

Illinois Legislature Passes Abstinence Law

The Illinois General Assembly passed a strong law on October 31 requiring that public school sex courses teach sexual abstinence until marriage as "the expected norm" and "honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage." H.B. 2634 was passed over Governor James Thompson's veto by large majorities in both houses (94-12 in the House and 38-14 in the Senate) and takes effect immediately.

The legislation is being hailed as a victory for the children of Illinois who will now have access to information about the preeminent status of heterosexual marriage and about the disease, pregnancy, emotional, and psychological risks of premarital sexual activity. The legislation is also a victory for parents who are

assured the right to remove their children from sex classes without retaliation or harassment by the school.

The most controversial portion of the new statute is the requirement for "evaluating and measuring the effectiveness" of all sex and family life courses used in Illinois. Despite the tens of millions of dollars that Illinois taxpayers have poured into such programs, through both the schools and the public health and welfare agencies, to combat the high rate of teenage pregnancy, no evaluation of results has ever been made.

The state-funded agencies fought bitterly against H.B. 2634, saying that "the stress on abstinence was unnecessary." They were strong-

ly against any evaluation requirement.

The principal features of the new Illinois Sex Education and Family Life Education law are as follows:

"All public elementary, junior high, and senior high school classes that teach sex education and discuss sexual intercourse shall emphasize that abstinence is the expected norm in that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100% effective against unwanted teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually."

"Course material and instruction shall teach honor and respect for monogamous hetero-

sexual marriage."

"Course material and instruction shall stress that pupils should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready for marriage."

"Course material and instruction shall include a discussion of the possible emotional and psychological consequences of preadolescent and adolescent sexual intercourse outside of marriage and the consequences of unwanted adolescent pregnancy."

"Course material and instruction shall stress that sexually transmitted diseases are serious possible hazards of sexual intercourse."

"Course material and instruction shall advise pupils of the laws pertaining to their financial responsibility to children born in and out of wedlock."

"Course material and instruction shall advise pupils of the circumstances under which it is unlawful for males to have sexual relations with females under the age of 18 to whom they are not married."

Parents have the right "to examine the instructional materials" and to remove their children from all comprehensive sex or family life courses or AIDS instruction without action against the student by the school.

The State Superintendent of Education shall develop procedures for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the family life courses of instruction in each local school district, including setting "goals for reduced teenage sexual activity, STDs, and premarital pregnancies."

The bill was sponsored by Representatives Gary Hannig (D-Mt. Olive) and John McNamara (D-Chicago), and Senators Bob Kustra (R-Park Ridge) and Dick Kelly (D-Hazel Crest).

Education Spending Trounced by Voters

Several education initiatives put to statewide referenda in the November election went down to crushing defeats, even though they were packaged in "help the children" wrappings and were supported by most prominent public officials. Observers said that these election results provide new proof that the anti-tax movement in America is alive and well.

Michigan voters trounced two school financing proposals to provide additional state funds for education. The Michigan Legislature had worked for three years to put these two plans on the ballot, and they were enthusiastically backed by Governor James Blanchard and all education establishment voices. The Michigan Education Association was reputed to have spent \$2.5 million to pass the two propositions.

One of the Michigan propositions would

have raised the sales tax only 1/2 of 1 percent, with all the revenues to be used for schools; but the voters said no by more than 2-1/2 to 1. The other Michigan proposition, also to benefit the schools exclusively, would have raised the sales tax 2 percent with an offset of temporary property tax relief. However, the voters said no by more than 3 to 1.

Opponents of the two measures said that the election results showed that the people do not want to lose local control of their schools and do not trust the Michigan state department of education. If the funding proposals had passed, the law would have greatly reduced the authority of local school boards, and all public schools in Michigan would have had to be accredited by the state department of education. The proposals would also have mandated health

services and counseling in all schools, and would have set up a data bank to record student and parent attitudes and expectations.

In another upset victory in November, voters in Washington State decisively rejected by two-to-one a proposition for a small sales tax increase attractively titled the Children's Initiative. Public officials were stunned that the voters rejected a plan to help children — especially when the proposal would have financed programs widely promoted by the media and recommended by the experts, such as early childhood education, drug education in the schools, and child abuse prevention. The initiative was endorsed by nearly everyone with political name I.D. including the Governor who made TV spots pointing the finger of

See *Spending*, page 2

NEWS Analysis:

Michigan Reading Test Fails to Test Reading

The new Michigan Educational Assessment (MEAP) tests were administered in October to all Michigan public school pupils in the 4th, 7th and 10th grades. The Michigan state department of education has made it clear that this new test is based on the newly-adopted theory of reading instruction which is called "whole language." (See the July *Education Reporter* for news of the adoption of the whole-language method in Michigan.)

Parents and many teachers criticize this method because they say it teaches children to guess at the meaning of words instead of learning reading skills and phonics. They assert that "whole language" is just a trendy new word to describe the discredited "look-say" or "whole-word" approach, which resulted in such a high percentage of illiterates coming out of public schools in the last three decades.

Parents began to voice their concerns when the new whole-language method was explained at teacher workshops, and when some parents and teachers got access to the pilot tests used in selected districts in the 1987-88 and 1988-89 school years.

Now that the test has been given all over the state, concerned parents and taxpayers say that the questions actually used on this test in the fall of 1989 prove that the new Michigan reading method does not teach reading at all, and furthermore is designed to score pupils in a way

that conceals the fact that reading skills are not being taught.

Parents also object to the negative content of some of the test stories and to the questions which demand opinions, attitudes, and value judgments from the student. They further object because answer selections often leave out choices which reflect their value system.

The new Michigan MEAP reading test is expected to have national and international influence. The September issue of the *Michigan Education Report* published by the Michigan State Board of Education states that, "Michi-

gan's new reading test is being used as a model for test development by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for the 1990 national assessment of reading."

According to Michigan State Superintendent of Public Instruction Donald L. Bemis, "The Michigan test was chosen because of its new theory and research for learning and teaching of reading and its innovative approaches to reading assessment."

Parents and teachers are concerned that the Michigan reading test, which they consider fundamentally flawed, is being used by the U.S. Department of Education as a model for national, federally funded tests. If federal reading tests are adopted in the public schools, that means a federal curriculum is not far off, not only in content but in methods, even if the methods are defective.

The same issue of the *Michigan Education Report* states that the U.S. Department of Education submitted four passages from the Michigan MEAP test to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Many observers are concerned that this means that the U.S. Department of Education is moving toward the development of an international curriculum.

What's In the Test?

The following is an analysis of the 1989

MEAP reading test, as made by informed observers who have had access to the new test questions.

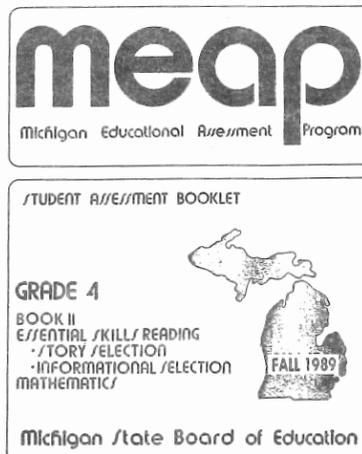
Fourth grade pupils were given two little stories in Book I called "A Pet Raccoon" and "The School Play," and then asked, "What will most likely happen?" about each (questions 10 and 12). Instead of querying the student on what happened in the story in order to determine whether the child could read it, this question merely asked what might happen in the future, which is just a matter of opinion and *not* a reading skill.

After another 4th grade test story, "Dark Sky," question 19 asked, "This story shows that Ann is probably (a) kind, (b) loud, (c) mean, (d) beautiful." However, the story doesn't "show" that Ann is any of those things. Two of those options are reasonable opinions.

Two questions following another story were total nonsense, and the directions admitted as much: "Read each sentence. Choose the best meaning for the underlined nonsense word" [indicated in bold]. Question 23 asked, "Using a crayon, the child **thrud** the picture of the horse." The correct answer was "colored." Question 24 asked, "The **blam** gave my father a speeding ticket." The correct answer was "police officer."

Many questions probed the child's feelings

See *Analysis*, page 4



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Creationists won a far-reaching victory when the California Board of Education adopted new textbook guidelines on November 9 which delete a reference to evolution as "a scientific fact" and that "life has continually diversified through time, as older species have been replaced by newer ones." The new guidelines, which will remain in effect for seven years, include the statements that "some people reject the theory of evolution purely on the basis of religious faith" and that such "personal beliefs should be respected and not demeaned." Both sides will now concentrate their lobbying efforts on the publishers, which will be producing textbooks to satisfy the new guidelines, and on Texas, where new textbooks will be submitted for evaluation next March under guidelines that were adopted earlier this year after a similar board of education compromise. California and Texas are the two largest markets for textbooks, and publishers tend to follow the guidelines set in those states.

The Georgia State Board of Education has taken a hard-line stance against teachers who violate acceptable behavior. By a vote of 4-3 on November 9, the board upheld the firing of Coquitt County Teacher of the Year Vicki Sherling, whose husband was convicted of growing and using marijuana at the home they share. In another case the same day, by a vote of 5-0 the board refused to let Huey Coates, a music teacher who had an affair with a 13-year-old former student a decade ago, re-enter the teaching profession in Georgia.

A public controversy erupted in suburban St. Louis where a private school gave a year's leave with full pay to a second grade teacher in order to take her out of the classroom because she was deliberately pregnant while unmarried. The 31-year-old teacher, Martha Overcash, is single and became pregnant three months ago through artificial insemination. The leave was offered because parents and board members were concerned about the example her behavior set for elementary school children. The local newspaper published outraged comments by feminists, lawyers, and teachers' advocates who complained that "there are still segments in society that are uncomfortable with any type of reproduction outside of a legal marriage" and "some segments of society have yet to accept the non-conventional families in their midst." The school then reversed its decision and is allowing Miss Overcash to continue to teach and take regular maternity leave as provided in school policy.

Skaneateles, New York news reports announced that Dr. Ruth was to be the keynote speaker for the New York State School Boards Association state convention in Niagara Falls. According to the reports, New York state Senator James Donovan, chairman of the Senate Education Committee, decided not to attend when he learned this and cancelled his reservations for the convention.

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002, (618) 462-5415. Editor: Susan Glover. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund, Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Second Class postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

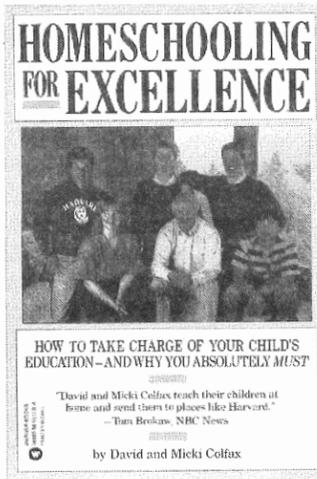
Book of the Month



Book of the Month

Homeschooling for Excellence: How to Take Charge of Your Child's Education and Why You Absolutely Must by David and Micki Colfax, (New York: Warner Books, 1987), 142 pp., paperback.

The Colfax family turned to homeschooling as much out of necessity — having moved to homestead 47 acres of remote Northern California wilderness in 1973 — as from their dissatisfaction with the public schools. They knew the system firsthand, having both been public school teachers.



The Colfaxes were so successful with their four boys that the three who have reached college age have been accepted into Harvard, and they decided to share what they had learned by writing this book.

Unlike many homeschoolers, their indictment of the public schools does not appear to stem from concern over lack of moral teaching or the undermining of religious faith. However, they declare that "American education is in deep trouble" and call it a "debacle." They lament that, in the early sixties, "local control of school districts was transferred, primarily because of patterns of funding, to state and federal agencies, . . . a centralized system in which organizational men and women — administrators and bureaucrats — rather than teachers and students, became the key players in a very big, very expensive game. It is a legacy which haunts and poisons the classroom a generation later."

In contrast, the authors describe homeschooling as "the most dynamic and creative educational movement in decades." They also warn that it requires a considerable investment of time, as well as funds for textbooks and a library.

Their book gives practical advice to parents who wish to initiate a home school, including numerous recommendations of textbooks on various subjects at every level, with annotations about many. They strongly advise critical examination of textbooks.

One striking piece of information was the fact that, as soon as they were introduced to reading through a series of readers with workbooks and allowed to work at their own pace, all three of their boys who were old enough for school (ages 8, 5 and 3) learned to read quickly. The elder two, Grant and Drew, finished the series and reached sixth grade reading level in two years. In the case of the 8-year-old, this progress seems to substantiate the arguments of

Illinois Sex Education Law

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly: Section 1.

Ch. 122, Sec. 27-9.1. Sex Education. (a) No pupil shall be required to take or participate in any class or course in comprehensive sex education if his parent or guardian submits written objection thereto, and refusal to take or participate in such course or program shall not be reason for suspension or expulsion of such pupil. Each class or course in comprehensive sex education offered in any of grades 6 through 12 shall include instruction on the prevention, transmission and spread of AIDS. Nothing in this Section prohibits instruction in sanitation, hygiene or traditional courses in biology.

(b) All public elementary, junior high, and senior high school classes that teach sex education and discuss sexual intercourse shall emphasize that abstinence is the expected norm in that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100% effective against unwanted teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually.

(c) All sex education courses that discuss sexual intercourse shall satisfy the following criteria:

(1) Course material and instruction shall be age appropriate.

(2) Course material and instruction shall teach honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage.

(3) Course material and instruction shall stress that pupils should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready for marriage.

(4) Course material and instruction shall include a discussion of the possible emotional and psychological consequences of preadolescent and adolescent sexual intercourse outside of marriage and the consequences of unwanted adolescent pregnancy.

(5) Course material and instruction shall stress that sexually transmitted diseases are serious possible hazards of sexual intercourse. Pupils shall be provided with statistics based on the latest medical information citing the failure and success rates of condoms in preventing AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

(6) Course material and instruction shall advise pupils of the laws pertaining to their financial responsibility to children born in and out of wedlock.

(7) Course material and instruction shall advise pupils of the circumstances under which it is unlawful for males to have sexual relations with females under the age of 18 to whom they are not married pursuant to Article 12 of the

Criminal Code of 1961, as now or hereafter amended.

(8) Course material and instruction shall teach pupils to not make unwanted physical and verbal sexual advances and how to say no to unwanted sexual advances. Pupils shall be taught that it is wrong to take advantage of or to exploit another person. The material and instruction shall also encourage youth to resist negative peer pressure.

(d) An opportunity shall be afforded to parents or guardians to examine the instructional materials to be used in such class or course.

Ch. 122, Sec. 27-9.2. Family Life. If any school district provides courses of instruction designed to promote wholesome and comprehensive understanding of the emotional, psychological, physiological, hygienic and social responsibility aspects of family life, then such courses of instruction shall include the teaching of the alternatives to abortion, appropriate to the various grade levels; and whenever such courses of instruction are provided in any of grades 6 through 12, then such courses also shall include instruction on the prevention, transmission and spread of AIDS. However, no pupil shall be required to take or participate in any family life class or course on AIDS instruction if his parent or guardian submits written objection thereto, and refusal to take or participate in such course or program shall not be reason for suspension or expulsion of such pupil.

The State Superintendent of Education shall prepare and make available to local school districts courses of instruction designed to satisfy the requirements of this Section.

The State Superintendent of Education shall develop a procedure for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the family life courses of instruction in each local school district, including the setting of reasonable goals for reduced sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases and premarital pregnancy. The goals shall be set by the beginning of the 1991-92 school year. The State Superintendent shall distribute a copy of the procedure to each local school district. Each local school district may develop additional procedures or methods for measuring the effectiveness of the family life courses of instruction within the district. Before the beginning of the 1993-94 school year, the State Superintendent shall collect and evaluate all relevant data to determine whether the goals are being achieved.

Passed October 31, 1989.

Spending

Continued from page 1

shame at opponents. Yet, 66 percent of voters said no.

When the disappointed backers of the Children's Initiative met to discuss the vote, House Speaker Joe King said, "I don't think you can read into this that the public doesn't care about kids." Opponents of the Children's Initiative said they can read into the results the message that the public has discovered that such programs are "principally a means of loading more persons onto the public payroll, with only trickle-down benefits to children."

Earlier this year, in Fremont, California, the city council put to a referendum a proposition to raise taxes by a \$12 per household in order to provide daycare for employed parents. This small increase was supported by "everyone" but it lost 3-1/2 to 1, and the politicians were reportedly stunned.

those who warn against "hurrying" children and maintain that they need not start formal schooling as early as age 6 or even 7.

Another notable point is the fact that there was never a television set in the Colfax home; they were too far away to receive the signals, and no doubt benefited greatly, since the average American child spends more time between the ages of 5 and 18 in front of a TV (15,000 hours) than he does in school (11,500 hours).

The book contains useful chapters on questions frequently asked about homeschooling and on preschool toys and games, "tools for learning" (what reference books should be on hand), the 3 R's (teaching the basics of reading and writing), and the high school level. The value of the Colfax's efforts in homeschooling was demonstrated when their eldest son, Grant, who had never been tested at all, scored high on his SAT examinations and was accepted at both Harvard and Yale.

FOCUS: Report on Chautauqua at Pitt

"The Russians are Coming"

by Marjorie Provan

The University of Pittsburgh played host to the Fifth Chautauqua Conference on U.S.-Soviet Relations from October 29 to November 3. The event was planned to enable 250 Soviet leaders and their American counterparts to meet and discuss, in plenary and workshop sessions, social, political and cultural issues of interest to both nations. Two previous conferences had been held at Chautauqua, NY, and two in the Soviet Union.

Pittsburgh was chosen for this conference because the Soviets wanted a city where their citizens could have a genuine "American experience." The event was promoted by long-time conference enthusiast Wesley Posvar, president of the University of Pittsburgh. News accounts indicated that the University worked extremely hard for nine months previous to the event.

The announcement that a number of celebrities would be on hand for the occasion helped to increase local anticipation. These included TV talk show host Phil Donahue, actress/activist Marlo Thomas (and wife of Donahue), Geraldine Ferraro, former Vice Presidential candidate, and actor/environmentalist Robert Redford. Redford failed to appear.

Pittsburgh headlines heralded the arrival of "Chautauqua at Pitt" and a number of city residents (all wearing merging USA/USSR flag pins and many waving dual flags) welcomed approximately 250 Russians. At the same time, local newspapers reported that at least two Soviet editors (Starkov and Koralev) had been urged not to attend the U.S. conference (Starkov's denunciation stemmed from his recent publication of an unflattering Gorbachev popularity survey.)

A local Pittsburgh-area organization circulated a report asserting that the Chautauqua Institute and the USSR Friendship Society are part of the Soviet Active Measures Operation in the U.S. as outlined by the Security and Intelligence Foundation in Arlington, VA. This Foundation had distributed an FBI report stating that "Soviet intelligence officers will continue to target . . . influential American citizens, U.S. government officials, journalists, and political activists. Soviet intelligence . . . is always alert for the opportunity to recruit Americans who are in position to facilitate or assist Soviet Active Measures Operations."

The Conference was open to the public and received international media coverage due to the appearance of U.S. Senators John Heinz and Bill Bradley, Pennsylvania Representative Bill Coyne, Valentina Tereshkova (lauded as the first woman in space), Vladimir Pozner (listed as "political observer," but widely known for his longtime defense of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviets' use of mental hospitals for political prisoners), and Bruce S. Gelb, Director of the U.S. Information Agency. The U.S.I.A. finances and facilitates the activities covered under the U.S./Soviet Educational Exchange under the General Agreement signed at the Geneva Conference of November 21, 1985.

Sunday's opening included a message from President George Bush, speeches by Rhodes Scholar and University of Pittsburgh president Wesley Posvar, Sen. John Heinz, Bruce Gelb, and Mayor Sophie Masloff. A frequent critic of Soviet Jewish policy who has picketed Russian performing arts in Pittsburgh, Mayor Masloff

exited the stage immediately after her speech.

Students were bused in daily from area high schools (some from as far as Chautauqua, NY) and college students were encouraged to participate and volunteer for the sessions. A daily publication entitled "Chautauqua at Pitt" (printed in both Russian and English) listed each day's schedule. Sessions included topics



A girl welcoming the Russians at Chautauqua at Pitt.

such as the current "State of US/Soviet Relations," "Prospects for Increases in Trade and Economic Relations," "Cooperation in Outer Space," "Women," "Environmental Issues," "Youth Problems," "Drug and Alcohol Abuse," "Human Rights," "Arms Control," "Reproductive Issues." Some events, such as the Sierra Club discussion, were listed as "Open To Soviets Only and Others By Invitation."

Bob Reteshka, Sr. (media representative of the University of Pittsburgh) assured attendees that audiences would participate in discussions of both countries' experiences, failures and successes. In spite of this assurance, there were numerous complaints that those in the audience weren't permitted to ask questions in a number of sessions, and that a number of written questions were "reinterpreted" by the moderator.

Those who attended the conference were greeted by hundreds of colorful U.S. student "peace" messages covering the walls and pillars of the main auditorium lobby. These messages were written by Pittsburgh area schoolchildren (public, private and parochial schools) and, reportedly, were to be sent to the USSR when the visiting delegation returned home. In addition, a six-foot chest with at least a hundred cubicles containing "peace" messages stood in the lobby. Tacked to the walls were form letters inviting Soviet speakers into local schools. The USSR/USA flag logo was seen everywhere. All Pittsburgh hosts wore the twin flag pin.

The Soviets accomplished a great deal by the "Chautauqua at Pitt" Conference. One audience member commented on the naivete of the average American in dealing with Soviet professionals. Students (for the most part) have very little background in dealing with dialectics. Most sessions offered little disparity between speakers. Experienced Soviet watchers noted the excellent training exhibited by the Soviets. For example, when Vladimir Pozner was confronted with an accusation against the Soviet

Union, he always adeptly charged the U.S. with a similar offense.

The new glasnost party line appears to be: admit past errors (but not take the total blame), then immediately liken Soviet problems to problems facing the United States. Pozner was a past master at adroitly adding a light touch and "cute" anecdotes. When cornered, the Soviets resorted to the partyline. One Ukrainian citizen in exile (Volodymyr Zyznewsky) sputtered "Hogwash! That's a lie!" following Veniamin Yaklovlev's statement that the "Baltic states and other Soviet Republics joined the Soviet Union for protection against Fascism!" Yaklovlev is the new Soviet Minister of Justice.

Students who attended such sessions as "Prospects for Increases in Trade and Economic Relations" were told that we must repeal the Jackson/Vanik Amendment (which says that any trade with the USSR must be linked with an improvement of human rights in the Soviet Union.) Because the speakers didn't specify just what the Jackson/Vanik Amendment is, most audience members were left with the impression that it was bad legislation.

Students who attended "Role Definition: Men and Women in Changing Roles" heard Natela E. Lagidze, Tbilisi City Commissioner of the Georgian Communist Party; Yelena A. Kukyanova, assistant professor of law at Moscow State University, and longtime feminist Letty Cottin Pogrebin, editor-at-large of *Ms. Magazine*.

An estimated 3,000 attended a session called "Women in Contemporary Society." There appeared to be no significant areas of disagreement between the views of Alevtina Fedulova, First Deputy Chairman of Committee of Soviet Women, Geraldine Ferraro, former Vice Presidential candidate, and Marlo Thomas.

Geraldine Ferraro stressed the importance of election strategy and the grooming of women for public office by having them win first in local elections, then state and national. She promoted Comparable Worth by using the original feminist argument that "tree-trimmers were paid more than daycare attendants." Ferraro's espousal of Parental Leave and daycare was another crowd pleaser. Her final remark brought heavy applause, "I always loved Bella Abzug. She said that true equality will come, not when a female Einstein is promoted as quickly as a man like Einstein, but when a female schlemiel is promoted as quickly as a male schlemiel!"

Marlo Thomas was introduced as an actress/producer/social activist, winner of the Helen Caldicott Award for Nuclear Disarmament, the ACLU's Thomas Paine Award and member of the Board of the Women's Political Caucus. In her long dissertation on the negatives of being a woman, Thomas said, "Either way, it is women who get stuck holding the baby!" She then lamented, "Women were mothers and teachers, girls were bad in sports, women were feminine and smelled good. Women served coffee. It was prison, a fantasy with walls, etc." (She did not refer to her parents' palatial home in Beverly Hills, or the fact that she has no children.)

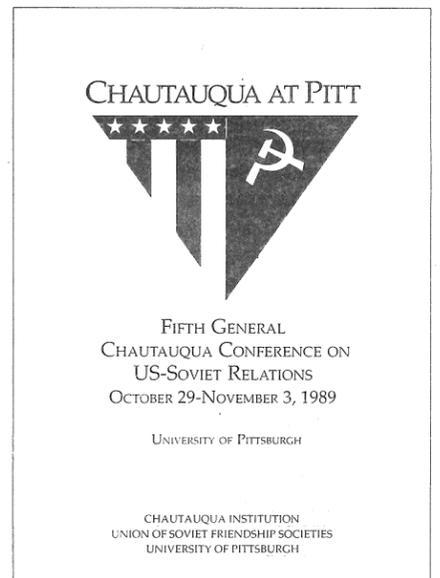
At that point, Thomas exuberantly exclaimed that the feminist movement had changed all that, "Revolution was born in union, the sisterhood!" She then proclaimed, "Nobody knows that better than the people of the Soviet Union. Some 70 years ago you launched the boldest revolution of the century — a revolution that not only shook the world, but changed it . . .

Our hearts are with you!"

Television talk show host Phil Donahue and Vladimir Pozner's "Citizen's Open Dialogue" probably had fewer students in attendance due to its \$10 ticket price. Donahue spoke lovingly of his 1985 "SpaceBridge" (a satellite TV program that brought Soviet and American citizens together for dialogue and discussion). He interspersed his light banter with tales of his "growing up Catholic" with copies of J. Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit* "not only in our living room but in our bedroom."

Donahue waxed ecstatic about his trip to the Soviet Union. He said that the minute a Soviet citizen asked for his autograph, "The cold war was over for me!" Much of Donahue's speech was a laudatory introduction for Vladimir Pozner. "He's been to our house. I've been to his! I've learned more from him than he has from me! This is the son my mother wanted to have. He's my pal, and I'm pleased to present him to you!" Further along in the evening, Donahue berated America for our poor voter turnout (less than 50% in the U.S. compared with a 90% turnout in the Soviet Union). Later, an angry member of the audience took him to task for his lack of understanding of the Communist voting system.

Pozner appeared chagrined that more "American businessmen are unwilling to invest money in the Soviet Union." He felt it could be tied to our uncertainty about Gorbachev's official future. When Pozner conjectured that "Bush could die tomorrow!", there was loud applause.



Students who attended a session entitled, "Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Society" were able to watch glasnost and perestroika disintegrate into angry charges if they had the patience to sit through a number of droning speeches. Angry charges were hurled when audience members accused the Russian Orthodox Church of collaboration with Soviet officials in oppression and suppression of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Russian prelates (Archbishop Makarii and Metropolitan Yuvenalii) vehemently denied this and constantly admonished those in attendance that we must not dwell on past Soviet "mistakes." Buzzwords such as the "need for dialogue," "love your enemy," "building bridges," "widen our perspectives," and

See *Russians*, page 4

Analysis

Continued from page 1

and emotions while having nothing to do with reading skills. The pupil was told to answer yes or no to: "Does feeling well help to tell about feeling jealous?", "Does feeling excited help to tell about feeling jealous?", and "Is wishing you were invited to a party instead of a friend an example of caring about someone?"

Question 17 asked: "Is lightning [sic] an example of natural resources?" It's hard to know whether to laugh at the misspelling, weep at the stupidity of it all, or be indignant at the fraud of calling this a reading test.

How do you know the answer? "By looking at the pictures."

Book II of the grade 4 "reading test" started out by featuring a depressing and unrealistic 5-page tale about a child who was so jealous of her new baby brother that she put him up for sale in a rummage sale for \$6.49 in order to buy a play disguise kit (with fake nose, mustache, etc.). Fortunately, the mother showed up in time to buy the baby for \$6.49, and then the child had money to shop at the toy store.

The 4th grader was asked 46 questions about this story, most of which reinforced the mischievous storyline but did *not* test reading skills. For example, 21 asked, "How do you know that the person telling the story is a girl?" The correct answer was: "By looking at the pictures." Indeed, that is the *only* way one could answer the question because no female name or pronoun was used in the text.

Some of the questions invaded family privacy and even portrayed sibling jealousy sympathetically. For example, 22 asked, "What would help you MOST in understanding how the girl felt in the story?" The correct answer was, "being a big brother or sister."

Some of the questions had no correct answer. For example, 28 asked, "what kind of a story is this?" The options listed were: "a mystery, a fairy tale, a story that could be real, a science fiction story." The story was actually none of the above; it was a story that could *not* be real.

Question 16 asked, "Which of the following BEST describes how the girl feels at the end of the story? (a) proud, (b) jealous, (c) silly, (d) bored." Since nothing in the story gave a clue as to whether the girl felt any of those things, this question simply called on the child to make a value judgment about the idea of selling a baby brother, and "ashamed" was not an option.

Twelve of the questions (35 through 46) asked the child to evaluate his own reading skills by requiring him to check "strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree" with such statements as: "It was easy for me to read the words in *Rummage Sale*," "I tried hard to read the words in *Rummage Sale*," and "I worked hard so I would do well on the test questions." These questions about the child's feelings apparently substituted for actual testing of the child's reading performance.

The next story in the 4th grade test was called "Conserving Our Natural Resources." The problem with this section was that most of the 46 questions could easily be answered without ever reading the story at all. Examples are (4) "What is a national forest?" and (5) "Why should we use our natural resources carefully?"

A clue to the grossly defective instruction which Michigan 4th graders have been receiving was revealed in question 23: "If you did not know what the word 'polluted' means, how

could you find out?" The expected answer was, "Find the word 'polluted' in the dark print and read the sentences around it."

In other words, the students have been taught to guess at the word from the context. The student is *not* taught to break the word into syllables and sound it out, *or*, if he did not recognize it, to look it up in the dictionary.

Again, the pupil was given 12 questions (35 through 46) to evaluate his own reading ability. Since the test itself does not evaluate reading skills, the teacher is apparently to score the child based on the child's own self-evaluation.

Teaching that Dishonesty Pays

The 7th grade test had an outrageous 6-page story called "Cheating Mr. Diskin" about a couple of boys who cheated a merchant and got enough money to go to the movies. The lesson was that, although they felt "bad" about their dishonesty, they did achieve their goal of getting enough money to go to the movies.

Some of the 46 questions had no correct answer. Question 8 asked "which word BEST describes [the boy named] Soup?" Options were "honest, selfish, cowardly, quiet," but all were wrong; Soup was deliberately and unrepentantly dishonest.

Some of the questions reinforced the lesson that dishonesty pays. Question 13 asked "what Mr. Diskin did" after he found out that he was cheated, and the correct answer was that he was "NOT mean." He gave the boys movie money anyway.

Some questions required answers to hypothetical questions that were not answered in the story. Question 15 was, "If Mr. Diskin had NOT noticed the trick, Rob would probably have felt (a) nothing at all, (b) sorry he had not used a bigger stone, (c) bad about what he had done, (d) lucky to have a friend like Soup." There is no right answer to this question based on reading the story. It is a hypothetical question that required a value judgment as to

how the student thinks the dishonest boy should have felt.

Question 30 asked the student, "what type of story is this?" The options were, "a fantasy, realistic fiction, an adventure story, [or] science fiction." The answer should be: stupid, unrealistic fiction teaching that dishonesty pays.

Instructions to Teachers

The instruction booklet to the teachers on how to score and report these phony "reading" tests revealed quite a bit about how this new test mythology was constructed and how teachers were induced to accept it.

To explain why so many non-reading skill questions were included on the "reading" test, the teacher was told that it is important to report on the students' "attitudes and self-perception, knowledge about reading, and topic familiarity" because those factors "influence reading performance." Indeed they do, but a reading test should test reading performance. If it mixes the test score with other factors, it is a fraud.

The instruction booklet boldly asked the question, "How can this test measure the reading process?", and answers, "It doesn't! It can measure only what they *know* about the reading process." Translated into plain English, that means the test measures whether the students are good at guessing at words they have not yet memorized.

The instruction booklet prepared by the education department has so many examples of incorrect grammar and punctuation that many wonder how students can be expected to learn how to write a respectable letter. ■

Russians

Continued from page 3

"religion devoid of rigidity" were the order of the day at this session. The audience was also admonished to recognize "the need of the nonbeliever to gain the respect of the community!"

What was accomplished at the conference? A solid plum for the Soviets is the upcoming "Pitt-Moscow School Plan Exchange." The *Pittsburgh Press* reported on November 3, that the University of Pittsburgh and Moscow State University have reached an agreement to exchange students, faculty and researchers, with details to be worked out over the next year. The program is planned to include undergraduate and graduate student exchanges, faculty exchanges and cooperative research and will focus on sociology because that is the specialty of Vladimir Dobrenkov, prorector of Moscow State University and chairman of its sociology department.

Dobrenkov negotiated the agreement for the Soviets while attending Chautauqua at Pitt. Holzer said the arrangement will enable Pitt students and faculty, especially those in the Russian and East European program, "to observe firsthand what is happening in the Soviet Union. We're doing this to improve the quality of education that we're offering our students." Among the other Soviet institutions with which Pitt has such arrangements is the Siberian Academy of Science. Currently, there are two Soviet students at Pitt.

Other accomplishments of the Soviets include new partnerships in environmental concerns; more impetus for trade agreements (especially if the Jackson/Vanik Amendment is eliminated); and more U.S.-USSR citizen group exchanges. The media hoopla surrounding "Chautauqua at Pitt" helped dispel any notion that the USSR is the enemy. The conference was a supreme public relations coup for the Soviet Active Measures Operation. ■

MEAP Math Test Shows Lowered Standards

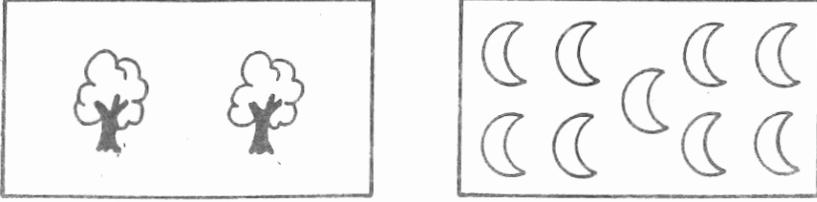
37 Which is a triangle?



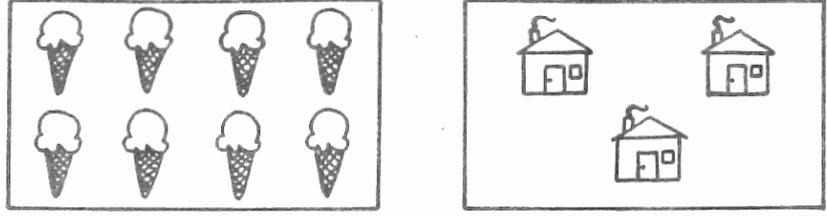
38 Which is a rectangle?



43 Which set has fewer members?



45 Which set has fewer members?



The mathematics section of the Michigan 4th grade MEAP test (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) reveals how school arithmetic standards have declined. Fourth graders used to be taught and tested on fractions and long division, while 3rd graders learned all their multiplication tables through 12×12 .

But this year's 4th grade math test in Michigan included no multiplication question more difficult than 4×5 , and no division at all, short or long. The addition and subtraction questions did not require the child to add or subtract, but merely to guess at the answers from four multiple-choice answers.

Three math questions (37, 38, 39) appeared to be more suitable for kindergarten than the 4th grade. They showed an outline drawing of a

square, a circle, a rectangle and a triangle, and asked the student to identify which was which.

Three questions (43, 44, 45) had two boxes with a different number of items in each and asked which set contained *fewer* items. Can you imagine testing a 4th grader's math abilities by asking which is fewer: two trees or nine crescent moons?

When the test got somewhat harder, three questions asked "which set has the *fewest* members?" Question 79 had one box with 3 balls, one with 2 balls, and one with 1 ball. Question 80 had one box with 5 wagons, one with 4 wagons, and one with 3 wagons. Question 81 had one box with 2 umbrellas, one with 3 umbrellas, and one with 4 umbrellas.

This is 4th grade! ■