

North Carolina Citizens Reveal Bias In Social Studies Textbooks

A citizens organization called North Carolina Conservatives United has undertaken a project of sending social studies textbooks to local teachers in order to demonstrate what has been omitted from the books which North Carolina schools are required to use.

The organization claims that the social studies textbooks selected by the State Textbook Commission under the North Carolina statewide textbook-adoption system are biased against patriotism and American independence, as well as deficient in providing historical facts about our Judeo-Christian background.

Textbooks recommended by the organization for inspection include *History of Our United States, Grade 4* (A Beka Books) and *A Basic History of the United States, Vol. 1-5*, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee). (See panel for complete list.)

This project started in mid-1987 when the organization's chairman, Mrs. Ann Frazier of Roanoke Rapids, discovered that State Superintendent of Public Instruction A. Craig Phillips had sent a letter addressed to all "Publishers of Textbooks" advising them what kind of social studies textbooks the State of North Carolina would purchase for use in the schools.

The Goal of Social Studies

In a signed 17-page document, Phillips stated: "The primary goal of social studies instruction is to provide each student the experiences necessary for attainment of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for becoming an effective and contributing citizen in an interdependent world." This caveat applied to every grade level from 1 through 12.

"Previously, we had thought that the textbook publishers were to blame for slanting the textbooks against patriotism and independence, and toward world citizenship and interdependence," Mrs. Frazier said. "But Superintendent Phillips' letter made it clear that the textbook publishers were merely obeying the instructions they received from their customers, the schools."

"Censorship" and "Bias" Claimed

On the Fourth of July, 1987, Mrs. Frazier



Ann Frazier

sent a letter to all members of the State Board of Education and the State Textbook Commission. Her letter accused Mr. Phillips of "censorship" because his instruction to the publishers effectively limited the State Textbook Commission to consideration of only those books that promote world citizenship and the ideology of interdependence, while denying them the opportunity "to evaluate or recommend textbooks that promote America as a strong, sovereign, and independent nation."

Her letter also explained how what she labeled the "bias" in the Phillips' instruction was already being implemented in North Carolina public schools by the North Carolina Basic Education Program Competence-Based Curriculum. She asserted that "world citizenship" or "interdependence" themes were integrated, or infused, into the social studies curriculum by such specifics as stressing the scarcity of resources, population planning and control, and the need for interdependence, and by frequent and redundant use of such words as "collectively" and "compromise for the good of the group."

Mrs. Frazier also asserted that the curriculum

currently in use in North Carolina's schools calls for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag only twice during their 13 years of K through 12th grade schooling, while on the other hand students are asked to develop a flag and a pledge for a new country, to design a postage stamp for worldwide use, and in the 9th grade to "write a constitution for a perfect society."

Textbook Commission Reacts

Although the State Textbook Commission had to select social studies textbooks only from those that were received under Superintendent Phillips' guidelines, the commissioners manifested sensitivity to the public's criticisms.

On November 5, 1987, the Commission released a statement recommending that the State Board of Education appoint a committee "representing a broad base of our society" to examine the treatment of religion in textbooks. The Commission further added its voice to what it called "the nationwide call for continuing improvement in textbooks."

The policies adopted in North Carolina are considered significant because the state commission adopts textbooks for the entire state. Along with California and Texas, North Carolina is considered to be one of the three largest text-

book markets in the United States. Publishers, therefore, are especially sensitive to what kinds of books will be selected in North Carolina.

The textbooks on social studies, art and music, which were adopted last fall, will be used in the state's public schools for at least five years, with an option to continue their use for one or two more years, before those subjects are considered again by the Commission.

In the face of continuing criticism by the North Carolina Conservatives United, State Board of Education chairman James H. Ellerbe admitted in December 1987 that the social studies textbooks adopted the previous month "are still not as good as they can be."

Board member Howard H. Haworth said that the State School Board should become more aggressive in "fulfilling our requirements of oversight" of the textbook-adoption process. Board members have discussed their limited role in improving textbooks and their "discomfort in giving blanket approval."

Mrs. Frazier said she hopes that, by showing teachers the deficiencies in the textbooks currently in use, they will join with parents in demanding better and more accurate and objective textbooks in the future.

Death Education Exposed

Atlantic Monthly published a ground-breaking article in its February issue on "death education," a public school classroom subject that few parents are aware even exists. Death education means classroom discussions, assignments, questionnaires, games, crafts, and field trips about death and dying, violence and burial.

According to *Atlantic Monthly*, in death education, students are usually asked to write their own obituaries, epitaphs, and wills. Sometimes, they are asked to write their own suicide note or to decide how they would prefer to die.

Some of the more morbid examples of lesson plans, as reported by *Atlantic Monthly*, include telling students to write their epitaphs on construction paper cut in the shape of a tombstone, to plan their own funerals, to choose pallbearers and decide corpse disposal, to decide how they want to look in their coffins, to report a pretended "suicide" to the teenager's friends, and to make their own coffins. Field trips include visiting the embalming room of a funeral parlor and crematoria, viewing an embalming, touching a corpse, and sitting in a coffin to see how it feels.

Hundreds or thousands of teachers (no one knows how many) who have attended one workshop on death education are now teaching it to ten year olds in public schools. No one knows how widespread is this psychological experimentation since death education can range all the way from a full semester course to a few sessions in a health, literature, or gifted and talented curriculum.

An article in *The School Counselor* in 1977 argued the case for death education like this: "Education can initiate change.... Death education will play as important a part in changing attitudes toward death as sex education played in changing attitudes toward sex information and wider acceptance of various sexual practices."

In trying to change the way children view



death, the death educationists lead many pupils to believe that death is something to look forward to, that they have a "right to die," and that death is just escaping the body into perhaps a happier or better environment. Death education makes it easy for pupils to be swept up into the current trendy belief in reincarnation, which in turn tends to make suicide sometimes an attractive option.

Some of the techniques closely resemble hypnosis. In a "simulation mind game" developed at the University of Kentucky, the teacher in a dim candlelit room guides the pupils through a sort of seance in which they are told that they "will experience death and at that moment you will see yourself rise to the ceiling of this room ... [and be] content in your new state."

Changing students' attitudes toward death, says *Atlantic Monthly*, "reflects a view of education in which the molding of a student's attitudes may be as important as, or even take precedence over, the development of his mind. It implicitly expects teachers to serve as psychologists for the children in their classrooms."

This corroborates the National Education Association report entitled "Education for the 70s" which stated: "Schools will become clinics whose purpose is to provide individualized, psycho-social treatment for the student, and teachers must become psycho-social therapists."

Materials Distributed by N.C. Conservatives

Textbooks:

A Basic History of the United States: The American Experience, 1607-1774, Volume 1, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee).

A Basic History of the United States: The Beginning of the Republic, 1775-1825, Volume 2, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee).

A Basic History of the United States: The Seven Years War and the Civil War, 1826-1877, Volume 3, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee).

A Basic History of the United States: The Growth of America, 1878-1928, Volume 4, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee).

A Basic History of the United States: The Welfare State, 1929-1985, Volume 5, by Dr. Clarence B. Carson (Greenville, AL: American Textbook Committee).

History of Our United States, Grade 4 (A Beka Books).

Old World History and Geography, Grade 5 (A Beka Books).

New World History and Geography, Grade 6 (A Beka Books).

American Government and Economics, Grade 9 (A Beka Books).

U.S. History — Heritage of Freedom, Grade 9 (A Beka Books).

Videos:

The Common Sense Classroom: Understanding the Present and Guiding the Future, by Larry Abraham (Double A Publications).

The Common Sense Classroom: Place on the Map — A Key to Current Events, A Lesson in Strategic Geography, by Larry Abraham (Double A Publications, Inc.).

The Common Sense Classroom: Why Some Countries are Rich and Others are Poor, by Larry Abraham (Double A Publications).

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Georgia will become the first state to require all school districts to test kindergartners for promotion to the first grade. The State Board of Education announced the new policy and plans to give the California Achievement Test to 93,000 Georgia kindergarten pupils this spring. The 90-minute examination, which is primarily a fill-in-the-square type, will be one of the factors used for promotion decisions, along with teacher evaluations. The 7-to-1 ruling is highly controversial since many early-childhood experts contend that standardized tests are unreliable predictors of young children's achievement and will result in the mislabeling of many children as slow learners.

Recess Initiative, a group of Northern Virginia parents, has gathered 500 signatures on a petition to persuade the county School Board to put recess back in the elementary school day. Recess has been dropped from the schedule in many communities across the nation to accommodate the growing academic schedule. David Elkind, head of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and developmental psychologist, said "Just because something is academic doesn't mean it's good." A Recess Initiative member told reporters, "Adults take a coffee break. They feel perfectly entitled to it, but children are expected to work all day."

More and more schools are becoming smoke-free as a move to ban smoking for teachers and staff is starting to spread across the country. Unknown to most citizens, many high schools have not only permitted teachers and students to smoke in schools but have even provided smoking rooms or areas for underage pupils. Now, the trend is going in the opposite direction. Student smoking on school grounds is now banned by 11 states and by about half of school districts, according to a 1986 survey. Reasons for these new policies include health concerns over secondhand smoke intake, providing smoke-free examples for students to follow, and curbing teen pregnancy/drug abuse since most students with those characteristics also smoke cigarettes.

The New Jersey education department is conducting a \$75,000 study on the feasibility of allowing parents to choose the public schools their children attend. In January, Governor Thomas Kean called for a study of the "choice option." Kean has previously rejected two proposals, one for vouchers and one for tax credits to parents sending their children to non-public schools. The public school choice concept was endorsed by the National Governors' Association in 1986. The nation's governors put themselves on record in support of the concept that allowing a choice system can improve students' attitudes and academic achievement.

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Parents Persuade School Board To Adopt Abstinence Course

The Lufkin, Texas, School District has just started teaching the sexual abstinence course called *Sex Respect* to about 1,000 students in three public schools. This two-year pilot program for the 7th and 9th grades was adopted by the school board last November.

Two years ago, the local chapter of Planned Parenthood created something of a local controversy by publicly recommending to the school board that sex education be introduced into the area schools.

A local citizen, Stephanie Cecil, obtained a video produced by Project Respect of Golf, Illinois, and began showing it to various groups. Over a two-year period, she, Melita McCall and Ann White showed it to more than 500 Lufkin-area teachers, school nurses, counselors, principals and PTA officers, as well as to parents and many community groups.

The video is a 50-minute presentation describing the *Sex Respect* course, which is one of the handful of sex education curricula that teach sexual abstinence until marriage and do not encourage children to use contraceptives. It was developed under a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, and recent evaluations show remarkable results in encouraging teenagers to say "no" to promiscuous behavior. (See Education Reporter, February 1988.)

By late November, Mrs. Cecil and her group felt that they had built up so much favorable



Stephanie Cecil



Melita McCall



Ann White

community support that they were ready to present the curriculum to the Lufkin School Board. It was unanimously approved.

The Video Was the Key

"The key to the positive acceptance of this curriculum by the school board and school administration," according to Mrs. Cecil, "was, first, presenting a course that was both moral and healthy, and second, building support in the community through the showing of the video."

Assistant Superintendent Jerry Campbell said, "We felt that, if we added a sex education program of any kind, it would have to be one that was supported by all the various groups."

Campbell added that the most important aspect of the program is that it gives support to children who want to say "no."

"There is always one group that is going to have sex, no matter what you tell them," he said. "But there is also a group that needs some support for saying 'no.' We are in the process of trying to build strength within each individual to say 'no' — to place the idea that sex should occur only during marriage."

"It is extremely important," Campbell added, "that we support those who will say 'no.'"

After two years, the Lufkin School District will review the results of this program.

Pupil Privacy Regulation Made Official in Maryland Tells Students How To Assert Their Rights

A pupil privacy regulation, stated in clear and unequivocal language, has been distributed by the teachers to 7th and 8th graders at White Oak Intermediate School in Silver Spring, Maryland. The regulation explains to students how to identify and assert their privacy rights and how to ask for "alternative assignments."

The new regulation includes the positive statement that a pupil is "under no obligation to respond to an assignment in a personally revealing way."

The regulation, which each student was asked to sign and keep in his own notebook, was distributed so that students will be aware that they may decline to answer teachers' questions and may opt for alternative assignments when necessary to preserve pupil privacy. The regulation is included in the student handbook for 1988-1989.

The regulation explained to the student that "privacy" rights apply to any personal or family experience or truth that may cause hurt, stress, or embarrassment for the student. Privacy rights apply to both written assignments and classroom questions or discussions.

The regulation also advised the students that, if he or his parents object to any book of fiction being taught, the student may bring in a note explaining the reason for the objection and ask for "an alternate book to be studied with equal work load provided."

The full text of this Maryland school regulation follows.

* STATEMENT ON PRIVACY * White Oak Intermediate School

Students: Please keep this copy of the privacy policy in your notebook. Share this with your parents if you like, so you are both aware that you may opt for alternative assignments when necessary. This statement will be included in the student handbook for 1988-1989.

I, _____, a student at White Oak Intermediate School have been advised of my right to privacy concerning writing assignments, class discussions, etc.

I understand that if the teacher gives me a writing assignment or asks me an oral question to which I would be inclined to respond in a personal nature, I have the right to ask for an alternative assignment. It is my responsibility, however, to inform the teacher that I do not choose to respond to this assignment (or discussion) because of my concern regarding privacy.

Privacy applies to any personal experience or truth involving self or family that may cause hurt, stress, or embarrassment for me. Fiction is not a matter of privacy; nor are discussions surrounding character or conflict in stories. Questions which ask students to give an opinion should be answered in a way specific to the story or character, not in a way which would reveal a personal value that a student does not wish to share.

I understand that the teachers at White Oak, while concerned about me as an individual, are not intending to cause me to reveal personal matters of hurt, stress, or embarrassment. I further understand that they are not expecting me to answer questions of a general nature with answers revealing my values. Therefore, I will think carefully before I respond to writing assignments or discussion to evaluate the way I wish to respond to the question. I am under no obligation to respond to an assignment in a personally revealing way, and I have the right to ask for an alternative assignment.

Where novels are concerned, if I or a family member has a major objection to a book being taught, I understand that I may bring in a note from my parent explaining the reasons for this objection (values oriented) and that I may ask for an alternate book to be studied with equal work load provided.

I have read and understood these rights, and take it upon myself to exercise my right to ask for alternatives when I see an assignment which I feel may cause me hurt, embarrassment, or stress if I were to respond in a personal manner.

Signed: _____ Grade: _____
Teacher: _____

FOCUS: Parent-Teacher Guide on AIDS

Education Secy. Bennett's Guide a Best-Seller

Education Secretary William J. Bennett has just updated the booklet called "AIDS and the Education of Our Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers," and a third printing is now ready for shipment.

The 28-page booklet was first released in October 1987, and has already been distributed to 850,000 people. Requests for another 800,000 copies are now in the process of fulfillment.

To obtain individual copies of this booklet free of charge, write Consumer Information Center, Dept. ED, Pueblo, CO 81009. To obtain more than 25 copies free of charge, write Office of Public Affairs, Dept. ED, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

Selected excerpts follow.

The key fact young people need to know is this: there is much they can do to avoid contracting AIDS. Most cases of AIDS result from behavior that can be avoided. AIDS is primarily spread by having sexual contact with an infected person or by sharing hypodermic needles or syringes with an infected person. Avoiding such behavior greatly reduces the chances of becoming infected. Individuals are not powerless against the threat posed by AIDS. We can protect our young people, and the way to protect them is to tell them the truth and to teach them to act responsibly. ...

In regard to AIDS specifically, responsible adults will counsel young people against premature sexual activity — that is, against engaging in sexual activity before achieving maturity, before acquiring an understanding of the seriousness of what is involved, before achieving respect for oneself or others, before being willing and able to accept responsibility for one's actions. Among many other reasons for discouraging premature sexual activity — in addition to the reasons adults have traditionally offered and still should offer — AIDS offers one more compelling reason. The stark message is this: if you have sex with a partner infected with AIDS, there is a chance you will get the virus and that you will die from it. ...

How Is the AIDS Virus Transmitted?

The AIDS virus is most commonly transmitted through male homosexual intercourse with an infected partner and through the sharing of intravenous drug needles or syringes with an infected person. It can also be transmitted by heterosexual intercourse with an infected partner. Because the AIDS virus, when present, is contained in some body fluids (mainly blood, semen, and vaginal secretions), actions that involve the exchange of these fluids between people greatly increase the chances of passing the virus to another person.

Because the AIDS virus can be transmitted by the transfusion of blood or certain blood products, hemophiliacs and other recipients of transfusions or blood products were at very substantial risk of becoming infected. However, since 1985, donated blood has been screened by a new test that can identify blood containing antibodies to the AIDS virus. ...

It is not currently known how many of the persons infected with the AIDS virus will develop the disease. Most experts estimate that more than 50 percent of those now infected with the virus will develop the disease over the next 10 to 15 years. **Regardless, of whether the symptoms of AIDS are apparent, anyone who is infected with the AIDS virus must be presumed to be capable of transmitting the virus to someone else.** Persons who do not have the symptoms of AIDS but are capable of

infecting others pose a serious risk to their sexual partners. ...

Teenage Sexual Activity

Statistics show that sexual activity increases dramatically during the teenage years. ... Nonetheless, **at age 17 over one-half of all teenagers have not been sexually active.** The incidence among teenagers of homosexual activity, the most common mode of transmission of the virus, is not known. ...

Increased sexual activity among teenagers has contributed greatly to their high rates of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea and syphilis. This increased sexual activity also makes the transmission of AIDS more likely. More than 6 out of 10 persons with gonorrhea or syphilis are less than 25 years old — that is, 581,913 out of a total of 938,038 cases in 1985. The Centers for Disease Control reported that in 1985:

- One out of four persons with gonorrhea or syphilis (25 percent) was between 10 and 19 years old.

- Almost 4 out of 10 persons with gonorrhea or syphilis (37 percent) were between 20 and 24 years old.

What Is to Be Done?

The surest way to prevent the spread of AIDS in the teenage and young adult population is for schools and parents to convey the reasons why adolescents should be taught restraint in sexual activity and why illegal drug use is wrong and harmful. Although messages urging responsibility and restraint have been given before, the emergence of the AIDS threat gives them even greater importance.

We here offer four principles of AIDS education to guide parents, school, and the community in educating our children and helping them combat the disease of AIDS.

1. Help Children Develop Clear Standards of Right and Wrong

Studies have shown that children who firmly hold to the principles of appropriate moral and social conduct are less likely to act in ways that would place them at risk of becoming infected with AIDS. The most important determinant of children's actions is their understanding of right and wrong. Parents, schools, and community organizations that work with children must instill firm standards of conduct that include respect for personal well-being and the well-being of others. Children should be taught the importance of self-discipline and personal responsibility by holding them accountable for their actions. They should also be brought to understand that, as young adults, they will bear the primary responsibility for protecting themselves from becoming infected with the AIDS virus.

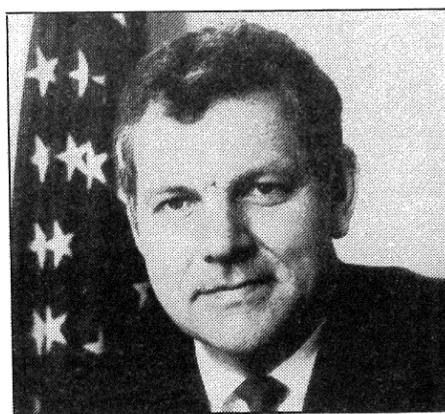
- **Teach restraint as a virtue.** Parents and school personnel should teach children restraint as a standard to uphold and follow. Explain the positive benefits of responsible behavior as well as the fact that the safest and smartest way to prevent infection with the deadly AIDS virus is to avoid premarital sex and illegal drugs. Even the use of nonintravenous drugs, such as marijuana and alcohol, can lead children toward activities that would expose them to the risk of being infected with AIDS.

- **Present sex education within a moral context.** Parents want the schools to teach the difference between right and wrong in sex education and elsewhere. Parents want sexuality taught within a moral framework. In a national poll, 70 percent of the adults surveyed said they thought that sex education programs should teach moral values. About the same percentage believed sex education courses should urge

students not to have sexual intercourse.

- **Speak up for the institution of the family.** Fidelity and commitment should be positive goals toward which all of our children should strive. Unless a marriage partner is infected before marriage or uses intravenous drugs, persons in mutually faithful and monogamous relationships are protected from contracting AIDS through sexual transmission.

- **Set clear and specific rules regarding behavior.** Parents and teachers must clearly establish appropriate standards of behavior and convey them to children in the home and school. Setting high standards of behavior and holding young people accountable for their actions will help them take responsibility for their behavior, and it will help them develop respect for others and for themselves.



Secy. William J. Bennett

2. Set a Good Example

Parents and school personnel should be aware that they very much influence young peoples' behavior. Adults who try to live in accordance with moral standards, take care of their health, and engage in a monogamous relationship provide an example to young people of how to avoid the risks of contracting AIDS.

- **Demonstrate moral standards through personal example.** Adults must try to live up to the ideals they set for themselves and their children. They should cite concrete examples from everyday life, discuss the moral issues they confront, and describe how they find the strength to follow their ideals. Parents should put their children in contact with other adults whose lives will be a good example to young people ...

- **Demonstrate responsibility for others in personal relationships.** By the relationships they establish with children, their families, and other adults, parents and teachers show children how they expect them to act. Adults who show concern for the well-being of others help prevent the spread of AIDS through their respect for others.

3. Help Children Resist Social Pressures to Engage in Dangerous Activities

Peer pressure is one of the strongest influences encouraging students to engage in promiscuous sex and drug use. In addition, older students who have already engaged in these practices reinforce the view that sexual intimacy and drug use are the norm. Adults must counteract these influences. ...

- **Encourage students to provide a good example to their peers.** Students can positively influence their peers through their attitudes and everyday behavior. If student leaders take stands against irresponsible behavior, other students will be more likely to follow their lead. Students can also persuade their peers who indulge in dangerous behavior to seek adult help in combating their problems. ...

4. Instruct Children About AIDS

... To prevent the spread of AIDS among

young people, parents, schools, and communities should teach children about the deadly disease. The dual messages of responsibility and restraint must be integral parts of any education effort. ...

- **Teach about sex in a way that emphasizes the reasons for abstinence, restraint, and responsibility.** Many sex education programs fail to provide a message of personal responsibility. Some present sex mechanistically, answering questions about how sex works and how it can be made to serve a variety of purposes (e.g., self-gratification). Other programs contain value-neutral discussions of sexual relations in which the teacher makes a concerted effort not to make moral judgments about sexual activity.

Responsible sex education courses should not hesitate to teach children that sexual restraint is the best standard to follow. Sexual intimacy should be presented as more than merely a physical or mechanical act. ...

- **Teach drug prevention to children.** Drug prevention efforts should be an integral component of all educational programs. Schools, religious institutions, and youth organizations should emphasize that drug use is wrong and harmful. Efforts should be geared to strengthening a child's resistance to drugs. For teenagers, a clear link between drug use and AIDS should be made. Children must learn that not taking drugs will reduce the possibility of becoming infected with the disease. ...

Guidelines for AIDS Materials

Materials for use in teaching young people about AIDS must be selected and developed with the approval of parents. In addition, they should meet the following guidelines:

- **Teach about high-risk behaviors.** Teenagers and young adults are at greater risk of AIDS than much of the population because of their high levels of sexual intercourse and their use of illicit drugs. This point must be made clear.

- **Present the facts in a straightforward manner.** Facts on AIDS should be accurate and current. Information should be conveyed in straightforward language that students will understand. It should honestly portray what we do and do not know.

- **Emphasize standards of right and wrong.** Instruction about AIDS must include more than basic medical information. It must be based on clear standards of individual responsibility.

— Materials should set positive standards; they should emphasize that young people can avoid premarital sex and drug use.

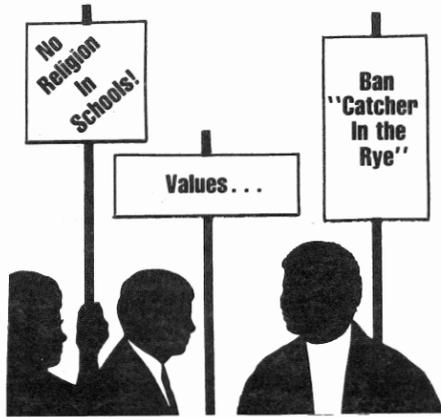
— Materials should not be value neutral. Young people should be told that the best way to prevent the sexual transmission of AIDS is to refrain from sexual activity until as adults they are ready to establish a mutually faithful monogamous relationship. AIDS education should confirm this message from the sex education curriculum. AIDS education (as part of sex education in general) should uphold monogamy in marriage as desirable and honorable.

— Materials discussing illicit drugs should not condone "responsible use" or use of "soft drugs." All illicit drug use is wrong.

- **Select appropriate materials.** To teach about AIDS is to deal with sensitive topics. Instructional materials, therefore, must be appropriate to the age of the students being taught and to local community needs and values.

— Young children should not be given overly explicit and detailed explanations. For them, instruction should lay the foundation of moral action and good health and give limited attention to AIDS itself.

National School Boards Assn. Holds Censorship Conference



"Censorship and the Public Schools" was the title of a conference held in Washington D.C. on February 18 and 19 sponsored by the National School Boards Association (NSBA). Attended by more than 120 school board members and other education representatives from all over the country, the conference addressed issues involving the content and selection of public school textbooks and curricula.

"How to Conquer Censorship" was the major emphasis of the conference. NSBA President Jonathan T. Howe asserted that "censorship" is a violation of teachers' First Amendment rights. He urged school boards to develop a "censorship" policy before a controversial issue arises.

Howe listed areas where censorship may be an issue. These included: speech; student publications; selection or removal of textbooks and library books; recognition of student organizations; school prayer; sex and AIDS education; allowing the use of facilities to outside organizations; teachers' academic freedom; parental control; and special interest groups.

Rev. Charles Bergstrom, board member of People for the American Way (PAW), stated, "There are 168 reported efforts of censorship mainly from organizations such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America, Pat Robertson, Norma Gabler, and Citizens for Excellence in Education."

"The language of censorship is secular humanism," Bergstrom added. "To define secular humanism is like nailing jello to a tree."

"Conquering Censorship"

A 36-page packet called "Conquering Censorship" was distributed at the conference. The packet was compiled to assist teachers and school personnel in counterattacking what it calls "assaults on schools and their instructional materials." The orientation of the packet is that the school and its designees should have total control over the selection of all materials without any interference from parents or citizens.

The packet contains detailed instructions telling teachers and school administrators how they can refute, embarrass, stonewall, and defeat parents who make curriculum objections. The packet includes form letters the school can send to stall parents who make complaints, and detailed forms that the school can require parents to fill out. The packet tells school personnel to force parents to make all their complaints in writing.

The packet instructs the school how to get legal help to circumvent parents, to publicize the school's side of the controversy in the media, and to line up the support of local liberal groups such as the ACLU and People for the American Way.

Other topics addressed in this packet include: Checklist for Survival Against Censorship; Information About Selection, Censorship, and Cen-

sors; Dealing with Selection of Materials and Challenges; Guidelines for Handling Attacks from Religious and Political Extremists; Library Bill of Rights; Evaluating Library Collections; and Several Ways of Dealing With Censorship. Hazelwood School District Case

The final session of the conference included panel member Robert Reynolds, Hazelwood East High School Principal, who received national fame in the 1988 Supreme Court case of *Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlmeier*. The Court ruled that school officials do not violate student free speech rights by removing objectionable material from the school newspaper. The broad-reaching decision by Justice White extends the latitude of school officials to censor student expression when it affects the educational process.

Reynolds noted that many aspects of the case were never carried in the media, such as the fact that the students whose articles were pulled from the newspaper were given the opportunity to publish their rewritten article but chose not to do so. The panel, which included representatives of the Texas Education Agency, People for the American Way, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, school board lawyers, and a school board member, agreed with Reynolds' decision.

Censorship by Publishers

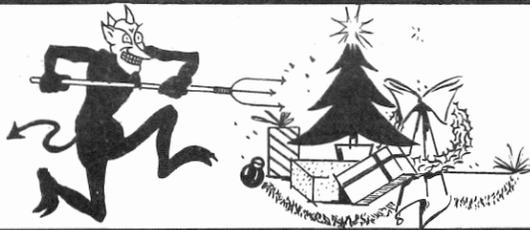
Roger Rogalin, Senior Vice President for Development for D.C. Heath and Company (a textbook publisher), admitted that, because of increasing competition among textbook publishers, publishers are spending a lot of money on packaging and marketing textbooks rather than on content — as much as 25 cents of each dollar. Rogalin also noted that, since 1983, there has been a dramatic change in textbooks. Textbook publishers are now re-evaluating information in the textbooks, working with teams of experts, administrators and educators, to see what historical facts that have been censored from textbooks should be included once again, such as the religious aspects of Thanksgiving.

Rogalin gave attendees a list of ways to improve the content of textbooks: (1) detach textbook choices from curricula choosers, (2) do not try to control the content of textbooks, (3) abandon the use of readability formulas, and (4) use seasoned teachers in the textbook selection process.

There is more to curriculum than just textbooks, counseled Mary Ann Lecos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum of Fairfax County Public Schools in Annandale, Virginia. Curriculum, she said, is a strategic plan for development and interaction between instructional materials and the way teachers present it.

Other speakers admitted that test results indicate that children attending public schools are experiencing learning deficiencies. Harriet Tyson Bernstein, a senior associate of the Council of Basic Education, stated that textbook materials are often incomprehensible. Since teachers and curricular people are demanding more pictures, there is less and less text, and school books have jazzy layouts like magazines.

Other topics of discussion during the two-day program included: "Making Curriculum Content Decisions at the State and Local Levels," "The Role of Parents and Community Groups in the Selection of Curricular Materials," "Developing Local Policies to Address Parental and Community Concerns about Curricular Materials," "The Publisher's Role in Developing Public School Textbooks," "Curriculum Content — Who Has the Final Word?" and "Public Curriculum and Religion."



Halloween Parodies of Christmas Carols Assigned

The Pottstown, PA, *Sunday Mercury* stirred up a hornet's nest when it published a news story on January 17 this year about an assignment given in October 1986 to the 5th grade music class at the New Hanover-Upper Frederick Elementary School. Readers took sides on the controversy, and letters to the editor continued for days.

More than a year ago, the music teacher gave her pupils the assignment to write Halloween parodies of Christmas carols. Her 11- and 12-year-old pupils dutifully obeyed, parodying the famous Christmas carols with references to ghouls, blood, death, vampires, and the devil.

A parody of "Away in a Manger" became "Away in a Coffin" and read as follows:

"Away in a coffin, some blood on his head,
The little sick vampire lay down his gross head.
The ghosts in the sky dropped down their heads,
The little sick vampire asleep in the shed."

One parody of "Joy to the World" was called "Fate to the World" and said in part,

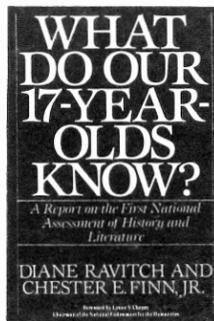
"The devil will come, Let earth receive its fate,
Let every heart enjoy its death." Another parody of the same carol read, "Chaos to the earth! Let every person prepare for doom and death, And ghouls and goblins sing."

The music assignment came to light 15 months after it happened when one parent gave the songs to a *Mercury* reporter. The teacher had compiled all the parodies, mimeographed them, and distributed the entire set to her class of 43 children.

When called by the newspaper, the teacher and the principal refused comment, several school officials attacked the newspaper for printing the story, and the superintendent ordered his school board members not to discuss it.

The newspaper, in an editorial defending its action, said, "Innocent, impressionable children were asked to take Christian songs of worship and reword them into hymns for Halloween — a holiday that celebrates witches, ghosts and evil spirits. ... Parents had a right to know the kinds of assignments their children are given."

Book of the Month



What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, by Diane Ravitch, and Chester E. Finn, Jr., New York: Harper & Row, 1987, 293 pp., \$15.95.

Former *New York Times* Moscow bureau chief Serge Schmemmann has said, "Rare is the Russian who was not reared on *The Deerslayer* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and who is not familiar with *The Catcher in the Rye*, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck."

Could it be that the average Russian citizen is more familiar with the classics of American literature than the current graduates of America's schools?

Professor Chester Finn of Vanderbilt University, currently serving as U.S. Undersecretary of Education, and Diane Ravitch, Adjunct Professor of History and Education at Columbia University, have attempted to answer that question.

Noting that, in our move toward educational reforms in the early 1980s, the humanities (history and literature) were neglected, that the study of history has been folded into courses in "social studies" with few schools requiring more than a year of history for graduation, and that the very idea of a "canon" of appropriate works and authors has disappeared, Finn and

Ravitch determined to create for the first time a national test on knowledge of history and literature. Their book records the creation of that test, and its results.

Under the auspices of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been testing students since 1969, a nationwide examination was given in 1986 to 8,000 eleventh graders. The history questions were divided into six major periods in American history, and the literature questions included poems, plays, novels, epics, myths, and Bible stories.

The authors regretfully had to use a multiple choice format, which probably allowed students to score higher than they would have scored on essay questions. Nevertheless, the students averaged only 54% on history and 52% on literature — clearly failing grades.

The book's central chapter, "What They Know," describes the test questions and results. Reading it is like encountering the scene of a traffic accident: one recoils from the carnage, yet somehow feels compelled to look in horror. Here one learns, for example, that only 30.6% of high school juniors can identify the Magna Carta, only 32.2% can place the Civil War as having occurred between 1850 and 1900, and only 36% connect the *Canterbury Tales* with the name of Chaucer.

While the authors make no claim to having proved that American youth know less about the past than their predecessors, since there are no previous tests results for comparison, they find the results deeply disturbing. The current generation's ignorance about our nation's and world's past and of the great classics of literature "...put them at risk of being gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entry into adulthood, citizenship and parenthood."