

Education for Pluralism

Max Rosenberg

Women: Education Is The Key

The number of illiterate women in the world is greater today than at any time in the past. This shocking fact is one of many noted in a recent article in *Development Forum*, which is published by the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the United Nations. The article, entitled "Women: Education Is the Key," is written by anthropologist Patricia McGrath.

McGrath points out that there is a worldwide campaign to increase the number of literate adults. While this campaign is beginning to succeed, the majority of the newly literate are males.

Progress, however, is being made. In almost every country of the world, free and compulsory primary education is finally an adopted goal, if not an actual reality. In recent years, female access to primary education has improved greatly. At the secondary and university levels, there has also been significant progress; the statistics indicate "a big improvement." In some ways, the situation at the higher education level has "even greater implications."

McGrath's conclusion is that while "many formidable inequities remain to be overcome, the steady advances in women's education augur well for the emergence of a social order in which the ideas and energies of women are fully expressed."

Update on Law-Related Education

A spanking new journal has

been published. Sponsored by the American Bar Association's Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, it is named *Update on Law-Related Education*.

The Volume 1, Number 1 issue deals with a number of topics of special interest to readers of this column. Some of these are discrimination, and equal protection under the law on the basis of sex, race, national origin, and alien status.

The issue contains a discussion of the Bakke Case in California, which involves a charge that the medical school of the University of California denied admission to a white applicant while admitting less qualified minority students. This involves the question of what some call "reverse discrimination."

Another article of particular historical interest is entitled "A Plea for Equality," the story of a school segregation law case that was decided more than a century ago in Boston. This case involved a black child, Sarah Roberts, who was denied the right to attend a school close to her home. Why? Because it was an all-white school. The lawyer who defended the black child was Charles Sumner. He lost the case, but history was made.

The editors of *Update* promise to keep its readers well informed concerning law-related education, and it is clear that a portion of law-related education ties in with the concerns of pluralism-related education.

How Blacks View Their Status

"... Americans, after 20 years of desegregation-integration, have

not yet included the blacks in the open class system"—this, in summary, is what one survey indicates.

The survey was conducted by James A. Scruggs, an education consultant with the Florida State Department of Education. The survey report was published in the April 1977 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*.

According to this survey of opinion, which was directed to black administrators who serve in educational posts in government, black colleges, and a number of school systems in various states, the situation in this country continues on an unsatisfactory level.

The following are a few survey highlights: (a) Most black educators believe a quota system exists for hiring black administrators; (b) Black administrators are of the opinion that their acceptance into the educational system is not equal to that of whites; and (c) The attitudes of white teachers toward their black students are not what they should be.

Scruggs concludes that "the American culture has not abandoned its negative approach toward black individuals, even when they hold high posts in education, and that the black child is still left deficient in his schooling when compared to whites."

Bilingual Education Takes Hold

"... Bilingual education is taking hold at every level across the nation. No longer the rarity it was a decade ago, it is still however, a relatively new venture, and much pioneering work remains to be done." This is the description of

the current situation that appears in a recent publication.

The publication, which offers an analysis, is entitled *Bilingual Education*. A product of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), this is one of a series of occasional papers that ETS plans to publish. The series is called *Focus*.

The pamphlet deals with many issues relating to bilingual education:

- Is it enough to teach children English as a second language?
- How can the necessary liaison with the community be achieved?
- How do you cope with a shortage of teachers in this area?
- What about the matter of effective learning materials and tests?
- How can you evaluate a bilingual instructional program fairly?

Bilingual and bicultural programs will undoubtedly grow over the coming years. They should make a significant difference in the lives of the five million children in the United States who do not speak English well enough to succeed in schools that use English as the only language of instruction.

The Schools and Migrant Children

The children of migrant workers in the United States have difficult problems with their education. During certain seasons of the year, they move about with their families from state to state, and for limited periods of time.

Furthermore, most secondary-school-age students work in the fields ten or more hours each day, at least six days a week. It is only after a long working day, that they can attend evening classes.

However, some states and some local school districts do attempt to provide worthy formal learning experiences. The Spring 1977 issue of *Compact*, published by the Education Commission of the States, carries a description of a

migrant education program in Montana.

The Montana program, which involves 1,400 students, is administered for a six-week period. Sixty percent of the staff is bilingual, and more than twenty percent is Chicano. The staff is specially trained to work on language problems. The Montana program is federally funded. It is administered through the state superintendent's office, and operated by the Billings School District #2.

The *Compact* article, written by Joyce N. Walker, is called "Schools Catch Up to the Migrant."

Asia in American Textbooks

"Inaccuracies of fact and definition are frequent, and illustrations and terminology perpetuate Western ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and condescending attitudes toward Asian peoples." These are some of the conclusions of a major national study of the treatment of Asia and Asians in the textbooks most commonly used in elementary and secondary school classrooms in the United States.

Titled *Asia in American Textbooks*, the study took more than two years to complete. The survey included the evaluation of more than 300 classroom textbooks in use in schools in all 50 states.

The books were read by more than 100 experts—scholars of Asian studies, and teachers and writers with Asian specialization and/or teaching experience. Detailed evaluation guidelines were provided for each of the readers. These guidelines included specific questions concerning such matters as accuracy and authenticity, underlying assumptions and approaches, attitudes toward Asian life and culture, use of Asian sources, qualifications of authors and consultants, and supporting materials.

The expert readers were asked to give overall ratings to the textbooks they reviewed. Two hundred sixty-one books received ratings. Of these, 80 were declared to be "so inadequate that they should

be replaced." One hundred eighteen were reported unsatisfactory to the point that they "should not be used without revision." Sixty-three books were designated as either "excellent" or "can be used, but has some problems."

Here are some other findings of the study:

- In many textbooks, "Asian traditions are regarded as irrelevant to the present or thought of as obstacles to modernization."
- Most of the evaluated textbooks "approach Asia from a Western-centered point of view."
- The role of Americans and Europeans in Asian history is "magnified," and in world histories "a disproportionate amount of space is given to America and Europe."
- The texts examined "fail to discuss Asians as individuals."
- The books generally fail "to include authentic Asian sources."

The primary purpose of those who conducted this nationwide study was "to catalogue the variety of themes and source materials which can contribute to an understanding of Asia." The report expresses the hope that it will serve as a guide to publishers in "the revision and production of new texts," and to educators as they teach about Asia in their classrooms.

The survey was sponsored by The Asia Society, with support from the Ford Foundation.

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. [E]

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