

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Correspondents: Ben M. Harris
Jack Price
Steve Mann

"Professionalism Regained?" Provokes Response

Dear Editor:

The Beecher Harris article "Professionalism Regained?" in your November Viewpoint section¹ leaves me somewhat aghast. I don't think the article worthy of serious commentary, but I do wonder about the editorial wisdom exercised in publishing such a superficial statement. It is obviously a very biased expression of point of view. I know you can't always be on target, but this one seems unduly off-target.

Much of the rest of the issue, in contrast to the article by Beecher Harris, is really great. Specifically, I continue to be pleased with the Research Reviews. Zahorik's teacher's planning model is certainly excellent. Similarly, Patterson and Hansen have offered an article on decentralized decision making that is most worthwhile.

BEN M. HARRIS
Professor of Education
University of Texas at Austin.

Another November Opinion Challenged

Dear Editor:

Norman Bauer's Letter to the Editor in the November issue of *Educational Leadership*

¹ Beecher H. Harris. "Professionalism Regained?" (Viewpoint.) *Educational Leadership* 33 (2): 143-45; November 1975.

points out quite clearly why many educators prefer field-based preparation for prospective teachers.² He obviously has not been in a public school recently—and it is an affliction shared by a number of his colleagues in teacher training. His blanket statement that no public school has the capability or desire to "free the intellectual capabilities of our children" is obviously incorrect. Further, the statement is characteristic of the type of thinking—broad generalizations based on little evidence—that we do not want our children to do. Hopefully, it is not an example of the "unfettered thinking" which he holds as a value characteristic of the university. Worse yet, if his statement is true, then it follows that the university-based programs have not produced teachers who free the children.

If there is a "rip-off," as Bauer suggests, it is by those education professors who have been content to rest on their lectures. Their disenchanting students now follow a new piper who must be discredited by a frightened faculty before the mountain closes forever in front of them.

How wonderful it would be if we could stop fighting over turf and combine the best of both processes to produce outstanding teacher candidates. Bauer's letter does little to advance the cooperative spirit, but we would be happy to draw our circle to include him.

JACK PRICE
Assistant Superintendent, Programs Division
San Diego City Schools

² Norman J. Bauer. (Letters to the Editor.) *Educational Leadership* 33 (2): 141; November 1975.

Busing: A Critical Issue

Dear Editor:

The ASCD Conference preview does not contain any mention of busing. Yet many people in ASCD feel that busing is one of the most critical educational-political issues before us. An association with a membership approaching 18,000 and with claims to leadership in the field cannot neglect or cower from taking a stand on this issue.

If the issue is viewed narrowly, it appears to be confusing. From the viewpoint of certain specific schools or districts which are getting much publicity, there *seems* to be a contradiction between what progressive people think *should* be a sound policy and what seems to have been the effect of applying that policy. But when viewed more broadly, in a proper political context, the issue gets clearer.

Busing is one front of a many-faceted and centuries old struggle of the Black minority for equality. Because of the great and courageous action on the part of the broad masses of Black people, some great gains were made under the conditions of economic expansion that occurred in the post World War II era. Progress toward integration, in general, and toward integrated schools through busing, in particular, was one aspect of these gains. In many places busing has worked in the sense that it has, without violence, ameliorated to some degree the isolation, and thus the vulnerability to attack, of Blacks.

But now busing is coming under strong new attack, and we are obliged to ask, "Why now?" just when the economy is in sharp decline. Is it a coincidence or is there a connection? Is the attack on busing really an attack on busing alone or is it part of something much broader? We *are*, in my judgment, in a period of intense economic decay which will last for a long time. In *all* such periods the owners of factories and mines, bankers, agrizib people, and financiers—the owners of the means of production—find it necessary to drive all working people down in order to maintain their profits. New York makes the point quite well. Fewer jobs, less relief for the growing number of both officially and unofficially unemployed (who are equally hungry even if they don't fit the statistician's methods), closing of public health facilities, freezing of wages while prices continue to climb . . . all this so the banks can get their interest on time.

Under these conditions the capitalist bankers cannot "afford" the reforms they've allowed in the expansionary period. They need isolated minorities who can be forced to work for less as a desperate alternative to not working at all, thereby lowering the wages they are required

to pay *all* workers; and they need "white" workers who will attack the minority workers for them, based on the lie they've been told that it is the minority worker rather than the capitalist who is the source of misery. This is why the attack on busing is escalating so dramatically right at this time. The drive to defeat busing is part of a drive to rescind the gains made by the civil rights drive of the post-war years, a drive to further isolate the Black and other minorities; it is a drive to divide the exploited workers of all ethnic groups into rival sectors in order to drive *all* workers, including teachers like ourselves, way down in order to protect their profits. It is easier to drive down a divided population than it is to drive down, for example, a united movement of educators demanding equal, quality education for all.

The attack on busing is part of an overall renewed attack on Black people, and through them and through the other minorities, it is an attack on all working people. Louise Day Hicks, the Ku Klux Klan, and the American Nazi Party are all enjoying an upsurge in followers by appealing to the most backward side of people. They are deliberately stirring up people with lies of the most vicious sort. And they are showing us that their method of persuasion has not changed fundamentally.

The conclusion I draw is that we cannot allow this attack to confuse us, we cannot allow it to draw us into positions that can only further divide one group of working people from another. We are obliged to fight back against the effort to make people believe that one group can only benefit at the expense of another. We must develop a united defense of quality education, *equal* quality education, for *all* children. Concretely, we must defend busing, and along with it we must defend bilingual education and all the other special programs that are crucial to equal quality education for oppressed minorities. We must resist arguments that say, for example, "We can't afford bilingual education *and* busing, they are both too expensive. So fight it out to see who wins." We must fight for *both* busing *and* bilingual education and we must demand that the federal government, which alone has the resources to do so, provide adequate funding for equal, quality education for all.

ASCD, I believe, must take a stand on this issue. A forum for discussion, though omitted by the conference planning committee, will be provided by the Coalition for Quality Education. The coalition will also be sponsoring resolutions on the subject at the business meeting and will be making plans for carrying this fight into all our communities after the conference is over.

STEVE MANN
ASCD Member, Springfield, Massachusetts

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