

# Education for Pluralism

Max Rosenberg

## Desegregation: A Summary Report

*Fulfilling the Letter and Spirit of the Law: Desegregation of the Nation's Public Schools* is the title of an important summary report issued by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

This report contains the Commission's evaluation of school desegregation in a variety of school districts throughout the United States. It reveals that, in spite of the headlines, in most communities desegregation has been implemented peacefully and smoothly.

One element that is emphasized is leadership. "Perhaps the most important ingredient in successful school desegregation is leadership, both at the community level and in the schools. . . . The record shows that where such leadership exists, desegregation is more likely to be achieved with minimal difficulty. Where it is lacking, on the other hand, desegregation may be accompanied by confusion, anxiety, and perhaps disruption on the part of students or, more likely, parents."

On balance, this report makes clear, substantial progress is being made in school desegregation. "If the Nation," insists the Commission, "is to build on this progress, there are certain 'musts' that the Commission believes need to be kept in mind:

"1. Leaders at the national, state, and local levels must accept the fact that desegregation of the Nation's schools is a constitutional imperative.

"2. The Federal Government must strengthen and expand programs designed to facilitate the

school desegregation process.

"3. There must be vigorous enforcement of laws which contribute to the development of desegregated communities.

"4. A major investment of time and resources must be made in order to deal with misconceptions relative to desegregation."

The report concludes with an emphasis on "relevant evidence." "This report represents the most intensive effort to date to bring together relevant evidence. If the national debate on desegregation is based on this and other comparable evidence, as contrasted with hasty generalizations drawn from a few negative experiences, we have no doubt that the Nation will once again demonstrate its ability to deal in a constructive manner with a crisis growing out of the implementation of the Constitution of the United States."

## Adolescent Prejudice Revisited

Readers of this column will recall that attention was directed several months ago to a major new study on *Adolescent Prejudice*. Among the shocking findings: "Prejudice is rampant in school populations . . . not only racial prejudice but anti-Semitism and a virulent but especially neglected class prejudice as well."

A follow-up national conference has been held at the University of California in Berkeley. Sponsored by the University and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, this conference included representatives of many school systems, universities, and national educator associations.

Conference participants offered a number of recommendations. Some of these are:

- There need to be state requirements for teacher certification which relate to ethnic groups and prejudice. Some states, such as Wisconsin and Minnesota, have already developed such criteria for certification.

- Colleges of Education should establish required courses related to prejudice and discrimination. The College of Education at the University of Washington, Seattle, already has such a requirement.

- Analyses of textbooks' content and viewpoints should be encouraged by educators in concert with community leadership. A network which would communicate analysis techniques and results should be created linking school systems, state educational agencies, teacher-training institutions, and other interested agencies.

- The National School Boards Association, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, and similar groups should be encouraged to include in their journals and in their meeting programs content material focused on the management and easing of prejudice.

- Seed money should be made available for a center to continue research on the nature and extent of prejudice.

## Justice for Women

In April 1975, President Ford appointed a National Commission to investigate the "barriers to the full participation of women in our

Nation's life." The Commission has issued a valuable, 382-page report that includes 115 specific recommendations for change.

In the discussion on education, the report notes that the problem of enforcing Title IX is emphasized by many school leaders. They speak of difficulties and costs. Clelia Steele, associate director of the Project on Equal Education Rights, is quoted in response: "I say it's not a matter of difficulty or cost—it's a matter of justice. Title IX is not the cause of all the furor over sex discrimination. Rather, it resulted from this discrimination."

What is the ultimate goal? Presiding Officer of the Commission Jill Ruckelshaus answered this question in her Letter of Transmittal that accompanied the full report: "A true partnership of men and women throughout society, in the family, at work, in government, founded upon mutual respect and the recognition of the unique contribution each individual can make."

The report is titled . . . *To Form a More Perfect Union: Justice for American Women.*

## A Dispute Is Settled

The Community Relations Service (CRS) of the U.S. Department of Justice not long ago reported the settling of a dispute between Indian students and school officials in Ferndale, Washington, a town with a population of about 3,000 in the northwest corner of the state.

The nearly 500 Indian students who attend the public schools became involved in a series of protests over "alleged" physical abuse and other discriminatory treatment by school faculty members.

According to CRS, school officials and Lummi Indian Tribal Council representatives have signed an agreement ending the dispute.

A major provision of the agreement is in-service training for teachers and administrators designed to increase their knowledge

of and appreciation for Northwest Indian culture. Part of the training is orientation through reservation visits, seminars, and workshops.

Part of the training for administrators is to focus on determining sensitivity to cultural differences when interviewing prospective employees. The Lummi Tribal Council agreed to help the school district search for and recruit Indian employees.

In addition, curriculum and instruction materials will be evaluated for sensitivity to Indian culture and the Indian experience. A committee, which will have a tribal representative, will be established to govern the selection of materials to be used in the classroom.

The agreement also calls for increased Indian participation on various school committees: a new affirmative action advisory committee; a joint task force on school discipline; and the district's budget committee. An Indian liaison representative will also attend school board meetings and report to the Tribal Council on significant developments.

## Role of the Secondary School

... the secondary school must help racial, cultural, and religious groups achieve both a better education and a better way of life by aiding them in their struggle to overcome ridicule, hostility, guilt, lack of confidence, insecurity, and a feeling of shame. As we pointed out earlier, the inhospitable environment in which many of these students live often has caused severe and sometimes irreparable personality problems. These are frequently so severe that students cannot muster their resources to achieve success in school. The school should not only provide a happy environment; it must also help students feel the warm glow of personal worth, and make it possible for them to experience success that they have at last achieved on their own merits. There are literally hundreds of

ways of attacking these tasks. The role of educational leadership is one of supporting thoughtful and resourceful teachers who can operate programs that help disadvantaged individuals to overcome deeply ingrained negative self-images, the feeling of failure, and the feeling of being of no worth." —Virgil Clift and Harold G. Sitane. *Issues in Secondary Education*. Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1976.

## Multicultural Resources

What may be the largest collection of ethnic resource materials ever assembled is now available for reference use at California State University, Hayward. Under special arrangements, parts of the collection may be borrowed on short-term loans. School and community groups are expected to make the most extensive use of the materials, but individuals are equally welcome to use them.

The collection includes some 10,000 books, pamphlets, pictures, and periodicals, dealing chiefly with four minority groups: Native Americans, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Spanish-Speaking. Included are materials for all ages and levels of reading ability. The resources were gathered in the course of more than seven years of research by the federal Office of Child Development in San Francisco.

## Reminder to Readers

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 Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

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