Guest Editorial

Fred Rosenau

The argument against censorship is clear: no person should dictate our tastes, ideas, or beliefs. . . . As a work of literature, Uncle Tom's Cabin was no model, but its effect on people's ideas was tremendous. —William O. Douglas

The appearance last summer of "Limiting What Students Shall Read," a report on a survey sponsored by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, stirs up disquieting memories of the 1925 "great monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee.

In that trial, Clarence Darrow, for the defense, spoke these words:

If today you can take a thing like evolution and make it a crime to teach it in the public school, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools, and the next year you can make it a crime to teach it in the hushings or in the church. At the next session you may ban books and the newspapers. Soon you may set Catholic against Protestant and Protestant against Protestant, and try to foist your own religion upon the minds of men.

The effort to control other people's minds is very strong these days. In an article headed "A Tough Time for Textbooks," Publishers Weekly, a trade journal, reports that educational publishers "are finding themselves increasingly embattled as conservative voices are heard more clearly in the land." The article demonstrates all too clearly that protests against textbooks are nothing new. Indeed, many of the shifts and revisions have only recently been aired in detail in Frances FitzGerald's 1979 book, America Revised.

FitzGerald's analysis reminded me of my junior high school teaching days. After I had invited a local civil rights activist from the Mississippi summer project to talk to my social studies classes, a few parents became agitated. My principal invited them to come to school to meet with her and me. After we talked, the noise subsided, and in the months that followed I brought in other outsiders to express their views on then-current events. Only when the principal retired did I discover that she was a long-time member of the American Civil Liberties Union, as I was.

Banned books and controversial viewpoints continue to make news—not just in Moscow and Ho Chi Minh City, but in Baileyville, Maine, and the Island Trees (N.Y.) Union Free School District. In fact, the National Association of Secondary School Principals has filed a "friend of the court" brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in the Island Trees case in hopes of assuring that a local school board will have the legal authority to remove books from school libraries when there are substantive reasons for doing so.

Despite my concerns about censorship, I support the right of school boards to control the selection of textbooks and library books. I even agree with syndicated columnist James J. Kilpatrick's comment about Portnoy's Complaint: "It's difficult to believe that 10th-graders would be intellectually cheated, and their precious First Amendment rights grossly violated, if they were deprived of having the work immediately available in the school library."

I have never felt that every novel by every big-name author must be on the shelf of every school library. After all, public libraries appeal to all tastes, and parents can borrow—or themselves or for their teenagers—just about any title published nowadays.

Having said that, I still second Heywood Broun's observation that "there is a distinct affinity between fools and censorship. It seems to be one of those treading grounds where they rush in."

What's needed is fewer fools and more common sense. Teachers must be given the fullest academic freedom within the broad span of community norms. No one organized group should be allowed to dictate what is taught or what may be read by any individual. Every group should be continued on page 233.
preach—middle schools? This book is a welcome addition to the middle school bibliography and should be a help to both beginners and practitioners in middle school education. The Exemplary Middle School covers basic characteristics of middle school students, educational goals, educational options, program components, and organizational systems and also gives recommendations for staff preparation and implementation. The authors provide solid illustrative strategies and guidelines already developed nationally by exemplary middle schools. Available for $19.97 from Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Evaluating with Validity.
Ernest R. House.

—Reviewed by Thomas R. Hopkins, project director of the Hispanic and American Indian Higher Education Research Project, University of New Mexico, College of Education.

Those familiar with House’s writings will find very little in this book that is new. Six of the twelve chapters have been published earlier and the rest do not necessarily add new knowledge. He defines validity, “...to mean something like ‘worthiness of being recognized.’” I think that he quite properly relates education evaluation to the social-human factors rather than to the hard sciences. He certainly does not exclude quantitative argument but qualifications it with the dictum that it, “should always be used in conjunction with human judgment and that human judgment should be given the superior position.”

There are a few theoretical discussions on education evaluation per se, which is why this volume is appropriate for use in courses pertaining to assessment of education activities.

Available for $9.95 from Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212.

The School/Work Nexus: Transition of Youth From School to Work.
Eli Ginzberg.

—Reviewed by Lowell Horton, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

In the early sixties, James Conant found American society oblivious to the “social dynamite” inherent in the inadequate education and large scale unemployment of ghetto youth. The problem of Black teenage unemployment is still with us. In addition, government statistics show that each year approximately 800,000 young people in the country reach working age inadequately prepared for work and adult responsibilities. Many will remain unemployed or marginal workers throughout their lives unless educators, politicians and a concerned community intervene to assist them in effecting a linkage to the world of work.

Eli Ginzberg examines why the transition from school to work is relatively smooth for some young people and exceedingly difficult for others. He assesses realistic options available to an affluent and concerned democracy for smoothing the path of those young people who are encountering the major problems.

Available for $5 from Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Eighth Street and Union Avenue, Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

JUDITH WALKER DE FELIX
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The need for professionals with linguistic and cultural competence will increase in the years ahead. Business and government agencies are already recruiting bilingual professionals for other occupations. Our programs give the schools a chance to recognize the work of bilingual teachers and keep them in the classroom.

References


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able to make its views known and to have those ideas judged openly in the marketplace of ideas.

Concerned parents should be encouraged to make their views known, in writing, following formal school district procedures. But there’s a vast difference between a concerned, responsible parent and a crackpot, self-appointed censor who doesn’t live in the community and is not a tax-paying parent there. School administrators, librarians, and teachers should be able to listen critically to the comments of both and then judge what actions are appropriate to the nature and intent of the challenge.