

Contraceptive Company Promotes Products in Classroom

Can a pharmaceutical company which manufactures birth-control devices sponsor a sex education program for students without having a conflict of interest?

This question is at the center of a gathering storm which focuses on Ortho Pharmaceutical Corporation's participation in *Straight Talk*, a new sex education program currently being introduced in schools across the country. Concerned parents and citizens are accusing Ortho of using the program to take advantage of a captive audience (the public school classroom) to create a bigger teenage market for its own contraceptive products.

To support their charge, parents point to the program's overwhelming emphasis on birth-control options, in addition to the fact that Ortho's own contraceptive devices are used as demonstration models in the classroom. Ortho manufactures oral contraceptives, diaphragms, and spermicides.

Ortho finances program

Straight Talk was originally developed by Lifetime Learning Systems (LLS) in Fairfield, Connecticut with an educational grant from the Ortho Pharmaceutical Corporation, a division of Johnson & Johnson.

As stated in program literature, the curriculum is designed to "help teens beat the odds of the roulette wheel they spin when they engage in sex without knowledge."

According to LLS President Roberta M. Nusim, the *Straight Talk* package attempts to assist students by going "beyond basic reproductive anatomy and physiology."

Instead, the program's "interlocking components" are designed to "engage the entire community, including teachers, parents, and



Donna Pepe
Ortho Public Relations Director

medical professionals, in an open dialogue with teenagers so that they have the necessary information to make responsible choices -- choices to say 'no' to sex and wait until they're ready, choices among contraceptives if they do decide to have sex."

The main components of *Straight Talk* include the following: a 3-part video which addresses such topics as the "myths and misconceptions teens have regarding contraception" and includes "a lively discussion of contraceptive choices -- what's effective, what's available, and where to get them," contraceptive posters, a toll-free 800 hotline which will "enable callers to inquire about available resources in their area," discussion activities, and a detailed teacher's instruction guide.

Another important component of the program is a classroom visit by a local obstetrician/gynecologist. As stated in the program's promotional literature, "doctors in each city [where the program is in use] have received training, including a workshop and a detailed 50-page guide on the messages they should be giving to their 'students': the birth control choices available and the responsibility teens assume when they engage in sex. Each physician has received a specially prepared 'visual kit' containing samples of different contraceptive methods." The kit includes samples which are manufactured and provided by Ortho.

Dr. Nancy Banks, an obstetrician/gynecologist at West Nyak Hospital in New York, is one of more than 40 volunteer physicians visiting high-school classrooms as part of the program.

According to Dr. Banks, "part of teenagers' unwillingness to use contraception comes from misinformation and fears about what's available. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has officially stated that for this age group, the modern low-dose oral contraceptive is the safest and most effective method of contraception. And that's what I recommend for my patients."

First nationwide sex ed program

Program developers have asserted that *Straight Talk* is "the first nationwide sex education program." The pilot program was offered free last spring to schools in Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Tampa, and Washington, D.C.

Program literature states that, since its introduction, 650 schools in those 11 cities have already signed up to use the program, and expan-

Excerpts from *Straight Talk Program*

Suggested discussion questions/activities:

* "It is safer to take birth control pills than to go through childbirth." Agree or disagree?

Answer: "More women die in childbirth than from the effects of oral contraceptives. It is safer to take the pill than to risk the dangers of pregnancy and birth."

* "Have students role-play discussions between a boy and girl about choosing a contraceptive method."

* "What are some of the differences between how you and your parents view premarital sex?"

sion is planned to include schools in all 50 states.

Donna Pepe, director of Ortho has public relations for Ortho, denies that Ortho has any conflict of interest. In a recent interview on Chicago television, Ms. Pepe said, "It makes sense for a contraceptive company to put together a program to teach teens, if they're going to be sexually active, how to use contraception."

The *Straight Talk* controversy is only one of several incidents which have resulted in negative publicity for Ortho. In early November, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered Ortho to pay \$4.7 million in damages to a couple whose daughter suffered birth defects caused by the Ortho-Gynol Contraceptive Jelly.

New Study: Controversial Drug and Alcohol Program is Failure

The highly controversial drug and alcohol education program for students, *Here's Looking At You, Two* suffered a major setback recently. A just-released study by professors at Washington State University concluded that its predecessor, *Here's Looking At You*, is "ineffective" and has not produced changes in students' behavior. According to the researchers, the same holds true for *Here's Looking At You, Two*.

Professors Armand Mauss and Ronald Hopkins found that students who were exposed to *Here's Looking At You* showed no significant reduction in their use of alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs.

"It seems clear that the most plausible conclusion is that the *Here's Looking At You* curriculum simply did not work," concluded the study's co-authors.

In other comprehensive studies that many other completion, the study indicates that many other comprehensive prevention programs aimed at correcting or changing student behavior are also predestined to fail because other factors "independent of the program" exert a much greater influence in determining students' behavior. Those factors include the student's parents, religion, peers, and the media.

Parental concerns on the rise nationwide

As described in the study, *Here's Looking At You* is a "representative alcohol education program designed to enhance knowledge and self-esteem, instill appropriate attitudes, and teach the decision-making skills necessary for youth to make responsible decisions about alcohol."

The program is designed for kindergarten through grade twelve. It was originally devel-

oped and tested in the Seattle area in the early 1970s by the Seattle-based firm of Roberts, Fitzmahan & Associates.

Since then, *Here's Looking At You* has spawned two more programs, *Here's Looking At You, Two*, and its most recent revision, *Here's Looking At You, Two 2000*. The "Two" denotes that these programs include both drug education and alcohol education.

According to Dr. Mauss, a professor of sociology, "our results would be valid for both *Here's Looking At You* and *Here's Looking At You, Two*" because both programs use substantially the same methodology. It is exactly that methodology which has aroused the concern of many parents nationwide.

Most recently, *Here's Looking At You, Two* has been the target of increasing parental concern across the country due to its heavy concentration on requiring students to reveal their "feelings" to the teacher and the class by means of privacy-invading exercises, questionnaires, and role-playing activities in which students act out sensitive situations.

One year ago, parents in Lynden, Washington successfully persuaded the local school board to remove the program on the grounds that the program undermines parental authority and values learned at home. Exercises which parents cited as objectionable included: asking kindergartners to tell how much alcohol is too much, and questioning high school students about how they would feel about a minister being arrested for drunk driving, or an aunt who uses valium regularly.

Parents also expressed concern that the

program fails to teach about the real dangers of drugs or that drugs are illegal. "There is no distinction made between drinking coffee or beer, or taking aspirin or pot," said one Washington mother.

Over 6,000 students tested

For their recent study, the researchers studied the changes in the thinking and behavior of 6,808 students who were exposed to the course at sometime during a period of three academic years beginning in 1978-79. They focused on five school districts, both urban and suburban, in the Seattle and Portland, Oregon areas. The researchers selected the specific schools for evaluation in cooperation with the curriculum developers.

The evaluation procedure included training teachers in order to ensure proper implementation of the program, as well as testing students before and after the course was given, and administering and evaluating student questionnaires.

Researchers found that, "although the *Here's Looking At You* curriculum was solidly based in contemporary ideas about alcohol education," the students did not show a consistent positive effect in their behavior at any grade level either immediately following or several years after the course was given.

The professors' report suggests that one

reason for the failure of the program, in addition to the influence of independent factors such as family and religion, is that "alcohol education programs may also have goals that are simply too complex ... the 'responsible use' goal of alcohol education is much more complex and difficult to communicate effectively to youth than is the abstinence goal of smoking education. That is not to suggest that school-based programs should simply adopt an abstinence orientation because that it a more easily communicated goal. On the other hand, however, it may be that no society can reasonably expect to single out certain drugs and/or certain age groups for proscriptive or restrictive policies, while at the same time, condoning (or encouraging) the consumption of alcohol and other drugs in the rest of the population."

Developers dispute findings

Neal Starkman, a spokesman for Roberts, Fitzmahan & Associates, criticized the recent study. He said that the *Here's Looking At You* curriculum is outdated since it has been replaced by *Here's Looking At You, Two* and *Here's Looking At You, Two 2000*.

However, Dr. Mauss has examined the *Here's Looking At You, Two* program, and he defended his claim that the study results apply to that program as well.

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EDUCATION BRIEFS

Three Washington state teachers have dropped their challenge against a grade school reading series which they claimed contains sex bias. The North Kitsap school district teachers had protested that the Open Court Reading series for elementary schools was sexist because it contains illustrations of women in traditional occupations, such as baking cookies. The teachers also objected to alleged sexist language such as "man-made satellites." (See *Education Reporter*, June 1986) When their complaint was rejected by the local school board last spring, the teachers appealed to the state Superintendent of Instruction, who subsequently scheduled a hearing before an administrative law judge. But Sheila Giles made the decision to drop the case before the hearing. According to the Bremerton *Sun* (11-11-86), Mrs. Giles abandoned the challenge because "she feared the district would win the case, rendering her argument forever defeated." *The Sun* reported that Mrs. Giles could not explain the favorable review of the books by other teachers.

Dr. Spock says that the time has come to consider censoring movies and television because of the negative impact they are having on our nation's children. In an interview in Kansas City, the well-known liberal doctor told reporters that "children are affected by the movies they see. They think the moral level they see and the customs they see are not only for real, but they also think this behavior is all right for them to do. The impact of these films is terrible and it's a proven fact." According to a *Chicago Tribune* report (11-6-86), Dr. Spock said that "Intelligent people have been brought to look with disgust at censorship. But I don't think we should reverse lack of censorship so much that we allow our children to be ruined..."

No more R-rated films will be shown in a Concord, California junior high school due to a phone call from one concerned mother. Earlier this fall, parents received a notice from the school informing them that R-rated films would be shown in class. The notice told parents that the films had "literary value." When one mother contacted the school principal, she learned that he was unaware of the films. The principal subsequently reported that two teachers were responsible for scheduling the R-rated films. He assured the mother that no R-rated films would be shown in the future.

A Career Homemaker was among the career options students could choose from during Career Day at Riverdale High School in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in November. Mrs. Bobbie Patray, a full-time career homemaker, was one of many career representatives who set up displays in the school gymnasium for the benefit of the school's 1600 students. The poster at Mrs. Patray's table read: "Career Home-making for the seasons of a woman's life — exciting, fulfilling, satisfying, challenging." The display included samples and photos of many different activities Mrs. Patray has been involved in as a career homemaker — taking care of foster children, doing volunteer work and lobbying at the state legislature, acting as a sign language interpreter, teaching Sunday school, singing in a Broadway revue, etc. Mrs. Patray said her exhibit was so successful that she plans to contact other area schools to see if she can participate in similar events.

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Sex Education Complaints Rise Rapidly Despite Surgeon General's Demand to Expand Programs

The number of parental concerns and complaints regarding sex education in school classrooms continues to rise rapidly, despite recent statements by the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Everett Koop, that sex education should be expanded and taught in the lower grades.

The following is a sampling of recent incidents in which parents have challenged local school authorities about the appropriateness of sex education materials.

WASHINGTON:

The Seattle public school district continues to use a controversial textbook in a mandatory health class despite parents' repeated attempts to persuade school officials to change textbooks. Parents object to the text's encouragement of premarital sex and homosexuality.

The target of the ongoing debate is *You and Your Health* by William Fassbender (publisher: John Wiley & Sons). The book has been used in the Seattle public schools since 1978 in a required high school "Health" class.

Seattle parents Jim and Sally Bostad are among the parents who requested that the district review and discontinue use of *You and Your Health* because of the offensive nature of its contents.

The Bostads cited the following quotes from the text as reasons for their request to remove the text from the required course:

- The book describes "premarital sexual intercourse as acceptable for both men and

women if they are involved in a stable loving relationship. It has been suggested by some marriage counseling authorities that all couples should live together before they are married."

'Morality is individual; It is what YOU think it is'

You and Your Health
John Wiley & Sons

- "Often promiscuity is labeled as 'bad' by persons who do not accept this type of behavior. As with other patterns of sexual behavior, one should not pin a 'good' or 'bad' label on a practice."

- "Morality is individual; it is what YOU think it is. Your conception of what is right or wrong (morality) is an individual decision."

- The text also teaches that homosexuality is a normal lifestyle and that "gay rights" legislation should be enacted to stop "discrimination" against homosexuals and lesbians.

In a letter to concerned parents, district curriculum consultant Bud Turner said that, after review of the parents' concerns, the district concluded that "with the careful guidance of trained staff, sensitive areas in the book would be covered professionally and objectively."



Legislation Update . . .

The Pupil Protection Amendment has not had the negative impact on schools that its opponents originally predicted, according to U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett.

In a recent interview published in *Washington Lawyer* magazine, Secretary Bennett said that, instead, the Pupil Protection Amendment has had a positive impact on our educational system because it has helped to publicize the need for parental involvement and input about what is being taught in our schools.

Also known as the Hatch Amendment, it requires schools to obtain informed, written parental consent before students participate in federally-funded exercises and programs which elicit or affect students' feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and habits concerning any of the following: political affiliations; sex behavior and attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his family; legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers; and income.

The federal legislation also mandates that schools make instructional materials pertaining to such subject matter readily available for parental inspection.

The Pupil Protection Amendment went into effect in the fall of 1984 when the U.S. Department of Education issued regulations which spelled out the enforcement procedure. At that time, critics of the amendment, including the National Education Association (NEA), predicted that the legislation would have a "chilling effect" on local schools.

But Secretary Bennett said that experience has proven otherwise.

"In general, no, I don't think the amendment intrudes on local education prerogatives," said Secretary Bennett. "If schools are inclined to continue to conduct such activities without parental knowledge or consent, they can do so with their own money. But if U.S. department



Secretary of Education William Bennett

funds are involved, schools must give parents the opportunity to participate.

"What this amendment makes clear, and what I think people in all parts of the educational system should recognize and applaud, is the crucial necessity of the involvement of the parent. When there is widespread disagreement — as there is in some schools — between what is being taught and what parents want to be taught, surely federal remedies aren't always going to be the answer. What's required is better communication between the community and the parent and the teacher."

Secretary Bennett also denied that the Pupil Protection Amendment may have brought about any lawsuits because of what critics call the "ambiguity" of its wording.

"I don't believe that this statute is a catalyst to precipitating lawsuits," said Secretary Bennett.

"To hear people talk, you'd think the Department of Education is involved in all sorts of litigation in regard to this amendment. In fact, this department has conducted six, six reviews. And in these reviews there was little mention of either the statute or the regulations being ambiguous."

ILLINOIS:

A Mount Morris mother is challenging the use of a health textbook for seventh-grade students which condones homosexuality and incest.

Nancy Poe was doing volunteer work in the school library in November when she discovered that two health textbooks were being kept in the librarian's drawer to be used upon student request.

Those students eligible to use the books included all students who were participating in the *QUEST Skills for Adolescence* program. *Skills for Adolescence* is also a target of nationwide debate due to its nonacademic emphasis on students' feelings and beliefs. (See *Education Reporter*, August 1986)

Mrs. Poe said that all students are automatically enrolled in *Skills for Adolescence* unless their parents specifically sign them out.

She said that, if more parents would read the textbooks, more parents would opt their children out of the program.

The texts under scrutiny are the *What's Happening to My Body* books, published by New Market Press. One text is specifically for boys and another for girls.

Mrs. Poe pointed to the following excerpts from the books as reason for her concern.

- "If you have homosexual thoughts, feelings, or homosexual experiences at times, it helps to know this is natural and normal. If you're pretty sure that you are more gay than not it helps to know that this too is natural and that you're not alone." (girls' edition)

- "Incest between brothers and sisters is not always a harmful or upsetting thing." (both girls' and boys' edition)

Mrs. Poe filed a complaint with the school in November and is currently waiting for a report from the review committee.

OHIO:

School officials in Reynoldsburg, Ohio revised a sex education lesson for ninth-graders after a local mother raised questions about a unit conducted by school psychologists.

Mrs. Kathy Howald became concerned last spring when her 14-year old daughter complained about a session at school in which one psychologist met with all the boys and another psychologist with the girls to discuss "what they felt awkward talking to their parents about."

Following the session, the girl told her mother that the discussion left her feeling humiliated, disgusted, and depressed.

Mrs. Howald said that her daughter reported the following topics of discussion:

- How to masturbate
- The best male/female positions for sexual intercourse
- Anal intercourse
- How Cleopatra used alligator dung as a spermicide

According to Mrs. Howald's daughter, the psychologist described her own first experience with sexual intercourse on a white sofa and explained that the more sex she had, the more she liked it.

Parental permission was not required before students took part in the discussion sessions.

Reynoldsburg Superintendent Jason Endre said that the psychologists will not meet with students in special session again because "we didn't like the turn it took, either."



Do you have a story for the *Education Reporter*? If so, let us know! Box 618, Alton, IL 62002

FOCUS: White House Report on the FAMILY, Families: Preserving America's Future



The role of the traditional, intact family in our society must be reaffirmed to ensure the continued strength and prosperity of our nation, according to a recently released report by a White House task force appointed by President Reagan.

Under the direction of Gary Bauer, Under Secretary of Education, the 22-member Working Group on the Family spent seven months examining the role of the family in our society. The Working Group focused particularly on how government policies affect the family in order to determine "the essentials of what government should, and should not do concerning the family."

Overall, Mr. Bauer said that the report concluded, "the family has paid too much. It has lost too much of its authority to courts and rule-writers, too much of its voice in education and social policy, too much of its resources to public officials at all levels."

The 60-page report of the Working Group, called "Families: Preserving America's Future," is a summary of the group's findings and subsequent recommendations for ways in which our society and our government can reconfirm the family.

A pro-family litmus test

A cornerstone of the Working Group's report is a checklist of the essential characteristics which should constitute a pro-family policy. Those criteria include:

- "First and most important, a pro-family policy must recognize that the rights of the family are anterior, and superior, to those of the state. Government does not create the family, though it does have an obligation to protect it. And government cannot abolish the family, or intrude upon its functions, without undermining the social foundation of the state itself. ... When dealing with the family, the starting point for government should be the central tenet of the Hippocratic Oath: non nocere. First of all, do no harm."

- "Family policy must be built upon a foundation of economic growth. Sustained vigorous expansion of the economy is an essential part of any pro-family program. That means low marginal tax rates and resisting spending schemes — even those wrapped in pro-family rhetoric — which undermine household prosperity."

- "Parents are fundamental in terms of both rights and responsibilities. Law and policy should presume the reasonableness of parental action, and the authority of the home should be respected except in cases of substantial risk of harm."

- "When intervention into family affairs is necessary, it should be undertaken by institutions closest to control by citizens themselves. There are literally thousands of private sector organizations across America that help meet family needs. These include churches, neighborhood groups, and voluntary associations."

The report also suggests that agencies and departments write a "family fairness" statement to serve as a litmus test for any new legislative or regulatory initiative. That test should include the following criteria:

1. Does this action by government lessen family income? If so, how do the benefits of this action outweigh, and justify, the exaction from the family budget?
2. Does this policy serve to reinforce the stability of the home, and particularly, the marital commitment that holds the home together?
3. Does this measure strengthen or erode the authority of the home and, specifically, the rights of parents in the education, nurture, and supervision of their children?
4. Does it help the family perform its functions, or does it substitute governmental activity for that function?
5. What message, intended or otherwise, does this program send to the public concerning the status of the family?
6. What message does it send to young people concerning their behavior, their personal responsibility, and the norms of our society?
7. Can this activity be carried out by a lower level of government?
8. Can it be performed by mediating institutions in the private sector?

Recommendations for reform

The report also provides numerous findings and recommendations for specific policy reforms and changes intended to strengthen the family. Those policies include:

Schools: "Schools should treat parents as partners in the educational process. Parental input should be encouraged and solicited. New education programs on the local, State, or Federal levels should require parental involvement."

Curriculum material should not undermine family values but should reinforce the principles and ideals most parents strive to impart to their children.

Local school officials should have a good deal of discretion in formulating day-to-day policies for the education of our children. Their efforts to maintain order and an atmosphere conducive to learning should not be undermined by intrusive court action."

Taxes: "The tax cuts of 1981 and the tax reforms of 1986 are major victories for the American family. ... The personal exemption could be expanded further with a goal of \$4,000 - \$5,000. To save revenues, that increase could be limited to dependents."

Teenage sex: "There is little in the record to suggest that value-free sex education courses or the availability of contraceptives has helped — in fact the evidence is quite to the contrary. ...

At a minimum, no Federal program should provide incentives for sexual activity by teens. No Federal activity should contravene the approach we have taken to drug abuse; we do not compromise with self-destructive behavior. We insist that it stop and we provide assistance to those young people who want to regain control of their future."

'When dealing with the family, the starting point for government should be . . . First of all, do no harm.'



Gary Bauer

Government should not provide incentives — or make things easier — for teenagers to be tempted to promiscuity. Specifically, single mothers under the age of 21 should not be given subsidized housing apart from their own parents. AFDC benefits could be reconstructed in a similar way. These steps would go a long way toward making illegitimate motherhood less attractive in the poverty culture."

Family and Poverty: "Welfare contributes to the failure to form the family in the first place. It is the creation of family fragments, households headed by a mother dependent upon public charity. In that process, the easy availability of welfare in all of its forms has become a powerful force for destruction of family life through perpetuation of the welfare culture. ..."

Divorce: "For millions, the divorce rate means emotional trauma and economic distress. Reporting to the American Academy of Child Psychiatry on a ten-year study, Judith Wallerstein concludes that divorce can so disturb youngsters that they become psychologically unable to live happy lives as adults. A study by Stanford University's Center for the Study of Youth Development in 1985 indicated that children in single-parent families headed by a mother have higher arrest rates, more disciplinary problems in school, and a greater tendency to smoke and run away from home than do their peers who live with both natural parents — no matter what their income, race, or ethnicity."

The divorce rate has not only devastated childhood. It has brought financial ruin to millions of women. Divorce reform was supposed to be a panacea for women trapped in bad marriages. It has trapped many of them in poverty.

Clearly, we all have an interest — whether ethical or economics — in reversing the recent trend toward automatic divorce."

Copies of Families: Preserving America's Future can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Under Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20202.

Sex Respect Program Produces Positive Results

A new sex education curriculum called *Sex Respect* is getting just what it asked for: respect. That respect is coming from teachers, parents, and students across the country who have seen the program in action and who like the results. Those results include a growing number of students who say NO to sex outside marriage.

Unlike the majority of sex education programs today, which focus on teaching students about contraception in case they do decide to have sexual intercourse, the focal point of *Sex Respect* is chastity.

According to program developers, the basic approach "is to give adolescents the information and confidence to say 'No' to premature sexual activity because it is for their own best health and in the best interest of the community."

Currently, *Sex Respect* is being tested in 15 midwestern schools during the 1986-87 school

year. One of those schools is Bradley High School in Bradley, Illinois, where students completed the same questionnaire before and after the course in order to measure any changes in attitudes toward premarital sex as a result of the *Sex Respect* curriculum.

Among the ninth grade girls, 58 of the girls said that sexual feelings are controllable before the course compared to 100 girls who thought that sexual feelings are controllable after completing *Sex Respect*.

Overall student and parental response to the program has been positive and enthusiastic, said Project Sex Respect Director Kathleen Sullivan, who cited numerous student evaluations to support her claim.

"It was great," wrote one female freshman from Illinois. "I wish we had this in 8th grade. That's when I made my choice. I chose

something I now regret. If I would have known the facts, I would have chosen differently."

"I'm pleased to see the material strongly against premarital sex," said a Wisconsin parent. "I feel this book has given me ideas and ways to help my children have a healthy respect for sex."

Sex Respect was developed with a Federal grant from the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The original author is Coleen Kelly Mast, a former teacher in Bradley, Illinois.

Since Project Sex Respect was launched in early 1986, both Mrs. Mast and Mrs. Sullivan have accepted a rapidly rising number of invitations to speak to state legislators, parents' groups, national conventions, and school personnel across the country.

Mrs. Sullivan said that Project Sex Respect has already received 3,500 requests for the cur-



Kathleen Sullivan

riculum's "preview packet." The full packet sells for \$28.50 and contains the parent, teacher, and student booklets. Both the preview packet and an information packet on the preliminary results of *Sex Respect* can be obtained from Project Sex Respect, Box 39, Golf, Illinois 60029.

Oklahoma Parents Sue School Officials After Boy is Confined to Box for Months

Some Oklahoma parents are finally going to get their day in court in what is being called a "civil rights" case in behalf of parents' and pupils' rights.

Micky and Sandra Bohannon of Jennings, Oklahoma are suing local school personnel for \$2.5 million for violating their own civil rights and the civil rights of their fourth grade son when school personnel made Chris Bohannon sit in a cardboard box in the classroom for three months without his parents' knowledge or consent.

After numerous delays and rejected settlement offers, the Bohannon's case is scheduled to be heard in Federal court in April.

"We want to make sure that what happened to us won't happen to anyone else," said Mrs. Bohannon.

Parents discover box by accident

The Bohannons first learned that their son was being made to sit in a box when their daughter came home from school in the spring of 1985. She told her mother that, when she delivered some book fair money to her brother, she saw him crying as he sat in a box in the classroom.

The concerned parents went to school the following day with a camera and saw that Chris' desk was placed inside a cardboard box, approximately the size of a refrigerator. When the parents took a photo of the box and showed it to the school principal, they did not receive satisfactory answers regarding why and when their son had been made to sit in the box.

The Bohannons subsequently appealed for

help unsuccessfully to the school superintendent and local sheriff.

Mrs. Bohannon said that, upon further investigation, the parents learned that a substitute teacher had originally put their son in a box and the regular teacher had continued the practice.

School personnel made Chris Bohannon sit in a cardboard box.

Chris' classmates confirmed that the boy sat in the box throughout the entire day.

The Oklahoma mother said that, prior to the parents' discovery of the box, their son had been experiencing nightmares, bedwetting, and rashes without apparent cause.

Mrs. Bohannon also explained that, upon the school's recommendation, she and her husband signed consent forms to have Chris tested for behavior disabilities earlier in the school year.

The reasons for many of Chris' problems became clear after the box was discovered, said Mrs. Bohannon.

Court date repeatedly postponed

The Bohannons originally filed suit in November 1985. Defendants at that time included the principal, substitute teacher, regular classroom teacher, school counselor, and superintendent. Since then, the court has limited the

defendants to the substitute teacher, regular teacher, and counselor.

According to the Bohannon's attorney, those defendants violated Chris Bohannon's civil rights and liberties when they confined him to the box.

When contacted, the Jennings superintendent declined to comment on the lawsuit because "there has been some bad publicity."

But Mrs. Bohannon said that, since they filed the suit, "it is the parents who have been put on trial." She said that the defendants requested that the parents be psychologically examined. That request was denied.

The Bohannon's case is scheduled to go to court in April, following the cancellation of two prior court dates in October and November 1986. The Bohannons rejected an out of court settlement offer in November.

New school makes all the difference

Following the box incident, the Bohannons transferred their son to a different public school without satisfactory results. Mrs. Bohannon said that school officials again reported that Chris had both emotional and learning disability problems. They recommended that Chris be sent to a special school for emotionally disturbed children.

The Bohannons rejected that recommendation and subsequently transferred their children to a private school. Mrs. Bohannon said that the change in schools has made all the difference for Chris. She said that school officials have reported that Chris has adjusted well, is doing well academically, and "is a pleasure to have in class."



tion of the unit and allow students to progress to the national level.

- **The Mini-Page:** This four page, tabloid size newspaper insert is written especially for young people and is published through Universal Press Syndicate. It appears in 450 newspapers nationwide. The cover story, puzzles, simple recipes, and interviews will focus on the Constitution through 1987.

- **National Music Educators National Conference "World's Largest Concert":** The MENC will dedicate its third annual concert to the Bicentennial. The concert will consist of patriotic music to be performed by school children and is planned for live broadcast over public television on March 19, 1987.

- **National Archives Teaching Unit:** The National Archives has prepared a teaching unit for secondary school students, based on documents in the Archives collection. The unit includes reproductions of documents and a teacher's guide which contains suggestions for classroom activities.

- **American Bar Association Mock Trial Program:** High school mock trial teams will compete in state competitions, culminating in a national competition in Washington, D.C. A student seminar will also review the history of the United States judiciary.

Constitution Celebration Gets Underway

Schools and organizations across the country are preparing to celebrate a national birthday next year. On September 17, 1987, the U.S. Constitution will be 200 years old, and hundreds of education projects are already underway to commemorate the world's oldest constitution in existence.

Former Chief Justice Warren Burger, chairman of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, has repeatedly stated his hope that the Bicentennial celebration will take the form of a national "civics lesson" to promote an understanding of how our Constitution functions with its separation of powers.

But the Bicentennial birthday party will not be limited to just one year. Instead, Bicentennial activities will extend through 1991. The celebration in 1987 will focus on the writing of the Constitution, in 1988 on the ratification by the states, in 1989 on the formation of the first Federal Government under the Constitution, and in 1990 and 1991 on the writing and ratification of the Bill of Rights.

Former Chief Justice Burger and several members of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution recently urged thousands of social studies teachers from across the nation to help schoolchildren better understand our Constitution during the Bicentennial years.

Speaking in New York at the annual convention of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in November, the Commissioners encouraged the teachers to

stress the origins, endurance, flexibility and strength of the document.

Another panelist at that NCSS convention was CBS newsman Bill Moyers who asked the former Chief Justice why we shouldn't have a Constitutional Convention to amend and update the Constitution.

"If it's not broken, don't fix it," replied the former Chief Justice.

Samples of education projects

The following is a sampling of education projects for elementary and secondary school students which have already received official recognition from the national Commission on the Bicentennial:

- **National Writing Competition for high school students cosponsored by USA TODAY/Gannett and the American Bar Association:** Students will submit essays addressing the question, "The Constitution: How does the separation of powers help make it work?" The national award for first place is \$10,000.

- **American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest:** The competition is designed to develop a deeper knowledge of and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution. Winners will receive scholarships to pursue education beyond high school.

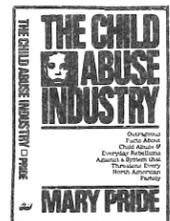
- **Center for Civic Education Bicentennial Competition:** The Center has developed a six-week classroom unit on the Constitution to be incorporated into the regular high school curriculum. Class competition will follow comple-



Book of the Month

The Child Abuse Industry, by Mary Pride, Crossway Books, © 1986, 268 pp., \$8.95.

When it really happens, child abuse is a tragedy. But when a family suffers from a false accusation of child abuse, the consequences for the family and the child are equally tragic. That kind of tragedy is spreading across the nation at a rapidly increasing rate.



The Child Abuse Industry explains how and why American families are fast becoming victims of a growing bureaucracy, or "network," of government agencies which were established to help and protect children, but in reality are destroying families.

Author Mary Pride explains — in words that everyone can understand — "how the system works." Citing extensive research, she explains how power, money, and the creation of new government jobs motivate the so-called "child advocacy" professionals.

These "professionals" are caught in a conflict of interest. Since too few cases and convictions translate into fewer jobs and dollars in their budgets, too many social services personnel are motivated to go out and find and invent cases of child and sexual abuse where no crime has been committed.

How do they do it? Mrs. Pride gives numerous examples of how child abuse hotlines have been abused, how the agencies and the media have misled the public about recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse, how legislators and schools have been co-opted into mandating educational programs which undermine parental authority, and much, much more.

She also documents how children are too frequently manipulated and coached by social service professionals prior to and when they appear in the courtroom, especially with the use of anatomical dolls.

Importantly, Mrs. Pride also dissects the so-called "statistics" we hear in the media about escalating cases of abuse. Too often, those statistics prove to be "estimates," which are projected by exactly the same people who have an interest in projecting higher numbers.

In addition, Mrs. Pride unravels the myths surrounding the current missing children "epidemic" and the growing bureaucracy which is being developed to handle those cases. Her research confirms what so many have suspected: that a very large number of "missing children" are really the victims of a messy divorce and a child custody struggle. They haven't been kidnapped by strangers at all; they were snatched by the parent who didn't get custody rights.

Also helpful are the appendices which provide summaries of child abuse laws for all fifty states as well as a directory of organizations which have been formed by innocent victims of child abuse allegations to fight further abuses.

So, in the end, what happens to those children who really are the victims of abuse? They are getting lost in the shuffle. They are not getting the help they need because the child abuse "industry" is too busy chasing those who are not guilty.

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