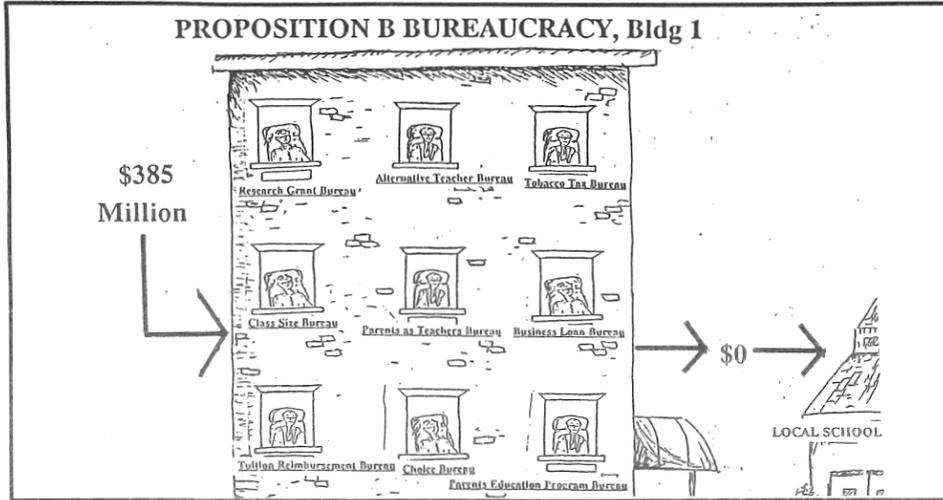


Parents Win Round Against 'Michigan Model'



Missouri Tax Increase Defeated Two-to-One

JEFFERSON CITY, MO — Missourians are shocked by the overwhelming defeat of the \$385 million tax measure known as Proposition B on November 5. "State officials are sifting through the wreckage of the Proposition B campaign, like accident investigators wondering why a plane crashed," writes Terry Ganey in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. The tax measure was defeated 622,468 to 303,653.

Opponents of the tax measure are not wondering why it was defeated — they are rejoicing at the 2-to-1 defeat. They believe it would have given more tax dollars to the bureaucracy, not to the local schools. As State Rep. Joe Orthwert of St. Charles, MO said, "This referendum is long on phony gimmicks and vague promises, and short on results, performance and meaningful improvements in the classroom."

Supporters of the tax increase see its defeat as a major setback for public education. "A long cold winter and a late spring" for Missouri schools is what Education Commissioner Robert E. Bartman predicts.

Proposition B was to raise \$385 million the first year, with \$190 million for colleges and universities and another \$190 million for elementary and secondary education. The remaining \$5 million was to be set aside for economic development and job training.

Many Missourians voted no on Proposition B because they did not want any more of their money going to a liberal education bureaucracy. As the voter's guide *Front Line* stated, "Critics of Proposition B accuse it of being a massive overload by the state on the local schools of paper pushing and bureaucracy. In the proposed law are 16 pages alone spelling out requirements on the local schools, teachers, principals and students. Since many of the school districts will not receive additional money from Proposition B, they will in turn have to find funds elsewhere so as to pay for the new programs, many of which involve lots of record keeping, statistics etc." Regarding the bureaucratic impact, the *Front Line* said, "A detailed analysis spells out the many agencies that will be expanded or created as mandated by Proposition B."

It has been reported that \$1.2 million was spent by backers of the Proposition B campaign. This includes TV and radio advertisements along with mailings and phone banks. That means the

cost of each "yes" vote was nearly \$4.00. It was recently revealed that supporters of the tax increase registered 55,000 college students at the state's universities for the specific purpose of getting them to vote for Proposition B.

The voters kept asking three big questions during the campaign: What happened to the lottery money that was earmarked for education? If this tax increase is approved, how do I know the money won't go for desegregation? Why do we need another tax increase after passing a half-cent sales tax increase for education (Proposition C) nine years ago?

Opponents of Proposition B were also leery of two controversial programs that were scheduled to be funded by the tax increase: the Parents as Teachers program, which hires "parent educators" to ensure that parents are doing what the state says is "good parenting," and the School Nurse program, which was widely thought to be the means of having the public schools dispense contraceptives and abortion referrals.

"The public has lost its trust in its leaders to put funds where it intended them to go and that must be corrected," said Attorney General Bill Webster. "The bottom line is that people are frustrated with government and our capacity to put our money where it needs to go."

Frank Hamshir, chairman of Confluence St. Louis' higher education panel, said, "Chronic underfunding of higher education is putting our state on a collision course with economic and human disaster." The *Front Line* points out, however, that "critics of the educational system today question why what is spent in 1990 for education is seven times more than that in 1930 while the education received is not even equivalent."

Another reason cited for the defeat of Proposition B is that the 87-page bill was too complex for voters to decipher — people may have thought something was hidden among all the pages.

State leaders are already working on a substitute plan. St. Louis Mayor Vincent Schoemehl said he favors a constitutional amendment requiring the state to spend 1/3 of its income on education. The state constitution now requires that 1/4 of state money go to education. ■

NORTHVILLE, MI — Michigan parents scored a stunning victory early in October when the State Department of Education deleted a deep-breathing technique from the Michigan Model for Comprehensive Health Education. Parents had complained that the stress-reduction exercise known as "calm breathing" can produce altered states of consciousness, posing serious medical and psychological risks to their children. The curriculum is used in 500 of the state's 565 school districts, affecting one million students in kindergarten through 8th grade.

A Michigan state official, Health Education Specialist Barbara Hower-Knutson, refused to acknowledge the validity of parental concerns. She insisted that the offending technique was removed simply to quell the controversy it had provoked, and promised that other relaxation techniques would be found to take its place. "We do realize there are multiple ways of gaining the same result," she confided in an interview with *The Northville Record*.

After three years of sustained attacks on the Michigan Model by concerned parents across the state, cracks are finally beginning to appear. A committee established by the Michigan State Senate completed three months of hearings on the controversial curriculum in September. The committee's chairman announced that a decision would be made by the end of the Senate's 1992 session on whether or not to draft legislation to amend the Model.

In August, a pre-trial hearing was held in a lawsuit filed by parents in 1989 against the Michigan Department of Education and various members of the White Pigeon School Board.

The Senate investigation was prompted by an in-depth analysis produced by a Northville group called Parents Concerned With the Improvement of the Michigan Model. R. Kraft Bell, Ph.D., the parent who spearheaded the critique of the Model, is a professional "problem-solver" who does consulting work for major U.S. corporations. *Improving the Michigan Model*, the 70-page booklet produced by Bell and his group, documents more than 400 objectionable items in the comprehensive curriculum. (See analysis, page 4)

Parents' complaints were separated into five categories: values clarification, advocacy of

"responsible" indulgence in sexual activity and drug usage, anti-family bias, use of techniques (such as "calm breathing") that produce altered states of consciousness, and invasions of family privacy.



R. Kraft Bell, Ph. D.

Bell's group prepared its exhaustive study in response to a challenge from the local school board to provide specific examples of the Model's alleged shortcomings. The board's demand for documentation, however, turned out to be no more than a delaying tactic. "Our school district's Health Committee was assigned to review the first 227 instances we had documented," Bell recalls. "Even before this committee's presentation, the school board already had two resolutions on the agenda, and in writing. The first stated that there was no 'credible' reason or instance shown for altering the Michigan Model in any way; and the other stated that all future concerns or even comments about the Michigan Model should go to the Intermediate Unit to pass on to the State."

Undaunted by the board's perfunctory dismissal of their concerns, Bell and another parent personally delivered several copies of their report to the state capitol in Lansing. "Within six weeks," notes Bell, "a Select Senate Subcommittee was set up to investigate parents' concerns with the Michigan Model."

Whatever the legislative outcome may be, it's clear from their recent decision to abandon "calm breathing" that state education officials are running scared. Concerned parents have already served notice that they do not intend to be placated by token concessions. What they want is a major overhaul of the entire curriculum, a position made clear by the

See *Michigan*, page 4

Quest Flunks Test in Ohio

TIFFIN, OH — The school board for the Tiffin City school system has rejected the *Quest Skills for Growing* curriculum for system-wide use, following a one-year pilot program at Lincoln Elementary. In recommending that the board reject the self-esteem/decision making program, the school system's curriculum director cited adverse public reaction and the negative results of a study of the program conducted by a researcher at Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio.

The *Quest* curriculum was introduced at Lincoln Elementary in September 1990 as part of a drug prevention program. Parents were not notified that the program had been instituted, as required by the school system's policy, nor were the requisite permission slips sent home to parents. Assessment tests were also administered to the students without parental knowledge.

In October 1990 Kelly Digby joined with other parents who objected to "programs like

Quest that turn the classroom into an encounter group." They formed an organization called Together for Education. It was clear to them that making room for *Quest* in the public school curriculum meant sacrificing something else of greater value. The system's limited financial resources, and declining student performance nationwide, convinced them that this sacrifice could not be justified.

The first function sponsored by Together for Education was a lecture on *Quest* by Dr. William Coulson, one of the originators of affective education and now one of its most vocal critics. "A lot of parents didn't even know what *Quest* was," Mrs. Digby recalls, and the lecture by Coulson was intended to correct that situation.

Coulson's appearance sparked controversy in the community. Some teachers at Lincoln Elementary took the event as a personal affront,

See *Ohio*, page 4

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Two high school students were taken away by police in Massac County, Illinois for participating in a student prayer session around a flag pole. They were gathering with other students at the school flag pole to pray for a campus free from "sexual immorality, drug and alcohol abuse, satanic cult influences and suicidal tendencies." The prayer service was part of a national campaign called "See You at the Pole," sponsored by National Network of Youth Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas.

A school district in La Crosse, Wisconsin has proposed a plan to place students according to family income. This plan, which is believed to be a first, means that 23% of the district's elementary students will be assigned to new schools and will require some additional student busing. The plan was developed to bring students from different income groups into closer contact and, as Superintendent Richard Swantz says, to give less affluent "kids a chance to know there is another life out there, there are people who are making it."

Though they lack sufficient credits, high school students in Dade County, Florida are allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies and complete their course work later in summer school. This year almost 20% escaped the intense curriculum of the regular school year by attending summer school to finish their graduation requirements.

Detroit abandoned a plan to establish 3 single-sex schools for black males because of a suit filed in federal court by civil rights groups. The plan was initially proposed to help reduce the dropout rate of black males in Detroit schools, which is currently 54%. The NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union filed the suit on behalf of 3 girls claiming that excluding girls violates federal, state, and local equal opportunity and protection laws.

A Virginia committee appointed by Governor L. Douglas Wilder proposes that all alcohol use be prohibited on state college campuses. This alcohol ban would affect both juveniles and adults because, as some committee members said, "adults must join students in curbing alcohol and substance abuse."

Parents and clergy in Kingston, Massachusetts object to high schools' use of the sexually explicit textbook, *The New Teen-Age Body Book*. This text, used in a ninth-grade health course, openly discusses homosexuality, group masturbation, and oral sex. The text has been endorsed by local educators "who say it takes a realistic approach to teenage sexuality." Parents favor *Sex Respect* which teaches that premarital sex is wrong and emphasizes the failure rate of birth control.

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N.Y. Commissioner to Rule On Psychological Courses

WESTPORT, NY — New York State Commissioner of Education Thomas Sobol is expected to issue a ruling soon on a petition filed by parents seeking to have their children excused from certain classes taught in the Westport Central School District. The petition was filed on June 7 by 13 Westport couples, who accuse the school district of subjecting their children to behavior modification techniques without their permission.

The parents object specifically to two self-esteem programs, DUSO (Developing Understanding of Self and Others) and TAD (Toward Affective Development). The Westport Central School District also makes use of Quest, Planned Parenthood's Project Aware, and Here's Looking at You 2000.

Former District Superintendent Mike Ratner originally granted permission for Westport students to be excused from classes to which their parents objected. On April 24 of this year, he reversed that decision, but granted parents permission to sit in on their children's classes. At a May 9 school board meeting, however, Ratner not only reaffirmed his determination to deny exemptions for students but also announced that parents would be allowed to observe classes *only* if the presiding teacher agreed. Westport teachers unanimously refused to permit such observation.

According to their petition, parents learned "by accident" that the school psychologist had been "coming into entire elementary classes and using a variety of techniques such as relaxation techniques, guided fantasy, daydreaming, and values clarification." In March a 5th grade student mentioned to his mother that he had learned how to "clear his mind" at school that day. The mother phoned the school psychologist, who explained that she was "acting with board approval to 'head off' any problems" with the 5th graders, whom she described as "cliquey." The mother then phoned Superintendent Ratner and received permission to have her children excused from the classes. Other parents soon followed suit.

After that permission was retracted, parents were "asked to file a formal curriculum complaint," which, they claim, "had nothing to do with excusing children but would supposedly let parents voice objections to the program." Nevertheless, the parents complied, and the curriculum review committee promptly concluded that their complaints were unwarranted. The parents note, however, that the school "routinely excuses the children of Jehovah's Witnesses from activities or portions of classes that are against their religion" and argue that "this is a right all parents should have."

The parents complain that their children have been encouraged to consult "all-knowing imaginary friends" and to travel "to secret places in their minds where they are told they can do and think anything they want." Such practices violate the religious beliefs of parents who "have taught our children that they will be

accountable for what they think as well as what they do," say petitioners.

The parents also say that they "find it hard to believe that entire classes need professional counseling." Such sessions, they contend, pressure their children to reveal "confidential information" that the psychologist and other students have no right to hear. "We feel it is morally wrong to intentionally try to elicit confidential information," the complainants observe, adding that "parents who object should not be asked what they have to hide." Ironically, the reason given for refusing parents permission to observe classes was the fact that confidential things are revealed. "This is exactly what we have been objecting to," say parents.

The manner in which the classes are conducted is another source of concern. "No one is in charge," parents complain. "The counselor is instructed that the responsibility for group leadership is shared with all members of the group. There is no single correct answer to the discussion questions." Teaching children that "there is no right or wrong, especially in moral situations," is unconscionable, say parents, expressing their conviction "that absolutes exist in this world and that no amount of reasoning can change that."

Claiming that they "have met with defensiveness on the part of the school and have been criticized for not 'trusting' the teachers and psychologist," the parents argue that they should not be compelled "to 'trust' someone to teach our children values. We never abdicated that right as parents," they insist. "We also object to the school's efforts to make this a matter of personalities or objections to staff — we never claimed any objections other than to curriculum," the parents say.

Because they are focusing their objections on the curriculum, the parents are obliged to challenge the composition of the curriculum review committee. "We feel our school board has acted in bad faith," they say. "When the curriculum review committee was set up, the superintendent chose members who had just served on a committee that elected to bar parents from a sensitive and controversial sex education program," they explain. "It is hard to believe that the superintendent could not find anyone less biased in their views toward parental wishes."

In concluding their petition, the parents emphasize that they are "not asking for these programs to be removed." All they want is "the right to have our children excused from any program utilizing and teaching concepts that go so violently against our religious and/or family beliefs — such as hypnosis, guided fantasy, daydreaming, group counseling or values clarification, and questioning of a highly personal nature."

One of the petitioners, Dianna DeGross, says that she and other parents cannot understand why a school of fewer than 300 students even needs a full-time psychologist. She concludes that many of the programs to which parents object are the result of the school psychologist's need to "find something to do."

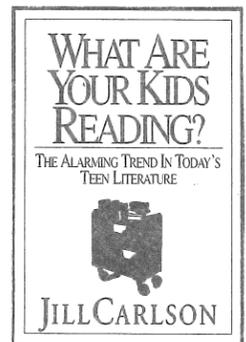
Mrs. DeGross adds that school officials seem inclined to "grab onto the first packaged program that comes along, without bothering to research to see if it does any good." And she notes with amusement that school officials "say they're sure the programs are good because so many schools have them." Nevertheless, says DeGross, many of their "solutions" are "worse than nothing at all." ■



Book of The Month

What Are Your Kids Reading? The Alarming Trend in Today's Teen Literature by Jill Carlson, Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., Brentwood, TN, 1991, 214 pps., \$9.99.

What has happened to teen fiction? This is the serious question posed in this well-researched book which examines the latest teen novels in our school libraries. Many are on "recommended book lists," which public school librarians use to select novels.



Jill Carlson and a group of parents in her community were so concerned about the concepts expressed by authors in novels that they began a three-year study. They read and statistically analyzed the contents of 45 books selected at random from the major lists of books recommended to librarians in 1988.

They found the following dominant themes in the teenager's world, as portrayed by today's teen authors:

- Most fathers are absent or bad.
- Marriage is boring or dangerous.
- Parents and their kids are estranged half the time.
- Clergy are bumbling hypocrites.
- The spirit world helps kids more than it hurts them.
- I can solve my own problems. God doesn't help.
- Sex outside of marriage isn't wrong unless it's forced.
- Death is prominent, even pervasive.
- Profanity is in 70% of the books.

"We believe these books can change a teen's way of thinking," the book points out, "because kids are trained to see the school as an authority figure. Anything on school shelves is official knowledge." Mrs. Carlson also states that, "If indeed 'readers are leaders,' the more our kids read, the more they'll absorb these ideas."

What Are Your Kids Reading? addresses the hypocrisy of the issue called "censorship." "The pervasive mindset among teachers of library science and young adult literature is that minorities, women, and the handicapped who cry for change have pure motives. Those who ask for historical accuracy in religion, and who want their Christian voice added to the marketplace, are censors of the worst kind." The book adds that "reading experts sometimes scoff at parental concern and think we don't want our kids to learn anything. But we're not against fair give-and-take. We just question a one-sided sermon that omits the values we've worked so hard to teach our kids."

What Are Your Kids Reading? is a big help to any concerned parent. It not only thoroughly informs the reader of the disturbing trends in teen literature, it gives helpful strategies used by parents when dealing with these problems. "Having an education philosophy isn't just for the teaching professional. Parents need one too!" ■

Sworn Statement of Ownership

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Focus: Look Behind the Glitz of Channel One

by Jayne Schindler

The controversial Channel One TV news program in the classroom, produced by Whittle Communications, has been accepted in 9,300 schools, reaching over 6 million children. Even some religious private schools have succumbed to the bait of free TV, VCRs and satellite dishes by selling their captive audience of students. The students are forced to watch the 12 minutes of Whittle-selected news reports, spiced with two minutes of commercials for fast foods, sneakers and pimple cream.

Two minutes of commercials each day adds up to 6 hours per year. The Channel One contracts are for a three-year period, making a total of 18 hours of forced TV commercial viewing.

I attended a public preview of a week's worth of Channel One newscasts. The daily news reports included showing a group of schoolchildren taken to the United Nations building in New York to learn about the U.N. Treaty on the Rights of the Child. The TV program instructed children in the classroom how they could do their part by expressing their support for ratification of this U.N. Treaty to their Senators.

Scene after scene was shown of environmental disasters happening around the world. Students were shown how environmental accidents could affect everyone, as man-made boundaries do not restrict nature. The need for global concern by global citizens of the global community was repeatedly stressed.

After the preview, we were allowed to examine the district contracts. These contracts listed the subjects that the commercials will not cover, including abortion, religion, gambling, contraceptive products, politics, drugs, and solicitation of funds. Subliminals are not to be used.

Those signing these contracts should consider the possibility that these promises may just be a smoke screen. Furthermore, if advertising itself is not for "raising of funds," what is it for? How will parents know if the programming does or does not contain subliminals?

Included in the contract is the requirement that five of the donated TV sets will be monitored to verify the time of day that Channel One is shown, and the length and volume of the broadcasts.

Actually, the "free" equipment is not free and does not belong to the schools. It is rented

for the three-year period. Nothing is really free. The money for this expensive production and equipment has to come from someone's pocket. It is obvious that the parents are expected to pay dearly for this equipment by buying all of the advertised products that the commercials induce their children to want.

At an American Advertising Federation luncheon on Oct. 10, 1990, Ed Winters, President of Whittle Communication's Channel One, spoke to his peers in the advertising industry. He talked frankly about "buying a generation." At home, he said, teenagers use the remote control to skip from program to program, so no one can be sure they have heard the

But teenagers at Fargo North High School in North Dakota did. According to *Education Week* of Oct. 3, 1990, several hundred students walked out of the Channel One news show aired on Sept. 17 and 18, prompting the school board to appoint a committee to reconsider the school's decision to show the program. The students told administrators the show was "too immature for high school students."

In January 1991, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, resigned from the Channel One advisory council where he had hoped to serve as a watchdog. He cited as his reasons (1) that AFT opposes television commercials in classrooms and (2)

Communications.

Four national education groups — the National P.T.A., the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Education Association, and the American Association of School Administrators — have condemned the Channel One concept of using students as a captive audience to watch commercials. As an alternative, they recommend Ted Turner's "CNN Newsroom," a 15-minute news show without commercials available to schools.

Again, parents should not be fooled. Ted Turner, who received the 1990 Humanist of the Year award, is an activist for nuclear disarmament, abortion-on-demand, population control, and restricting business to protect the environment. He says he does not need commercials.

Haven't the public schools for years been blaming declining test scores on the fact that students spend too many hours in front of TV? And now, are some of them going to embrace the monster? ■

Rolling Stone Keeps Rolling into Schools

AFTON, VA — *Rolling Stone* magazine will keep rolling into the libraries of Albemarle County high and middle schools. The County School Board voted 4 to 2 to uphold Superintendent Robert Paskel's decision against the parents on November 11. Concerned parents have been objecting to the school library subscribing to *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*, *YM*, *Thrasher*, and *Seventeen*.

The parents cited the advertisements and articles in the magazines that are geared to sexual arousal and contain explicit language about alcohol and drugs without reference to negative consequences. As an example of their objections, parents cited an article in *Rolling Stone* titled "The High Life and Strange Times of the Pope of Pot."

In addition to glamorizing Mickey, the Pope of Pot, the article gives his 800 telephone number: 800/want-pot. "Give the pope a call if you live in Manhattan. Leave your address, your first name, and a description of yourself. Your pot will arrive by bicycle in 40 minutes or less."

In his prepared statement, Dr. Paskel stated that *YM* and *Seventeen* were evaluated and deemed appropriate for both middle and high school libraries. *Thrasher* and *Mother Jones* were not renewed because of budget constraints; back issues, he said, will be evaluated according to applicable policies, regulations and guidelines current at that time.

In regard to *Rolling Stone*, Dr. Paskel ruled that current and back issues available in the schools will be reviewed before display or circulation is permitted by schools. Parents will be allowed to withhold permission for their children to have access to *Rolling Stone*.

In defending his decision, Dr. Paskel said, "... various articles offer insight into personalities and issues that merit consideration for educational decisions." But he admitted that *Rolling Stone* "consistently contained advertising which provides access to certain 900 telephone numbers offering sexual experiences with or without credit card control and frequently contained language and sexual references which are not educationally suitable in a high school setting."

Following Dr. Paskel's statement, three parents presented the reasons for their appeal for reconsideration of the decision. Each parent gave examples of objectionable material in the magazines. ■



commercial message. Not so with "place based advertising" such as Channel One, where students must watch the entire 12-minute broadcast, including the two minutes of paid commercials.

Winters said he was elated that whole classrooms were "chanting the Nike commercial while it ran." He announced that Burger King purchased a week of Whittle time and for the first time would run two minutes of commercials daily. These kids will "never forget the Burger King ads," he said.

Since Winters was talking to an advertising crowd, he didn't spend much time talking about the 10 minutes of news surrounding those ads.

that Channel One was unfairly using his name and picture to promote the product.

The 12-minute news programming is just the foot in the door. Whittle has contracted with Pacific Mountain Network, a Denver, Colorado firm, to develop an additional 1,000 hours of programming for schools to buy. Parents who have seen some of this additional programming regard it as controversial.

Former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell is the current chairman of Channel One's board of advisors. The current Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, was a consultant for Christopher Whittle when he created Channel One, and an investor in Whittle

Gay Rights Board Policy Defeated

PALM BEACH, FL — Palm Beach County parents won a battle against homosexual rights advocates on August 21. At least, they think they did.

The Palm Beach County School Board rejected a motion on August 21 to include discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation" in its anti-discrimination guidelines. Areas already covered included religion, race, national origin, color, sex, age, marital status, parental status, and handicap. The motion by interim Superintendent James Daniels was supported by the Palm Beach Human Rights Council, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the Atlantic Coast Democratic Alliance, the National Organization for Women, and People for the American Way.

However, the board did approve a substitute motion, proposed by board member Susan Pell, prohibiting all forms of discrimination. "We shouldn't discriminate against anyone for any purpose," the *Palm Beach Post* quoted Pell as saying seriously. The revised policies now

forbid discrimination against employees, students, and contractors without enumerating the bases for bias, although stipulating that the board "shall comply with all applicable State and federal laws."

Acting Superintendent Daniels had maintained that no formal complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation had ever been lodged.

Opponents of the sexual orientation provision claimed victory, if for no other reason than that its supporters seemed to admit defeat. Rand Hoch, president of the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, claimed to be "very disappointed" by the outcome. Yet, Wayne Pratt, leader of an organization called Christians in Action, conceded that the newly approved formula was vague enough to include sexual orientation.

Pratt considers his involvement in the effort to defeat the sexual orientation proposal providential, for it was a complete stranger who brought it to his attention. A Boca Raton

woman called him after reading in her newspaper that the policy revision was scheduled for a vote at the next school board meeting. She and Pratt rallied local parents, who turned out in force for the meeting.

"It was basically a community effort," Pratt observes. "I don't think [the motion's supporters] anticipated that people were going to mobilize in this fashion."

Though the *Palm Beach Post* labeled opponents "homophobic," Pratt willingly concedes that homosexuals have the same rights protected by the Constitution as anyone else. "But that doesn't give them special privileges for their activities," he demurs. "They don't have the right to tell us that we have to accept them."

Unsure of the magnitude of his recent victory, but certain that there will be "many more battles in the months and years ahead," Pratt is currently "putting together a network of people who will be able to rapidly transmit information and set people in motion." ■

Michigan *continued from page 1*

specific recommendations offered in *Improving the Michigan Model*. "I'd like us to stop and agree on what this Model is all about," Bell said.

White Pigeon Parents Sue

What has become a groundswell of organized, statewide opposition to the Michigan Model began as an isolated complaint in a small community in the fall of 1988. That was the year that parents in White Pigeon first complained to their school board about the Model, then in use in grades K-2. In July of 1989 the board voted to suspend the curriculum, pending review, but soon reversed its decision and expanded the program to the 3rd grade. In November of that year, the Rutherford Institute filed suit on behalf of the aggrieved parents.

That suit, which is only now coming to trial, alleges that the White Pigeon Board of Education and other education officials are guilty of the unlicensed practice of psychology and psychiatry, violation of the Open Meetings Act, illegal administration of personality tests, illegal expenditure of funds, invasion of privacy, illegal operation of an unlicensed program, and violation of the rights of parents to remove children from sex education classes.

The Michigan Model has also been roundly criticized over the past few years by the DADS Foundation of Kalamazoo. Former professional hockey player Bob Lemieux, executive director of the organization, has been untiring in his efforts to have the Model revamped or dismantled. Lemieux charges that the State is using the Model to usurp the rights of parents, and that school-based programs aimed at curbing drug use and sexual activity among students do more harm than good.

University Research Flawed

Lemieux has challenged a study completed by the University of Michigan in 1988 that purported to show reduced use of alcohol and other drugs among students participating in the curriculum. The study, commissioned by the Michigan Office of Substance Abuse Services, was seriously flawed, Lemieux contends. He claims that 14 different studies conducted by various state and federal agencies have demonstrated that the Michigan Model not only does not reduce illicit drug use among students but actually encourages experimentation at an earlier age.

Having recognized the "statewide nature of these issues," R. Kraft Bell has coordinated his efforts on behalf of Parents Concerned With the Improvement of the Michigan Model with those of other pro-family groups like the DADS Foundation. "It is difficult to handle more than one school district at a time," he explains, "especially when each set of concerned parents is faced with state-funded and state-organized attempts to frustrate open dialogue and efforts at improvement. On the other hand, his presentation at one of the Senate committee hearings this summer "received an overwhelmingly positive response from the audience," he observes. "The logic of the presentation and materials raised the level of the debate away from name-calling and sometimes unsubstantiated assertions on both sides."

The recent decision by the State Steering Committee for the Michigan Model to remove "calm breathing," notes Bell, is a good indication that "our perseverance in documentation, clarifying the issues, and offering constructive alternatives sent the Michigan Model people reeling." Nevertheless, he comments, "our effort for real improvement has only just begun." ■

Michigan Model: You Want Specifics? You Got 'Em!

When the Northville, Michigan School Board demanded specific examples of what parents object to in the Michigan Model, they must have thought that that would be the end of it. School administrators often have the attitude that parents are apathetic, easily intimidated, and know nothing of the rigors of scholarship and the need for careful documentation of evidence from source material. These things are supposed to be the exclusive province of professional educators.

Board members could not possibly have anticipated that Northville parents would comb through the textbooks and course materials for nine different grade levels and produce a 70-page booklet listing more than 400 objectionable items organized into five logical categories, with the source for each citation documented, the basis for each objection concisely explained, and a recommendation provided for correcting each offense.

The effort may have been wasted on the Northville school board, but the booklet produced by Parents Concerned With the Improvement of the Michigan Model has made quite an impression on Michigan lawmakers. It's likely to serve as the prototype for indictments of school curricula all over the country.

After carefully scrutinizing the Michigan Model, R. Kraft Bell, Ph.D. and other Northville parents identified five major problem areas:

1. Changing children's values through Problem Solving with People;
2. "Responsible" usage of sex and illegal substances;
3. Anti-family bias;
4. Techniques that could produce altered states of consciousness; and
5. Invasion of family privacy.

Their analysis of these problem areas led them to the conclusion that the Michigan Model "at best diverts teachers and children away from basic, sound education and at worst increases and heightens the problems it is attempting to resolve." Specifically, in their view, the Model "violates clear legal, normative, and moral imperatives," while ignoring both the "severe medical and psychological implications" and the "empirically evidenced risks and impacts" of the techniques it incorporates.

A separate chapter of the book is devoted to each of the problem areas. The first, Problem Solving with People, "is extensively and inappropriately used in an attempt to change children's values," the parents claim. One of the examples cited involves a hypothetical situation in which a child finds a purse containing \$500. Students are asked to vote on the proper course of action and are thus taught that "problem solving without an ethical and legal basis is all right." According to parents, the teacher should explain to the students that "turning the purse in to the police or some other authority is the only right thing to do."

Problem Solving with People, say parents, ignores traditional values, compromises the authority of the teacher, and does demonstrable damage to parent-child relationships. They recommend that "authority-based problem solving" be substituted for this technique. "Authority-based problem solving," they maintain, "reverses negative family implications by placing the teacher in the adult position of upholding school rules, community laws, and family values, while focusing learning on problem solving about appropriate school and classroom behavior."

In addressing the 2nd problem area, the parents observe that the Michigan Model

"implies that the illegal usage of drugs, alcohol and tobacco is normal, and that premarital sex is normal, without emphasizing the illegality of the usage of such substances and behaviors." Children are encouraged "to make a personal choice about their own usage of illegal substances and activity in premarital sex," the parents complain, and "the risks and negative impacts of illegal and unacceptable behavior are not clearly, consistently, and convincingly stated." They cite a lesson in which students are asked to decide whether or not a young girl should submit to the sexual advances of her boyfriend for fear that he might otherwise lose interest in her.

The clear implication of the lesson, parents insist, is that the young girl "has a choice to have sex with her boyfriend." What students should be taught, however, is that "premarital sex is wrong, and young people should avoid sex until they are married." The parents argue that "sex education which emphasizes 'responsible' usage is ineffective as a prevention and actually leads to unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases." They apply the same argument to drug education, recommending the development of an abstinence-only program that emphasizes the adverse consequences of illicit activity.

The 3rd problem area involves the Model's consistently negative portrayal of parents and families. This "anti-family bias," say the parents, creates fear, insecurity, and confusion in children. Among the objectionable items cited is a lesson play dealing with sexual abuse, which, in offering a list of people to whom the students might turn if they were victimized, places the mother last and omits the father altogether. That omission, parents note, "implies that all fathers are untrustworthy." They recommend that such anti-family material be replaced by "material that is balanced and positively supports the family."

In discussing techniques that produce altered states of consciousness, the 4th problem area, the parents point out that relaxation exercises such as calm breathing are similar to the meditative techniques of Eastern religions. Moreover, the use of such techniques, they say, "can disrupt the delicate balance of a participant's parasympathetic nervous system with far-reaching consequences" and cause "profound psychological problems of disorientation." They recommend the prohibition of "all types of techniques that could produce altered states of consciousness in any child in our public schools."

Invasions of family privacy, the parents observe in their analysis of the 5th problem area, "permeates the Michigan Model." Children, they say, are encouraged by the curriculum's anti-family bias "to divulge personal and family information to peers and teachers." One lesson plan cited involves the discussion of "things that parents do that bother teenagers." The emphasis, say parents, should be on the fact that they "care for and love their children." They recommend removal of all elements of the Michigan Model which promote intrusion into child and family privacy.

What attitudes do parents want incorporated into the Michigan Model? Specifically, proper regard for authority, support for abstinence, reinforcement of family values, insistence on clear headed and attentive mental states, and respect for family privacy. That sounds like a wholesome school system, the way schools used to be! ■

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charging that parents "didn't trust them." On the contrary, noted Mrs. Digby, parents were "slow to react, because of the trust that they have in the teachers and the administration."

Together for Education members mounted a sustained effort to educate the public on the true nature of Quest and to apply pressure on the school board to discontinue the program. The odds seemed to be against them from the beginning. The daily newspaper refused to run many of their letters to the editor (and published some simultaneously with rebuttals solicited from school officials). The paper's reporters declined to interview Dr. Coulson, preferring instead to quote representatives of Ohio-based Quest International. In September of this year, the paper placed a moratorium on letters to the editor dealing with Quest.



"The thing that aggravated me the most," Mrs. Digby recalls, "was that the teachers really hadn't done any research on Quest." The three-day seminar that teachers attended prior to implementing the Quest curriculum, she insists, was hardly sufficient to prepare them for an entirely new way of teaching. "The lack of scientific data bothered me," she said, noting that there is no hard evidence that the Quest curriculum really does increase the self-esteem — much less the knowledge — of students subjected to it.

That conclusion was substantiated by researchers at Heidelberg College who, at the request of the school system, tested the Lincoln Elementary students participating in Quest and found no positive impact when comparing them to Lincoln students who had not participated.

Nevertheless, teachers were enthusiastic about Quest. "They just loved this program," Mrs. Digby admits. She said the Quest material is slickly packaged and shrewdly marketed. The techniques intended for building self-esteem among students are first employed on the teachers attending Quest seminars — "and it seems to work on them!" The presenters "Questize" the teachers, Mrs. Digby asserts, and sell them on the curriculum by making them feel "good about themselves." Another reason may be that "the materials are all easy to use, and the lessons are prepared for them."

Mrs. Digby believes that teachers who attend Quest seminars are probably chosen by their principals on the basis of susceptibility to the techniques employed. "They select those teachers who like progressive education and like to experiment in the classroom," she speculates. "They go for the younger teachers who have had things like values clarification in their own schooling."

Though Quest has been officially rejected by the school board as a result of public opposition, Digby and other members of Together for Education do not intend to let their guard down. "Once a teacher is trained in Quest methodology," she observes, "they're likely to keep using the same techniques," and parents have discovered some Quest methods and materials in all six of the schools in the Tiffin City school system. ■