

REPORT: EDUCATION FOR PLURALISM

Coordinator: Max Rosenberg*

AASA and Sex Equality. The American Association of School Administrators is issuing several publications dealing with the need to help achieve an end to sex stereotyping in America's public schools. One of these publications is titled *Sex Equality in Educational Materials*. It is designed to intensify administrators' awareness of the problem by describing some current practices. It is also designed to identify remedies and suggest administrative actions which would help correct the condition.

The what-can-be-done section suggests work with students and community, establishment of guidelines in evaluating educational materials, contact with publishers, development of original supplementary materials, along with other steps to neutralize sexist materials.

The authors of this publication point out that schools have a great effect on the future pattern of society; "they can either perpetuate or help replace those patterns of the present that restrict people unfairly."

Problem of Youth and Cultural Pluralism. The 1975 yearbook (Part I) of the National Society for the Study of Education is titled simply *Youth*. It deals, in a number of different ways and from several viewpoints, "with the problems of growing from adolescence into maturity in the 1970's and 1980's."

One notable emphasis of this volume is upon cultural pluralism. Approximately a third of the yearbook is devoted to youth's problems and concerns in various subcultures: Blacks, the rural "WASP's," Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, low income youth, and young women and their roles.

Robert J. Havighurst (yearbook editor) and Philip H. Dreyer identify three conditions

for successful cultural pluralism: (a) mutual appreciation and understanding on the part of every subculture; (b) freedom for each group to practice its culture and to socialize its children; (c) each group shares in society's economic and civic life.

In contemporary America, according to Havighurst and Dreyer, there has been a significant change. Cultural pluralism is no longer perceived as being an undesirable, negative social condition. Today it is viewed as a desirable, positive social condition in which "differences are respected and a positive group identity is seen as necessary for individual mental health and social progress."

Adolescent Prejudice Called Shocking. "Prejudice is rampant in school populations . . . not only racial prejudice but anti-Semitism and a virulent but especially neglected class prejudice as well." This is the sobering conclusion of a new study titled *Adolescent Prejudice*.

The study, prepared by Charles Y. Glock, Robert Wuthnow, Jane A. Piliavin, and Metta Spencer, was published in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. More than 4600 students in the 8th, 10th, and 12th

* 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.

grades in three different American cities were involved. The investigation attempts to search out the causes of adolescent prejudice, the role of the school, and offers a number of recommendations.

The researchers label some of their findings as "surprises"; among these surprises, they emphasize, "the most disturbing was the sheer amount of hostility toward Jews expressed by teenagers."

It is of particular interest to educators to learn that one of the shocking conclusions of this study is "that the schools are contributing to the perpetuation of prejudice." (!)

International Women's Year Targets. Did you know that the much-headlined International Women's Year conference held in Mexico City last summer devoted a large portion of the discussions to education? Among the "targets" finally agreed upon as a "World Plan of Action" by the 5000 delegates from 133 countries around the world, a number related specifically to education.

The targets deal with such needs as: "literacy and civic education"; "co-educational vocational training"; equal access "at every level of education"; "comprehensive measures for health education"; lifelong education for the "full realization (of men and women) as individuals in the family and in society."

Guidelines for Equal Treatment. Recently several publishers have developed guidelines for their own writers and editors in order to avoid sexism complaints. One such publisher is the McGraw-Hill Book Company. President Alexander J. Burke, Jr., writes in the introduction to *Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes*, "We would like to see our educational materials in particular convey to all children a sense of opportunity to develop their individual potentials along whatever lines they choose, free of any limiting stereotypes." These guidelines provide advice regarding a number of questions relating to the treatment of both sexes, job stereotypes, career options, life styles, portrayals, and descriptions. A large number of sexist words, phrases, and language constructions are noted, and correct usage is suggested. Here are a few examples: "women" (not "the fair sex" or "the weaker sex"); "wife" (not "the little woman," or "the better half," or "the ball and chain"); "supervisor" (not "foreman"); "human achievements" (not "man's achievements").

Ethnocentrism and Foreign Cultures. "Teachers can help reduce ethnocentrism (negative attitudes toward another culture) by permitting

children to express openly their initial negative feelings toward another culture and then reflect on the reasons behind those feelings"—this is one of the conclusions drawn from a series of classroom experiments reported in the March 1975 issue of *The Elementary School Journal*. The article is titled "Ethnocentrism Toward Foreign Cultures in Elementary Social Studies" by David S. Martin.

Some of the other findings: Children of higher measured intelligence are more tolerant when first exposed to foreign cultures. Children of lower intelligence, higher "dogmatism," and lower socioeconomic status react more ethnocentrically when first exposed to foreign cultures. In-depth study of another culture tends to reduce negative feelings. An improved attitude toward a foreign culture does not "require" the disparagement of the student's own culture. Ethnocentrism is reduced if students use their involvement with the foreign culture to learn more about their own culture.

Report: In Brief . . .

- Current senior high civics textbooks "do a generally inadequate job" of reflecting the pluralistic nature of American society—this is the major conclusion of the 1976 Michigan State Board of Education textbook study. The evaluation review was made of those textbooks that are most widely used, and represent the most recent offerings of American publishers.

- "Education Can Be Better When Unfettered by Bias." This is the title of the lead article of the September 1975 Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools *Bulletin*. The entire issue is devoted to various programs and activities regarding equality of opportunity for all: a Commission on Women, Title IX, human relations seminars, physical education trends, women's history, textbook reviews, and sex bias evaluation.

- The school board of the Dade County Public Schools has added the word "age" to its Equal Employment Opportunity policy. The policy now prohibits discrimination on the basis of "race, sex, creed, color, and age."

- The Los Angeles Board of Education has approved the creation of four racial/ethnic commissions to provide special assistance in meeting educational needs. The four commissioners are: Mexican American, Asian, Black, and native American Indian.

- The U.S. Congress has provided \$5 million for adult education programs for Indochinese refugees. The programs, according to H.E.W., will emphasize basics: speaking, reading, writing, and arithmetic. □

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