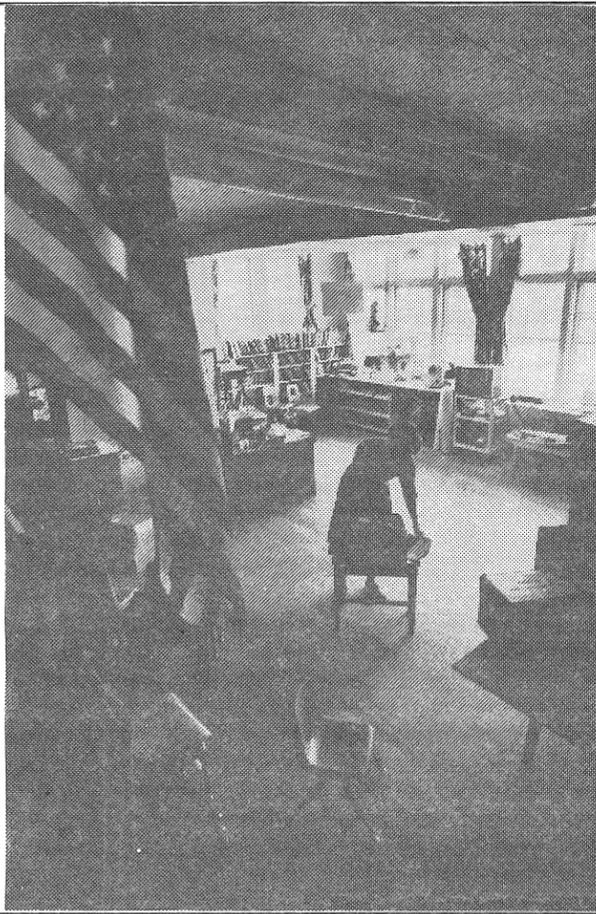
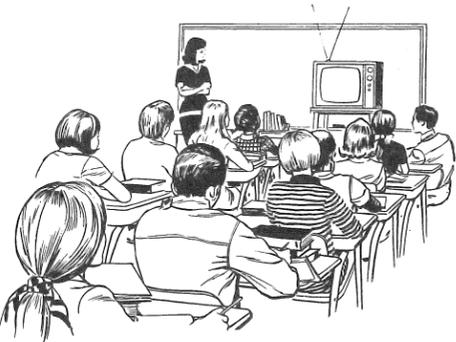


The era of rural schools came to an end in Pomfret, Vermont. "I went from 1850 to 1991 in three years of teaching," 3rd grade teacher Kate Ward said as she packed her papers at the one-room schoolhouse, preparing to move to the brand new school building down the road. Pomfret's five one- and two-room schoolhouses, among the last 20 in Vermont, are now closed. Growing school enrollments and the need to meet state standards pushed the community to a decision that had been talked about for more than 20 years. The new school will mean an increase of nearly 20% in local property taxes.



## Channel One Battle Elects Board Member



PORT ANGELES, WA — Mike Doherty is the newest member of the Port Angeles, Washington School Board. His opposition to *Channel One* was a major factor in his recent election, and he intends to use his new position to keep the school district from renewing its three-year contract with Whittle Communications.

Whittle is the Knoxville-based educational publishing company that furnished the Port Angeles school district with television sets, VCRs, a radar dish, and other equipment (valued at \$50,000), in return for which the district agreed to ensure that all students in grades 6 through 12 would watch the 12 minutes of current events programming airing daily on Channel One. Each classroom is equipped with a television set that automatically turns itself on when the programming begins.

Two of the 12 minutes are used for 30-second commercials touting youth-oriented products like snack foods and teen fashions. Whittle makes its money by selling those two minutes to major advertisers eager to reach a captive audience.

In a letter distributed to Port Angeles school teachers prior to his election to the school

board, Doherty and three other parents cited reasons for their opposition to "Whittle's intrusion into the classroom." They objected to the "use of sexual imagery to sell products," the advertising of R-rated movies, and the "promotion of junk foods." They also criticized the "use of a publicly funded institution for the private profits of a few corporations." They found fault with the use of "curriculum materials which, by their nature, cannot be evaluated in advance."

The parents also charged that Whittle Communications was guilty of false advertising with regard to the content of Channel One. "The Whittle program is sold for its ability to bring 'current events' into the classroom," they observed, "yet the 'current events' part of the program is only about three minutes out of the 12-minute program. The rest consists of two minutes of commercials, and features made months ahead of time — some of which have implicit advertising in the form of stories about movies, rock groups, etc."

Doherty notes that "the two or three minutes of 'news' at the start of each program are done in an MTV, glitzy, flashy style. Seven or eight minutes are features bought from other outfits. It's not current events," he concludes, emphasizing that the programs are produced at least five weeks in advance of airing. "It's not news-worthy," he says.

In their letter to teachers, the parents listed numerous national educational associations that also oppose advertising in the classroom, including the American Association of School Administrators, the National Parent Teacher Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the National

See Channel One, page 2

## History Errors Delay Textbook Adoption

AUSTIN, TX — The Texas State Board of Education delayed adoption of new American history textbooks after it was pointed out that the textbooks contained more than 230 errors of fact, some of them horrendous. "It was either poor editing, or somebody doesn't know history," said Norma Gabler. "If the errors were transposition of dates, you could understand it, but this goes further than that."

Mel and Norma Gabler of Longview, Texas, who have been checking textbooks for 30 years, discovered the errors. Mel Gabler said that this year's crop of errors isn't much different from what has been found in the past. A few years ago, the Gablers discovered 195 factual errors in eight world history textbooks. Every year, the Gablers and their associates find hundreds of blunders no one else discovered.

In a unanimous vote, the 15-member board directed Education Commissioner Lionel "Skip" Meno to draft rule changes requiring publishers to hire independent editors to review and certify the books and to fine publishers for uncorrected mistakes.

Publishers have their textbooks reviewed by editorial staffs for errors, and Texas textbook committees hold hearings after going over the books.

As publishers were called to defend their texts during a public hearing, it became a standard line for them to say their book wasn't the one that contained the atomic bomb mistake. That was a reference to the textbook error that "the United States easily settled the [Korean] conflict by using the [atomic] bomb." No atomic bombs were used during the Korean War. President Truman ordered the atomic bomb dropped on Japan to end World War II in August 1945.

"These kinds of mistakes are unacceptable," Mr. Meno said, "The process shouldn't be dependent on someone else checking your work."

Joe Bill Watkins, an Austin attorney representing the Association of American Publishers, admitted that the errors were embarrassing. "Perfection is the goal, but perfection in life is really difficult to achieve."

Texas is the third largest textbook purchaser in the country, behind New York and California. Texas is expected to spend \$131.2 million on textbooks in the 1992-93 school year, and is widely viewed as setting the trend for schools across the country. The history texts will account for about \$20 million of that total.

"It's absurd that this gets past the publishers," said Jane Nelson of Lewisville, the board member who publicized the Gablers' list of errors before the board meeting.

Representatives of several publishers refused to comment, while others defended their work. "We try to correct the books [the] best we can," said Reece Washington, regional manager for Prentice-Hall Inc. Mary Kelly, regional manager for Houghton Mifflin Co., said "most of the mistakes cited by the Gablers were only in teachers' editions of the textbooks."

"I don't care if it's a *New York Times* best seller," Kelly continued, "You're going to find mistakes in the first printing. It's as simple as that."



Norma and Mel Gabler

Watkins said publishers, already locked into a selling price for their books, will find the corrections and additional printing expensive. "It's extraordinarily costly," he said. "We're not talking about just a few pages."

Examples of errors are: "Carter produced in 1976 the only Democratic success in the previous six presidential elections." The fact is that two other Democratic Presidential candidates were elected during that time period, John F. Kennedy in 1960 and Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.

"When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1942 and war broke out between Japan and the United States. . . ." The date which was supposed to live in infamy was December 7, 1941.

Sputnik was "the first successful, intercontinental ballistic missile launched by the Soviet Union; carried a nuclear warhead." The fact is that Sputnik was the world's first satellite, not an ICBM. Fortunately, no country has ever launched a nuclear ICBM.

"1962 — Kennedy assassinated." The fact is that John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963.

"The Nixon presidency began in triumph and ended in disgrace. The events of those years — the end of war in Vietnam, the assassinations of King and Kennedy. . ." The fact is that Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated during the Johnson administration.

"... at the conclusion of Reagan's presidency in 1990. . ." The fact is that Ronald Reagan's presidency ended in January 1989.

"... on July 31, 1969, when Americans became the first to set foot on the moon." The fact is that the first moon walk occurred July 20, 1969.

"President Lyndon B. Johnson, who long admired her, invited [Barbara] Jordan to the White House in 1972 to preview his civil rights proposals." The fact is that LBJ finished his term and returned to Texas in January 1969.

"Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862." The fact is that Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863.

Representatives of all the companies said their goal is to publish error-free books and indicated a willingness to work with the board on improving the process for ensuring accuracy. ■

EDUCATION  
BRIEFS

Pennsylvania may be the first state in the nation to enact a true educational choice program. The State Senate voted to provide parents with a grant of up to \$900 a year if they choose to send their children to a private school or to a public school outside their neighborhood. The choice proposal passed the Senate on a 28 to 22 vote after more than 12 hours of debate. "Our educational system is failing us," said Senator Frank A. Salvatore, who brought the proposal to the Senate floor. "We have to have accountability and we have to have competition." The bill is headed for a vote in the State House, where a ferocious battle is expected.

President Bush reiterated his support for federal aid for families who choose private and religious schools in a speech in Columbus, Ohio on November 25. He argued for greater competition and increased parental choice among schools. Bush referred to a proposal in "America 2000" that would permit disadvantaged students to use federal funding from the Chapter 1 program to attend private schools. "We won't have full choice in education until the dollar follows the scholar," he said.

Wellesley College is being accused of showing bias against a lesbian dorm head and her live-in partner. Michele Porche was hired to run the freshman dormitory with her live-in partner. The school saw it as a great opportunity to "actively endorse an alternative lifestyle." At the last minute the school assigned her to a dorm for upperclasswomen because the administrators felt it would be best to give first-year students time to adjust to college life. This has resulted in a great campus outcry; many students feel "betrayed" saying, "Why bother hiring an openly lesbian couple if you hide them from the younger women?"

A handwriting expert has found that roughly 10% of voters' signatures appear fraudulent in the precincts responsible for electing the pro-busing slate in the April St. Louis, MO school board election. Handwriting expert William H. Storer said Nov. 8 that he has examined roughly 10,000 signatures from 50 precincts. Two St. Louis University professors called for the investigation because the number of votes cast in north St. Louis was suspiciously higher than in previous elections, even though the population has dropped. "Any fraud is significant," said Professor George Wendel. "Any fraud is intolerable fraud," added Professor Ken Warren. (See *Education Reporter* April, 1991.)

Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson has ordered a review of cassette tapes on drugs and sex that are alleged to be illegal. Produced and marketed by the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the "Health-Line" cassettes are under attack by Coral Gables lawyer John Thompson, who first exposed their use in Miami public schools. The marijuana tape says, "The issue of marijuana's legality is still undecided," but Thompson says, "It's not undecided. It's illegal." Thompson says that the cassettes on sexuality encourage teenage promiscuity and discourage parental involvement. (See *Education Reporter*, July 1991.)

*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. 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.

# Polly Peddles Parental Choice

ST. LOUIS, MO — "Public/Private Education: Should Parents Be Free to Choose?" That was the question asked at the Hillsdale College Shavano Institute for National Leadership Seminar on October 16 and 17 in St. Louis, Missouri. The Seminar, which was co-sponsored by the St. Louis Discussion Club, featured keynote speaker Polly Williams, State Representative from Milwaukee. She spoke of the overwhelming success of the choice plan experiment in the Milwaukee Public Schools.



Polly Williams

In the five-year pilot project, 1,000 low-income Milwaukee children each receive vouchers of up to \$2,500 to be used at nonsectarian private schools of their choice. There is a waiting list of students to be enrolled in the choice program.

Rep. Williams pointed out that parent response has been tremendous. She says that, when "low-income parents are given the power to choose, they get involved. They know education is their only hope." Her meetings

overflowed with parents, which she says proves that, "when you give people a dream and a hope, they'll come running!"

Williams said that "all kinds of people showed up for the meetings. We had Archie Bunker types, nuns, and parents." People who normally have very little in common are unified on school choice.

Her answer to opponents who claim that "Poor people don't have sense to make that decision" is, "Not so!" "They decide everything else, where to live, where to shop — why can't they decide where their kid goes to school?"

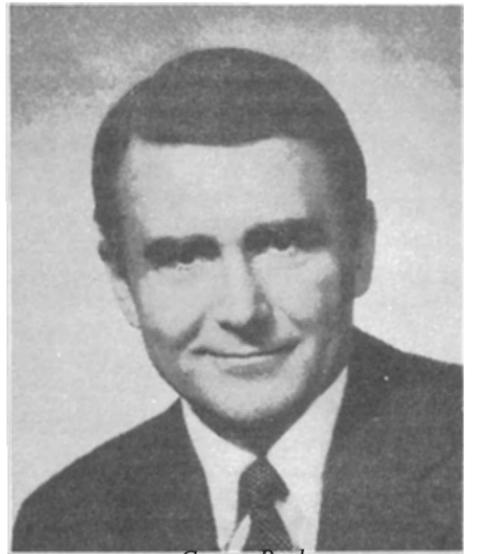
Regarding her strategy, Rep. Williams said she "didn't try to stop teacher's unions — we just tried to help parents. It's hard for the NEA to argue against that." She added that we should not concentrate on what is best for the bureaucracy or what is best for the building or what is best for the teachers — we need to ask, "What's best for the child?"

She closed by admonishing her audience to "make up your minds" on the issue of choice because "a made up mind is power."

J. Patrick Rooney, Chairman of the Board of Golden Rule Insurance Company, was another featured speaker. His company has started a very successful program of awarding scholarships to low-income students in Indianapolis to attend private schools. (See *Education Reporter*, September, 1991.)

The seminar concluded with a debate between Adam Urbanski and Terry Moe. Adam Urbanski, labeled as a "liberal", is vice president of the American Federation of Teachers and President of the Rochester Teachers Association. "I think the obituaries of public schools are premature," he stated. "Although they are in intensive care, they are not as bad as you may think."

Terry Moe, co-author of *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, argued in favor of choice. He stated that "choice is being taken seriously now because of the serious situation of our education system." He said that there are



George Roche

approximately 17 administrators in a private school for every 50,000 students, but there are 15,000 administrators in a public school for every 81,000 students. If the ratio were the same, there would be only 28 administrators for those 81,000 students.

Moe claimed that choice is effective because "markets work much better than central planning." He thinks that "choice brings back life to dead students who were apathetic because they were locked into a system." He said that, for a choice program to work, the authority to control the education system from above must be eliminated.

This informative two-day seminar attracted parents, educators, businessmen, and community leaders from all over the country, showing that the choice movement is gaining momentum and may play a big part in school reform. As George Roche, president of Hillsdale College, said, "We don't need more money or more government. Real strength doesn't lie in the government, but in parents and heartland values." ■

## Channel One *Continued from page 1*

Education Association.

"Because the children see these commercials in their classroom," the parents argued, "we feel the inescapable underlying message to the child viewers is that their teacher and their school approve of the products shown." They warned teachers that Whittle Communications "is using your authority and the respect you have earned to sell their products. They are using the children whose education is entrusted to you, the students you care about, as a captive audience for their sales pitch," they concluded.

Doherty, whose three sons attend district schools, points out that *Channel One* programming is identical for all grade levels. Its use in the Port Angeles schools, he says, represents "the first time there has been one piece of curriculum that goes from 6th grade to 12th grade." Because of that lack of age discrimination, programming that might be deemed acceptable for 16- and 17-year-olds is also shown to 11- and 12-year-olds, for whom it may be wholly inappropriate. The reverse is also true, says Doherty, noting that "juniors and seniors — the sharper ones — are bored stiff with *Channel One*."

Channel One also represents another first for Port Angeles schools — "advertising that's part of the curriculum." According to Doherty, conflicting messages are one of the inevitable results of this first, as when the discussion of the importance of good nutrition in health class is interrupted by a Channel One commercial for

junk food. Students have been allowed to "opt out" of the program, Doherty concedes, but some have been reluctant to do so for fear that they might subsequently be tested on the "current events" that they've missed.

The district has more than a year to go in its contract with Whittle, and officials are committed to honoring it, despite growing opposition among parents. In fact, says Doherty, those officials at one point announced that "they didn't want to hear from the parents at all" until the contract was up. They reversed themselves, however, shortly after Doherty pointed out on a local radio interview program that it would be easier to make an intelligent decision about renewal if an evaluation process were begun well in advance of the contract's expiration.

The district's reluctance to seek parental input for its decisions is what motivated Doherty to run for the school board. "There's not been a real active effort to get parents involved," observes the school board's newest member, who firmly believes that "schools with involved parents work better." Doherty has set himself the task of getting more parents involved so that their moral support [or opposition] will enable the Port Angeles school district to resist the blandishments of companies like Whittle. "It's the small rural areas that maybe don't have the budgets that are falling for *Channel One*," Doherty laments. ■

## Parent Pressure Sinks Sex Ed

CAPE MAY, NJ — Students at Lower Cape May Regional High School have seen the last of the "Life and Health" sex education curriculum, thanks to Marie Pratt and her coalition of concerned parents. Complaining that the curriculum promotes homosexuality and provided false information, the parents successfully lobbied school officials to replace it with abstinence-based materials.

A former biology teacher and now a homeschooler, Mrs. Pratt organized local chapters of various pro-family groups into a coalition solidly opposed to the "Life and Health" curriculum. She then led the drive to obtain 500 signatures on a petition calling for its removal.

Having accomplished her mission, Mrs. Pratt remains vigilant and active. The monthly meetings she holds with 30 "contact people" allow her to get her message out to the congregation of 30 different churches. The flyers she distributes to announce school board meetings have increased attendance substantially. And the "scorecards" she is currently preparing to publicize the positions of candidates on family issues will enable Cape May voters to make more informed decisions the next time they vote for their State Assemblymen. ■



# Books of the Month

**Constitutional Journal** and **A Child of Fortune**, both by Jeffrey St. John. Jameson Books, Inc., Ottawa, Illinois, 1987 and 1990, \$17.95 and \$24.95, respectively.

The Bicentennial of the ratification of the Bill of Rights occurs on December 15, 1991, culminating five years of commemorations of our American heritage of constitutional government. Among the most lasting products of the Bicentennial is this twosome of books by Jeffrey St. John relating the history of the writing and the ratification of our Constitution. Based on documented and newly-available sources, these books are both popular histories and important contributions to our knowledge of the founding of the American republic.

St. John has written the authentic history of these landmark, world-changing events in the style of a current 20th century newspaper correspondent. With simulated day-by-day reportage, this prize-winning journalist-historian makes his reader an eyewitness to the political battles that birthed our constitutional republic. He makes America's most important history come alive in a way that no writer has heretofore done.

"All history was once a news story," St. John says. "The making of the American Constitution is probably the most important national and international news story of the last 200 years. From this story has flowed an ocean of events and consequences for this country and for the world."

In *Constitutional Journal*, St. John takes the reader through the events of our Constitutional Convention in an entertaining style that conveys the emotion and drama of the Founding Fathers' debate as well as the essential historical facts. The Convention was held in secret, behind closed doors during a hot Philadelphia summer, for four months from May 25 to September 17, 1787. George Washington presided over the 55 delegates. Only 39 signed the Constitution on September 17, but they include some of the greatest names in American history, starting with George Washington as president

and deputy from Virginia: James Madison of Virginia, Alexander Hamilton of New York, Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, and Daniel Carroll of Maryland.



The Constitutional Convention of 1787 is a difficult and demanding story to tell because it involves a multitude of elements, ideas, issues and personalities. One historian has estimated that, if a verbatim transcript had been made of all sessions of the four-month Convention, consisting of some four hundred hours, it would probably fill at least fifty volumes.

The men who wrote the Constitution were well aware of the significance of their mission in Philadelphia and the unique importance of their handiwork. In one of the "Publius" newspaper articles which later became what we know as *The Federalist Papers*, James Madison wrote: "It is impossible for any man of candor to reflect on this circumstance without partaking of the astonishment. It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution."

*A Child of Fortune* is an even better book because it is more exciting. Like a correspondent filing weekly dispatches from the political battlefield in the 1990s, St. John tells the story of the bare-knuckled fights over ratification of the U.S. Constitution from September 18, 1787

through August 7, 1788. The eleven-month drama was played on the stage of the entire 13 states instead of within the confines of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. And what a battle it was! Most Americans have no idea how dramatic were those battles — hard-fought, bitter, and close.



The fate of our nation hung in the balance. The Constitution specified that it would go into effect upon the ratification of nine states. Nobody could predict with any confidence that nine states out of the thirteen would vote aye instead of nay. That's why General George Washington wrote his friend, the Marquis de Lafayette, that the Constitution signed in Philadelphia "is now a Child of Fortune, to be tattered by some and buffeted by others." The title for St. John's book came from this letter.

The biggest single issue during the ratification debates was over amendments to the Constitution, which began to be referred to as a bill of rights. The Constitution written at the Philadelphia Convention did not contain guarantees of freedom of religion, press, speech, assembly, trial by jury, and numerous other rights our citizens believed important. The more militant spokesmen argued that a conspiracy had been hatched in Philadelphia to rob the people of their liberties and the states of their sovereignty.

Only after the Federalists realized that the new Constitution might be rejected outright did

they agree to recommend a series of amendments. An analysis of the nine states and 1,648 delegates who actually voted on the new Constitution shows that, despite the promise of a bill of rights, 545 or 33 percent voted to reject the Constitution. In six of the nine states, only the promise of future amendments enabled the Constitution to pass.

In a very hard-fought and bitter battle, Massachusetts ratified the Constitution by only 187 to 168. Then Rhode Island rejected the Constitution in a referendum by 2,711 to 239.

The two largest states, New York and Virginia, were holding out, and no one could predict how they would vote. In Virginia, Governor Patrick Henry's oratorical brilliance hurled against the Constitution was just as impressive as his previous performances, but he apparently relied solely on his oratory and failed to develop a strategy to defeat the Constitution. The careful politicking and preparation of James Madison won out against America's greatest orator. Virginia ratified by only 89 to 79, and then New York ratified by only 30 to 27.

As soon as the new government was established, James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, consolidated the recommendations of the states, and Congress submitted twelve "rights," or amendments, to the states for ratification. Ten of the twelve were ratified by eleven states, the required number for constitutionality since Vermont had joined the Union in 1791. These first ten amendments to the Constitution became what we know as the Bill of Rights.

In the foreword to *A Child of Fortune*, Chief Justice Burger wrote: "Given the sad state of knowledge of our students — including many college graduates — about our history, this book, *A Child of Fortune*, and its companion, *Constitutional Journal*, should be required reading to graduate from high school." That's why the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution sent a copy of both books to all high school libraries. ■

## FOCUS: What Are Teachers Expected To Know?

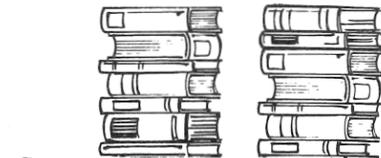
Since 1988, a teacher certification test (state board exam) has been required of all teachers in Illinois, as well as in many other states. I took this test this year, and I'm giving you an eyewitness report on its content.

The Basic Skills test *must* be passed by anyone who wants to teach in Illinois in any grade (K-12). It consists of 150 multiple-choice questions and one essay question. It's pretty elementary.

This year's test included a few propaganda items — for example, a reading passage about John Dewey and Horace Mann and their philosophies of education, with the stress on John Dewey's idea that the purpose of education is to lead to social change. The passage of education that we live in a democracy and that our democratic system of government means majority rule.

The test included emphasis on trendy ideas about self-esteem and reinforcement of the notion that self-esteem begins with looking inward, taking care of self, and learning to like yourself first (which supposedly then progresses naturally to liking other people). After reading the passage, the student had to answer a few multiple choice questions.

The English test *must* be passed by anyone who wants to teach English in the 6th through 12th grades in Illinois. It consists of 125 multiple-choice questions and no essay questions. It is pure propaganda for the Political



Correctness movement.

Many of the questions were amazingly simple, appeared to be oriented to the lowest possible level of scholarship, and tested things that should have been learned in junior high and high school.

These questions used short, noncontroversial statements to test the student's ability to spell, punctuate, use correct grammar, identify parts of speech, select pronouns that agree with subjects, and choose verbs and nouns that agree with each other, etc. Many of these simple, routine skills were tested not once but several times in the same test. For example, the difference between *it's* (it is) and *its* (the possessive) came up more than twice.

The test included roughly 15-20 passages (a paragraph to a page each) of selections from various works of literature to test the student's familiarity with certain authors' works and their dominant themes. The works selected were almost all from the writings of black authors, feminist authors, Asian authors, South American authors, one American-Indian author, and two authors from Africa whose names were totally unfamiliar. Among the

authors referred to (sometimes more than once) from these multi-cultural subgroups were Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Scott Momaday, Sylvia Plath, and others. The questions asked about these authors' selections often dealt with the Politically Correct social themes that predominate in their works.

Three questions were on *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, subtitled *An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, which is about a feminist socialist Marxist. (Dinesh D'Souza's new book *Illiberal Education* [reviewed in *Education Reporter*, June 1991] explains in detail how *I, Rigoberta* is just a propaganda tract for the current attack on Western culture.)

The test included a long, emotional quotation from Frederick Douglass which bitterly criticized the United States and condemned us for celebrating freedom and the Fourth of July when blacks were not free.

Another long passage blamed the Great Depression on America and emphasized that global misery resulted instantly from the stock market crash. Other passages featured pollution and environmentalism issues.

Keeping in mind that this test was given to English majors (not political science majors) who had presumably spent at least part of their college years studying literature, one might assume the test would at least mention some major U.S. and British authors. Wrong. Al-

though minor Politically Correct authors were well represented on the test, there was no mention on this test of any of the following U.S. or British authors: Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, John Donne, Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson/James Boswell, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, or Charles Dickens. Nor was there any mention of other European authors who might have been considered for inclusion, such as Anton Chekov, Cervantes, Victor Hugo, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, or Henrik Ibsen. It was as though these writers didn't exist.

The certification test is irrelevant for those who hope to be real English teachers in Illinois. Because most of it is so simple that almost everyone should be able to pass, including even the most inept and those not politically correct who made the mistake of studying Shakespeare instead of Sylvia Plath. What this test really accomplishes is to provide all prospective teachers with one last heavy dose of propaganda before they move into the classroom. ■

The author of this Focus is a writer known to the editor of the *Education Reporter* but whose name is withheld in order not to jeopardize her candidacy for teacher certification.

# National Teacher Certification on the March

ST. LOUIS, MO — National certification of teachers will begin as early as 1993, if the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has its way. The Board held its third nationwide conference in St. Louis in June and published the third edition of its policy manual, *Toward High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession*. In the manual, the Board cites 1993 as the year in which it will begin its planned “transition from being primarily a research and development organization to becoming a professional certification organization.”

The NBPTS was created in 1987 with a \$5 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation. A report published in 1986 by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, entitled *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, called for the establishment of such a Board.

The Board also received \$5 million in federal matching funds in 1991. “Fund-raising efforts,” the Board confides, “will concentrate on continuing to seek support in the U.S. Congress for federal appropriations totaling \$25 million over several years, to be matched with private gifts.”

“While many noteworthy efforts are being made to improve schools,” notes NBPTS President and Chief Executive Officer James Kelly in his preface to the third edition of *High and Rigorous*, “none promises the potential for permanent and systemic transformation of teaching that is offered by the National Board: to establish high and rigorous standards for what

teachers should know and be able to do and to certify teachers who meet those standards.”

However, centralized control over teaching and curriculum has increased over the last several decades — during the very period that the quality of American education has declined. Many people think that centralized control is part of the problem, and that increasing it further is not likely to improve matters.

Elected as the Board’s first president in 1987, Kelly is the former president of the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, a former Ford Foundation program officer, and a former faculty member of Columbia University’s Teachers College. Former North Carolina Governor James Baxter Hunt has served as chairman of NBPTS since its inception.

Many people question whether it is a solution to have teachers certified by a group that boasts the heads of the two largest teachers unions, NEA President Keith Geiger and American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker, as members of its board of directors. Some conscientious teachers are worrying that the NBPTS will be dominated by union members who will use their power as certifiers — and the vague standards established by the Board — to advance the careers of those teachers who support the unions’ political agenda and to discriminate against teachers who do not.

National certification will be available “on a voluntary basis,” insists the Board in the intro-

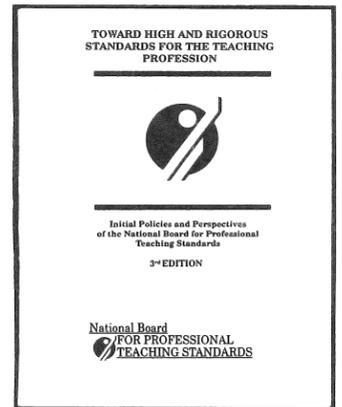
duction to its manual, and is “intended to complement, not replace, state systems of mandatory licensure for beginning teachers.”

NBPTS assurances that national certification of teachers will remain voluntary are less than reassuring. Will the bonuses, pay hikes, and career advancement that will surely accrue to nationally certified teachers have the effect of making certification seem a necessity to all the others? How long will it be before certified teachers begin asking — in the interest of students, of course — for political protection from the hiring of “quack” (uncertified) teachers?

The question was asked during an open microphone session following President James Kelly’s speech, “Will independent teachers who do not belong to teachers unions have a chance to be certified since teachers unions will dominate the board?” Kelly did not answer and told the woman to meet with him afterward to discuss her question.

Teachers will apply for certification by submitting a portfolio of lesson plans they have devised. Portfolios have been described as huge boxes of lesson plans, videotapes, etc. After teachers pass that round, they will be interviewed, perform simulation exercises, and submit to regular on-site observations over a substantial period of time.

The NBPTS policy manual makes repeated analogies to the certification (or licensing) of architects, lawyers, and other professionals, but



fails to mention the difference between their free market environment and the monopoly environment of the public schools. You can choose the architect or lawyer you want, but you cannot choose your tax-supported school or teacher.

The Board expects to process “at least 75,000 candidates per year,” an effort it proposes to finance with the proceeds from its “affordable” application fees. Start-up costs are another matter. In its 1990 Annual Report, the NBPTS estimates that \$50 million will be needed for “developing and implementing the new system.” So far, supporting grants totaling \$15.4 million have been donated “by major national corporations and foundations.”

NBPTS officials argue for a complete overhaul of American education. “Fine-tuning the present system will not suffice,” they proclaim in Chapter One of *High and Rigorous*. “Instead, systemic reform is required, for tinkering will not do. What is required, in fact, is no less than a revolution in teaching and learning.” NBPTS intends to be a “catalyst” for that revolution. Its members hope to “redefine teaching as a career by stimulating new incentive structures, staffing patterns and organizational arrangements.”

“The primary mission [of public school teaching],” according to the NBPTS policy book, “is to foster the development of skills, dispositions and understandings, while responding thoughtfully to a wide range of human needs and conditions.” However, the dispositions and understandings mentioned in the policy book are vague ethical dispositions and values.

The manual states: “Teaching is often portrayed as a conserving activity — transmitting culturally valued knowledge and skills to succeeding generations. It is that and more. Teachers also have responsibility to question settled structures, practices and definitions of knowledge, to invent and test new approaches, and, where necessary, to pursue change of organizational arrangements that support instruction. . . .”

Mark Tucker devised the entire certification plan at the time he was executive director of the Carnegie Forum. He was applauded wildly at the first meeting when so introduced. He is president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, which is “engaged in policy development and human resources” in Rochester, New York. When he was introduced, the speaker said that his institution was “more than any other is on the cutting edge of change in education.” He is working on plans “to turn American Education upside down in restructuring.”

It’s not news that the public schools are failing, and that somebody needs to do something about it. The question is, is national certification of teachers the solution? Many fear that the NBPTS can become another bureaucracy, with office staffs in each state and districts similar to the regional educational laboratories. ■

## School Board President Demands Truth; Opposes ‘Condom Mythology’

PLANO, TX — The newly formed AIDS Advisory Committee of the Plano Independent School District held its first meeting November 25 to discuss possible revisions in the district’s AIDS curriculum. School Board President Allan Bird recommended establishment of the committee, arguing that the current curriculum downplays the importance of abstinence and overemphasizes the protective value of condoms. Composed of teachers, students, parents, Bird, and another board member, the 20-person committee will hold several more meetings before presenting its recommendations at the school board’s meeting in January.

Originally approved by the school board in 1987 for use in the district’s middle and high schools, the AIDS curriculum was subsequently revised in 1989. The revisions — which, through an administrative oversight, were never formally approved by the board — placed added emphasis on condom education. It wasn’t until this year, however, that parents discovered that health and biology teachers were demonstrating to students the proper technique for putting on condoms (improvising with fingers and test tubes). Parents attending the school board meeting on Nov. 5 protested this practice.

At that meeting, the board voted 6-1 to delete the offending material from the curriculum guide, and to insert language emphasizing the risk of illicit sexual activity with condoms and stressing sexual abstinence as the only sure means of avoiding AIDS. A vote on the revisions was set for the November 19 board meeting, at which time Board President Bird intervened to make his recommendation for the formation of an advisory committee to study the curriculum further.

“The program, to me, needs to stress abstinence, and the original program didn’t stress anything,” says Bird, explaining his desire to

reconsider the curriculum. “When I saw the revised curriculum,” he adds, “I felt that what it had really done was move more in the direction of condom usage than abstinence, and that was really my concern.”

Bird has come out strongly in favor of parental notification prior to the presentation of sensitive materials to students. Students are currently allowed to opt out of programs that their parents find objectionable, but, as a practical matter, parents first have to know what programs are given.

“The question has never been, can parents pull students out?” Bird asserts. “I think the question is, How do you notify parents of what’s going on so that they’ll have the choice to opt out?”

Bird says that it’s not always easy to anticipate what parents will object to, citing an example from the recent past when school officials were caught off guard by black parents objecting to alleged racial stereotypes in Mark Twain’s novel *Huckleberry Finn*. In that case, teachers simply substituted material equally representative of the literary period.

With regard to condoms, Bird objects not to the discussion of them *per se*, but rather to the unrealistic portrayal of their efficacy. “If we have factual information on the prevention of disease, we ought to present that to students,” he insists. “But I think the information needs to be factual. If there is factual information — and, again, I’m still looking for factual information — of what condoms do in AIDS protection, I think that students ought to have that information. I don’t think they ought to have a mythology about it.”

According to Bird, much of what passes for factual information about the capabilities of condoms is mythological. “I don’t know that

anybody knows for sure what protection condoms provide,” he admits.

Bird is also determined to counteract the myth of rampant sexual activity among teens, a myth that he says is almost universally believed. “I think we have a moral obligation to the kids to correct the impression that everybody’s having sex,” he comments. “I don’t believe that’s true for a second,” he says, noting that irresponsible media reports fuel the misconception.

“I think we need to do something to combat that false impression,” Bird argues. “To simply say, We’re going to pull out the section on condoms and let the kids go on thinking that everybody’s having sex, is not an appropriate approach,” he explains. “And so I requested that we put the curriculum back on the agenda, and that we get something in place that sends out the right message. I think the message has gotten out now that condoms were the things that we were supposed to use, and I don’t think that’s a good message.”

Bird believes that teens need to know the truth about engaging in illicit sexual activity, and the truth, he says, is that “the better students don’t do it.”

Bird insists that the controversy that has erupted over the AIDS curriculum will prove beneficial in the long run. “I would much prefer having the discussion we’re having right now, and have a chance to clarify a lot of these issues,” he asserts. “I think it’s healthy.” He is determined to see that the advisory committee addresses the concerns of all parents when it presents its conclusions to the school board on January 21. As for himself, Bird says, “all along my greatest concern was that the message that we were giving, even in the original curriculum, wasn’t strong enough in terms of abstinence.” ■