

From the Desk of

Mel Sembler

I know you were as distressed as I was about the recent jury decision in Washington.

The enclosed ad, which reflects the support shown by hundreds of parents on the program, is very gratifying.

Thank you for your continued support.

File
STRAIGHT

St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, MONDAY, MAY 16, 1983

Group of parents buys newspaper advertisement to praise Straight

By **BILL CORNWELL**
St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer

Straight Inc. received a vote of confidence Sunday from a group of parents who spent \$3,800 for a newspaper advertisement that praised the controversial St. Petersburg-based drug treatment program.

The full-page advertisement was printed in Sunday's editions of the *St. Petersburg Times*.

The advertisement included letters from parents who said their

children had been relieved of drug problems by Straight.

Straight has been plagued by allegations of abuse and possible criminal violations, and a federal court jury in Virginia found last Thursday that the organization had falsely imprisoned a 20-year-old man in St. Petersburg.

BUT ONE OF the parents who was involved in placing the advertisement said it was not meant as a rebuttal of the jury's findings. Additionally, the parent,

Herbert Green of St. Petersburg, said Straight did not suggest or encourage the advertisement.

"No, no one on the staff of Straight was involved," he said. "It was a response from the parents themselves."

Green, who said he has had one child successfully complete the Straight program and now has a second involved in it, described the ad as "merely an expression of the other side of the story."

See **ADVERTISEMENT, 6-B**

Advertisement

from 1-B

He said that while most newspaper articles about Straight have been written "with some balance," the articles have tended to "end on a sour note."

Speaking of the allegations that people have been held against their will at Straight, Green said that those charges have been exaggerated.

"PEOPLE ARE not being restrained by belts and handcuffs and being beaten, as some would believe," he stated. "We're open to the press, we're open to television, we're open to anyone who wants to come in and see what it is all about.

"We have not had the benefit of the

good side of Straight," he continued, "of these children going to school and getting good grades and then going on to have good jobs. . . . The other side of the story needs to be heard."

Green's wife Shari said "at least 100 people and probably more" contributed money for the advertisement, which her husband said cost \$3,800.

About 95 percent of the money came from parents in Florida, Green estimated.

"ANYTHING worthwhile is worth fighting for," said Green.

Mrs. Green said she believes people are becoming afraid of Straight because of recent news accounts.

"There are people who could be helped . . . (but) they are fearful," she said. "It's a sad waste."