

REPORT: EDUCATION FOR PLURALISM

Coordinator: Max Rosenberg*

An Education Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? The Detroit Board of Education has passed a resolution in "full and unqualified" support of an equal educational opportunity amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In the landmark *Rodriguez* case, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that education is *not* "a fundamental right explicitly or implicitly protected by the Constitution." This ruling came as a shock to many, and in response an amendment has been proposed.¹ The proposed amendment would establish equal educational opportunity as a fundamental right guaranteed to all, *without exception*, by the federal government.

Support for the amendment has come from many educators: Wilson Riles, Paul B. Salmon, Daniel E. Griffiths, Stanley Elam, Robert J. Havighurst, Thomas Pettigrew, Carl Marburger, Barbara Sizemore, B. Frank Brown, and others. Leaders from organizations like Phi Delta Kappa, American Association of School Administrators, Education Commission of the States, American Federation of Teachers, and others have expressed great interest in the amendment.

The Detroit resolution calls upon individuals and organizations "to give their sup-

port to the proposed amendment to the end that it will indeed become a part of the Constitution of the United States." Question: What stand should ASCD take?

Working Group Recommends Creation of National Center. A National Center for Instructional Materials in a Pluralistic Society "could make a powerful and positive impact upon American education, and ultimately upon our whole society." This is the conclusion reached by ASCD's Working Group on Cultural Pluralism in Instructional Materials. Last year this group developed a proposal for the creation of a National Center to function as a resource, leadership, communications, and research center in the war against sexual/racial/social class bias in American education.

In the proposal, the Working Group

**Editor's Note: This column offers a review of fair and unfair treatment accorded women, the poor, and racial/ethnic minorities in American schools. As educators and citizens we need to share ideas, programs, strategies, experiences in the continuing battle against bias, discrimination, and injustice.*

Readers are invited to submit appropriate items to: Dr. Max Rosenberg, Detroit Public Schools, 5057 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Michigan 48202.

¹ See: Max Rosenberg. "Proposed: An Equal Opportunity Amendment to the U.S. Constitution." *Phi Delta Kappan* 55 (7): 442-43, 467; March 1974.

points out that the various actions taken by ASCD over the years "... however well-conceived and implemented, have tended to lack sustained effort and continuity. The absence of effective follow-through must be attributed, not to lag in enthusiasm or concern, but to the limitations imposed on a volunteer group by pressures of time and distance and by the parent organization's inability to provide the unusual financial assistance an all-out effort demands." The need, concluded the Working Group, is a facility designed "to serve as a major influence for multicultural education." Perhaps the proposal for the National Center ought to be published in full so that all readers can consider the merits of such a facility.

"Most Distinguished" or "Literary Racism"? This year's Newbery-Caldecott award winner is a book titled *The Slave Dancer*, written by Paula Fox. This "most distinguished" children's book of the year is reviewed in *Interracial Books for Children*, a publication of the Council on Interracial Books for Children. The four reviewers, two black and two white, describe the book as "racist," "distorted," "an insult," "literary racism." And yet, as one of the reviewers indicated, a Newbery-Caldecott winner is one book most school officials in school systems across the country will approve for purchase and use.

In an introductory note the editors of *Interracial Books for Children* explain: "We are giving special attention to *The Slave Dancer* on these pages not because its literary racism is any more pronounced than what appears in a great many children's books today, but because it has been cited by

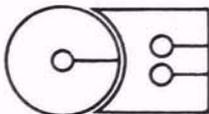
librarians as the 'most distinguished' work of the year."

Women's Rights and Minority Groups. "A feminist believes that women (just as men) are first and foremost people, and that human rights are indivisible by any category of sex, race, class, caste, nationality, religion, or age." This statement by Wilma Scott Heide appears in the Spring 1974 issue of the *Civil Rights Digest*. This issue is devoted entirely to the question of women's rights. The articles deal with the question as it affects the lives of women—education, employment, rights, power—within specific racial/ethnic group settings in the United States. The settings are black, Puerto Rican, Indian, Mexican American, and Asian.

Special attention is given to the idea that a new political coalition, which joins the strengths of those devoted to civil rights and social welfare legislation to the strengths of those battling sexist discrimination, would have the potential to effect significant social change. After all, writes Lucy Komisar, in the lead article, the very "same special interests and arguments that have been marshaled against blacks and other minorities are the special interests and arguments set against women."

Inside/Outside. The improvement of human relationships is the goal of multicultural education—helping us all to get inside the other person, to feel for him or with him, to feel for her or with her, and to get inside ourselves, to find out why we feel as we do, behave as we do, value what we value. This inside-outside process is the theme of a series

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of 15-minute, 16mm. color films and color video cassettes available from the National Instructional Television Center, Bloomington, Indiana. *Inside/Outside* is an interdisciplinary series of portrayals intended to help eight-to-ten-year-olds find out about themselves and others, and to deal with the human relationships which are common problems in everyday lives. Not only is the series of basic significance in a multicultural society in its emphasis upon promoting well-being through skills in coping with emotions, but a number of the presentations deal directly with conflicts with ethnic overtones, discrimination, and prejudice. (This item was submitted by Maxine Dunfee.)

ASCD and Publishers Agree To Support Pluralistic Criteria. Representatives of ASCD and the Association of American Publishers have met several times in recent months. One of the major topics for discussion has been "cultural pluralism and learning materials." The publishers' representatives have expressed their full support for the 1974 ASCD resolution adopted at Anaheim on the treatment of women and minority groups in instructional materials. Roger Egan of McGraw-Hill, who is chairman of the publishers' committee, said that the resolution is welcomed because: (a) its focus is on content; (b) it indicates curriculum change; and (c) it reflects a more contemporary viewpoint as to how women and minority groups should be portrayed. Publishers and educators discussed ways and means of encouraging both groups to make good use of the criteria. ASCD representatives included Gordon Cawelti, Geneva Gay, Evelyn Jones Rich, Max Rosenberg, and Glenys Unruh.

Bilingual Tests—A New Tool for Mexican American Students. In 1970 The Border Junior College Consortium was established as a concerted effort to overcome barriers to academic progress among Mexican American students. The word "Border" in the name refers to the location of its member colleges, which are in the U.S. along the Mexican-U.S. border. The consortium is identifying a number of problems which need to be solved.

One of these is the current practice of utilizing standardized English language tests in schools and colleges. Such tests are not helpful for use with large numbers of Mexican American students. The Consortium is working with the Educational Testing Service to construct new bilingual verbal aptitude tests; the U.S. Office of Education is providing financial support. The project is described in *ETS Developments*, a publication of the Educational Testing Service.

Report: In Brief . . .

● The *Race Relations Reporter* newsletter reports that the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) is threatening to sue the city of Pekin, Illinois, for calling its high school athletic teams the "Chinks." The OCA insists that "Chinks" is insulting and derogatory, and has asked the Illinois Commission on Human Relations to take the case. . . .

● The newsletter of the National Association of Secondary School Principals notes that help in solving racial problems in schools is available on request from the U.S. Community Relations Service (CRS). Many school officials are unaware that the CRS works through voluntary processes of conciliation and mediation to alleviate intergroup problems. . . .

● A notable essay on pluralism appears in the August 1974 issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*. Three major ideas are developed: (a) We require a basic change in the socialization process in American society. (b) The old Protestant Anglo American ideal which guided the policies of social institutions in the United States for so many years has now failed. (c) A new ideal is needed, and that should be pluralism. . . .

● Cultural Pluralism—as ASCDers know—has been adopted by ASCD's Board of Directors as a major focal point. Executive Director Gordon Cawelti points out: "This promises to broaden the Association's traditional base of humanistic values by committing us to the values implicit in honoring the diversity of our citizens, demanding social justice, and helping all people attain personal liberation." □

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