick some of the budget cuts apart on the House floor before a final vote this fall.

Stockman's position was directly opposed to statements by House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, D-Mass., who has said Democrats will offer a series of amendments to restore some of the cuts in crucial social programs such as nutrition and education.

Stockman's comments were made as most House and Senate committees took initial steps toward cutting more than $35 billion from federal programs. Congress, in a recently passed $695 billion budget resolution, instructed committees to make reductions in programs under their control.

Stockman said the House should take a "single up or down vote" on the package in order for the budget cutting process to work.

He said voting on each individual cut "will defeat the whole exercise."

Stockman did not express concern about the Senate, where Republicans hold a majority. Although Senate leaders do not have the option of shutting out amendments, Stockman said the chamber has "strong leadership."

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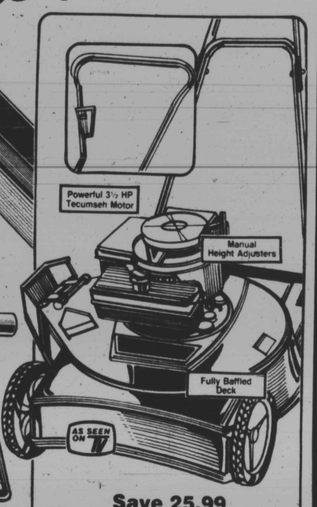

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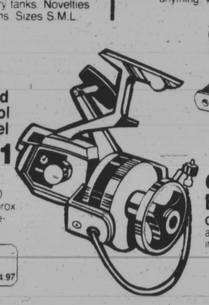

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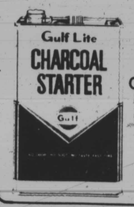

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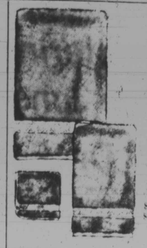

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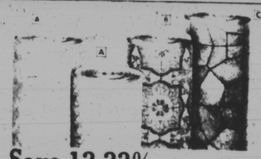

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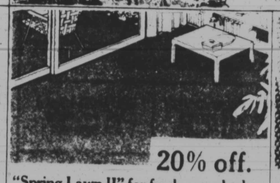

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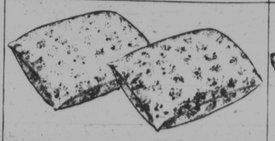

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