

# Letters

## THE PRO-FAMILY MOVEMENT

Hours before the publishing deadline for the November issue, my comments about the legislative goals of the Pro-Family Movement were deleted, with my agreement, because Connaught Marshner asserted that my interpretation of the Family Protection Act, a bill which Marshner helped to write, was incorrect. She said my remarks were obsolete because the bill had been amended.

By 24 hours later, it was clear that S1808 had not been amended, and legal counsel from several sources confirmed my original interpretation of the bill. In short, Marshner's assertions have proven to be inaccurate.

Support among the Pro-Family Movement for Senate bill S1808, the Family Protection Act, is being directed by Robert Billings of Moral Majority. The bill provides for the funding of private schools, reduces commitments to intellectual freedom, and seriously weakens existing federal support and civil rights guarantees for public education. To set the record straight: S1808 provides for the creation of "parental schools" and makes them eligible for public funds (S1808, pp. 26-29). Academic freedom in such schools is reduced by providing that "policies of any academic institution requiring faculty to adhere or subscribe to a certain doctrinal statement or set of beliefs shall not be considered a policy of deliberate and intentional discrimination" (p. 29). Hiring teachers on the basis of religion or sex is not prohibited (p. 26).

If a parent objects to any voluntary prayer or state statute regarding voluntary prayer, that parent is denied the right of appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court (pp. 29, 30). Other provisions of the bill deny federal funds to states that don't allow voluntary prayer in public buildings (p. 2) and to states that require forced payment of dues or fees as a condition of employment for teachers (p. 3). States are to have exclusive authority to regulate attendance at public schools (p. 4), and Titles I, II, III, IV, VII, and IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 are to be repealed (p. 25).

Also, should any school become subject to legal action, the bill provides that

the courts must show that the school has "... for at least four consecutive years prior to the filing of the suit, engaged in a policy of deliberate and intentional discrimination..." (p. 27).

It seems likely that much of the bitter rhetoric about public education coming from the new and evangelical right may be designed to create a climate for passage of the Family Protection Act. Marshner claims that the Family Protection Act is "the best strategic tool available to the Pro-Family Movement... it can be used to distinguish truly pro-family politicians from those who merely mouth pro-family rhetoric" (*Conservative Digest*, May/June 1980, p. 30).

Should S1808 pass it would effectively destroy public education as it now exists. It is unlikely to pass in its present form, but similar bills have been introduced in the House, and more will follow. Educators and the public must be aware of the danger.

I regret that some of my commentary was omitted in the original publication. However, in retrospect, perhaps we have all learned a lesson about the importance of protecting the freedom of public schools during times of social stress and conflict.

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## TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

It may be futile, but a response is needed to Robert Fizzell's letter on math avoidance by teachers [May 1980].

I agree that problems in elementary mathematics education lie with poorly prepared, underprepared, and otherwise incompetent teachers. However, rather than indicting them and the schools that employ them, shouldn't some attention be directed to the institutions that present them as teaching candidates in the first place? When degreed persons seek employment as teachers with university credentials which qualify them for state certification, should we in the public schools have to examine them to see if they can divide decimals or manipulate simple fractions? Further, should we have to devise ways of assessing attitudes to assure that avoidance as well as ignorance isn't passed on to students? I think not. Teacher training institutions,

especially in the face of declining enrollments and the buyer's market in teacher employment, have the opportunity and rationale for close scrutiny of individuals admitted, to say nothing of those graduated and certified.

—PATRICIA CHRISTMAN  
Director of Instruction  
Albuquerque Public Schools  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

## WHY WORK?

Urie Bronfenbrenner was quoted, "We have created a conflict between the two most human activities people engage in. One is working and the other is raising a new generation" [Overview, March 1980]. The real problem is that work is frequently boring, nonproductive (bureaucratic), and personally meaningless.

Curriculum development should proceed from philosophy going beyond smaller issues (math avoidance, sexism, racism) to approach the issue—why work?—at its heart.

We must exhibit the nerve and sense to redirect our tremendous creative energy from reaction to action for life.

—KENNETH W. SMITH  
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Seattle, Washington

## FLAGRANT SEMICOLONS

The June 13 cover story of *Time*, "Help! Teacher Can't Teach," has convinced me to direct your attention to an example of composition usage that I fear validates *Time's* allegations about the writing competency of many educators.

In Haney's article, "Trouble Over Testing," (May 1980) a flagrant misuse of the semicolon occurs twice in column 1, page 647. It is, I assert, neither pedantic nor picayune to expect accuracy in such fundamentals of lucid writing as punctuation usage. If the error was Haney's, then surely your editorial staff should have corrected it. After all, the title of your periodical is *Educational Leadership*. Please then, lead.

—CARL A. HENDERICKSON  
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The error was not the author's; it was ours.

—THE EDITORS

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