

Selection Guidelines or Censorship

One of the hottest issues in the textbook controversy is: Who controls the education of children, parents or schools? When 11 books were removed by the Island Trees School District because they contained material “offensive to Christians, Jews, blacks and Americans in general,” the *New York Teacher* remarked that this act “is regarded by the teachers as an outrageous incursion on academic freedom and a clear contract violation.”¹ According to the *New York Times*, “Ira Glasser, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said that the Island Trees ban was part of a recent ‘epidemic of book censorship’ in New York and 11 other states directed by ‘self-appointed vigilantes’ who do not have the ‘insight to understand their educational mission.’”²

When newspapers report on controversial textbooks, their standards do not permit them to print the language children are forced to read in schools. Many parents, therefore, receive a distorted view of the issues. They hear charges of censorship and attacks on academic freedom, but often they are not fully aware of what is really said in these controversial books. With great hesitation I included the profanity found in various books. But if children are required to read such school material, I finally reasoned then parents should know what is in today’s books so they can make intelligent decisions as to whether they want their children reading it.

Controversial Books

Following are excerpts from two books that Island Trees school board members believed should not be school material:

When the plane was safely aloft, the machine that was Billy’s father-in-law asked the quartet to sing his favorite song. They knew what song he meant, and they sang it, and it went like this:

In my prison cell I sit,
With my britches full of shit,
And my balls are bouncing gently on the floor.
And I see the bloody snag
When she bit me in the bag.
Oh, I’ll never fuck a Polack any more.

In the same book Billy visits a Times Square bookstore:

Billy was mildly curious as to what could possibly have been kept hidden in such a place. The clerk leered and showed him. It was a photograph of a woman and a Shetland pony. They were attempting to have sexual intercourse between two Doric columns, in front of velvet draperies which were fringed with deedlee-balls. (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse Five*)³

Now there is one thing I want to tell you that is directly related to this. To be sure, I have never understood it and I don't believe that I ever will. But I have seen it work and it may be that you brothers can understand it, and it may prove useful to you, it may help you to make it. There is a sickness in the white that lies at the core of their madness and this sickness makes them act in many different ways. But there is one way it makes some of them act that seems to contradict everything we know about whitey and shakes many blacks up when they first encounter it. . . . There are white men who will pay you to fuck their wives. They approach you and say, 'How would you like to fuck a white woman?' 'What is this?' you ask. 'On the up and-up,' he assures you. 'It's all right. She's my wife. She needs black rod, is all. She has to have it. It's like a medicine or drug to her. She has to have it. I'll pay you. It's all on the level, no trick involved. Interested?'" (Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*)⁴

New Standards

No wonder those school officials were upset: racial slur ("Polack"), human and animal sex, and the disgusting lie that there is a sickness in the white race that black sex can cure. The standards for today's authors of children's books have been drastically changed. Jane Yolen, author of thirty-five books, teacher, and lecturer on writing children's books, has received numerous awards and honors for her work. In the professional magazine the *Writer*, Yolen presents these instructions for people who plan to write children's books:

Don't get mired in that deepest kind of quicksand, belief in the *taboo*. There are no longer any taboos in children's books,

except that of bad taste. (And depending upon your taste, you might say that even that has fallen by the wayside.) What was once not even whispered in the parlor, and only snickered at in the barroom, is now legitimate fare for young readers.

The old-fashioned view that certain things should be taboo for children simply because they are young is no longer in style. Librarians, who are often caricatured as conservative, accept this, too. . . . So all the deadly sins, plus sex, death, drugs, drunkenness, divorce, poverty, hunger all have become the subjects of children's books.⁵

Take the book *Go Ask Alice*, which the Island Trees school board also wanted removed from their high school library, as an example of why so many parents are upset. This book is an actual diary about a middle-class 15-year-old drug user who ran away twice from home. The book ends with her desire to go straight; however, three weeks after she decided to stop writing her diary, her parents found her dead at home from unexplained causes. Here are some excerpts children will read from this book:

What a fantastic, unbelievable, expanding, thrilling week I've had. It's been like, wow—the greatest thing that has ever happened. Remember I told you I had a date with Bill? Well he introduced me to torpedoes on Friday and Speed on Sunday. They are both like riding shooting stars through the Milky Way, only a million, trillion times better.

Tranquilizers are the greatest.

Then Richie showed me how to smoke, Richie told me to suck in open-mouthed gulps to mix as much air in as possible. And I was so relaxed! I don't think I've been that relaxed in my whole entire l i f e! It was really beautiful.

Richie is so good, good, good to me and sex with him is like lightning and rainbows and springtime.

I don't mind pushing at high school because the stuff is sometimes kind of hard to get and the kids usually come up and ask me for it. Chris and I just supply it from Richie. He can get whatever is their bag, barbs or pot or amphetamines or LSD or DMT or meth or anything.

The goddamned rain is even worse than yesterday. It's like the whole sky is pissing on us. I tried to go out once, but my

cold is so bad I was chilled to my ass before I'd even gotten to the goddamned corner.

I feel awfully bitched and pissed off at everybody. I'm really confused. I've been the digger here, but now when I face a girl it's like facing a boy. I get all excited and turned-on. I want to screw with the girl, you know, and then I get all tensed-up and scared, I feel goddamned good in a way and goddamned bad in a way.

Another day, another blow job. The fuzz has clamped down till the town is mother dry. If I don't give Big Ass a blow he'll cut off my supply. Hell, I'm shaking on the inside more than I'm shaking on the outside. What a bastard world without drugs!⁶

Furious Parents

Reading "literature" like this makes many parents furious. We must understand that it is not parents creating the disturbance, but overzealous educators and publishers endeavoring to destroy the traditional moral system and force a new set of social values upon children. The determination of educational leaders to have children read vile books has created this backlash of public opinion.

One of the excuses used by those who support vile books is: "You don't understand the book because you have never read it through." With that they try to silence the critics; but it does not take much insight, after reading some excerpts, to tell whether school children should have a diet of such material. "But it's true and relevant—it pictures the world like it is," is another excuse. The fact that something is true or relevant does not mean schools have the license to make it available. Should schools include books on *How Successful Pimps Operate*; *Crime and Drugs—The Way to Wealth*; *How to Destroy Schools*; *Sexual Experiments: Detailed Illustration on Ultimate Sexual Satisfaction*?

Parents are becoming increasingly angry because of what is transpiring in schools. They want their parental rights respected in what is made available for their children. They want books that will build strong minds and inspire their children to wholesome living. However, many administrators take the position that they, as professionals, should determine curriculum content. William P. Haubner of the Teacher-Rights Division, National Education Association, has expressed it this way: "Selection and presentation of materials falls within the purview of the profession. You don't tell a carpenter which saw or grade of wood to use. If you let inexperienced, unsophisticated, unknowing people make the

decisions, teaching quality will be impaired.”⁷

Much of what Haubner says is true. Nevertheless, though the buyer does not tell the carpenter how to build his house, he does tell him what he expects as a finished product. Parents should not enter classrooms and tell teachers how they should teach, but they do have a *right* to demand that their children leave school properly educated, disciplined, and without having their moral standards ridiculed and destroyed.

Normally, if a carpenter does poor work, one seeks another. When parents send their children to public school, however, most have no alternative except to spend thousands of dollars for private education. Since not everyone can afford private schools, parents are forced to send their children to public schools. Furthermore, these schools belong to the taxpaying public, and it is the public’s right to insist that educational procedures properly train children.

Selection Guidelines

Since there are forces determined to undermine the traditional American way of life and to impose their degenerate concepts upon children, there should be definite guidelines to protect community standards. Such guidelines should:

(1) Forbid material encouraging racial hatred, profanity, criminal behavior, drugs, sexual promiscuity, and religious animosity.

(2) Promote the generally accepted standards of proper English, good citizenship, patriotism, the common values of our historical heritage, and the laws of the land.

The Texas Board of Education issued a set of guidelines that put publishers on notice that world history textbooks “shall depict the role of the United States in world history in a positive manner.” The publishers were also ordered to explain in the developments of the 20th century “the positive aspects and effects of American capitalism upon the world” and the “hardships of life under both fascist and communist dictatorships.”⁸

With properly enacted guidelines, educators will have ample academic freedom to choose textbooks. Some educators, however, object that guidelines will halt effective education and limit academic freedom. They should realize that only because educational leaders have violated the normal parental trust in schools are such guidelines needed. It is rather strange that educators’ choice of books is called a legitimate selection process defending academic freedom, whereas when parents object they are said to be imposing censorship. Where is the parents’ academic

freedom to help determine the type of books for their children? In all fairness, who has more rights, parents, or educators who teach children a few hours a day?

George Weber, a former editor for the *Council for Basic Education Bulletin*, says, “Traditionally, professionals were content to stay out of controversial areas in the classroom and to permit the schools to reflect community values. If they were not content with this position, they were at least reconciled to it, since school authorities usually insisted upon it. Today, some professionals feel that it is their duty or right to change the values and attitudes of children and young people ‘for the better’—in whatever way the professionals define ‘better.’”⁹

One objector to parental decisions said, “Censorship imposes a value system on students.” True! So does our Constitution. America does have a value system, and many parents are violently opposed to its destruction.

Jeffrey St. John, writing in the Tacoma News Tribune, reports:

The National Educational Association (NEA) is the major proponent of a humanistic educational philosophy. It is viewing this revolt in Charleston and other states over content of textbooks as the first serious challenge to its power and control to determine content without consent of parents. NEA has managed to convince the business community and the government of this state that the issue is one of book burners vs. enlightened education.

In reality, however, it is a conflict between the authoritarian educational establishment and angry, confused parents who are fast realizing that they have increasingly little control over their children once they are forced by law to send their children to public school.

The educational establishment as represented by NEA is confronted with a demand from parents in the urban, suburban, and now rural areas like Appalachia that education must cease being a privileged elitist sanctuary and open its door to the demands of parents for democratization. This parental demand is particularly ironic since NEA has consistently asserted that its educational credo is to serve democracy.¹⁰

When George Gallup asked, “When parents object to books or material in textbooks on grounds of religion, politics, or race or sex discrimination, how much consideration should be given to the parents’

views in deciding whether to keep these books in the school?” 5 percent did not reply, and only 7 percent replied, “None.”¹¹ If 88 percent of the parents want their views to be considered in controversial subjects, where is democratic justice when leaders take such a strong arbitrary stand that teachers should be the sole determiners of the textbooks used?

Censorship

William Murchison, associate editor for the *Dallas Morning News*, reported a controversial Texas textbook adoption meeting:

A great commotion arose in Austin last week as the state textbook committee met to choose public school textbooks. You might have supposed a horde of Klansmen, with tattoos and sloping foreheads, to have been marching on Texas, spreading desolation and illiberality as they went.

The commotion was all about book-burning. The Texas literary establishment sees the bonfires flickering again. “We are living,” writes Kaye Northcott of the Texas Literary Institute, “in the worst era of censorship since the McCarthy days.” You always know, when the horrific name of McCarthy is brought up, that the subject is a grave one.

If the Gablers went around incinerating textbooks, they would make broad and convincing targets. But they do nothing of the kind. They merely insist that textbooks reflect the community’s basic norms—such norms anyway as the Gablers *hope* the community affirms.

At the Austin read-in much merry sport was made of the Gablers’ objections to “open-ended (classroom) discussion,” wherein students are left to pursue their own intuitions about complex social issues. If I read the Gablers rightly, their objection is not to intellectual inquiry—it is to putting young minds ashore on strange islands devoid of recognizable landmarks and guideposts.

Miss Northcott submits that “a free society depends on a vigorous and uninhibited exchange of ideas.” I, as a First Amendment man, hereby declare that she is bang on.

But whatever way all men were created, all ideas manifestly weren’t created equal. Some ideas (e.g., democracy) are infinitely better than others (e.g., Marxism). A public school is a public

institution, supported by public tax money. It has the right, indeed the duty, to take stands—to come down firmly on the side of such ideas as the community finds truthful and nourishing.¹²

Mel Gabler brings this interesting insight to the censorship problem:

CENSORSHIP is an issue. Textbooks have been heavily censored BEFORE reaching classrooms.

(1) CENSORED of cheerful, kind, encouraging, or uplifting content.

(2) CENSORED of content favorable to our free economic system.

(3) CENSORED of most of the benefits of our Nation.

(4) CENSORED of the greatness of our Nation's founders.

(5) CENSORED of absolute values, such as morality.

Then Gabler adds, "This censorship has NOT been by concerned parents. REPEAT, not by protesting parents."¹³

Censorship has become such a loaded word that anyone declaring belief in censorship conjures up visions of demented intellectual misfits. But what is censorship? It is simply the act of forbidding the use of certain objectionable materials. Every responsible individual believes in censorship. Anyone claiming that naked children pictured in pornographic magazines should not be published or used in schools believes in censorship. The basic issue, therefore, is not censorship versus noncensorship; it is, rather, by what standard should books be censored or selected?

(I've written the book, *Character Under Attack and What You Can Do About It*, ©2006. It clearly reveals how books promoting virtues were censored. The book is available free on our website under "Free Resources.")

Evolution vs. Scientific Creationism

Amazingly, though educational leaders demand academic freedom for themselves and are extremely liberal in regard to discipline, rights of children, morals, sex, and knowledge in general, for years they have strongly censored the concept of scientific creationism as a viable alternative to the theory of evolution. Dr. Henry M. Morris, director of the Institute for Creation Research, San Diego, California, who has taught

in five major universities, is a popular lecturer and debater for special creation, and has written 22 books, says:

When creationist parents object to the exclusive teaching of evolution in the public schools, they are usually informed that all scientists are evolutionists and that their belief in creation is based solely on religious faith in the book of Genesis.

Both statements are wrong. There are today thousands of qualified scientists who do not believe in evolution (over 500 in the Creation Research Society alone) and the number is increasing rapidly.

As far as religious faith is concerned, evolution requires a higher degree of faith in events which are unobservable, unprovable, and unreasonable than does creation. . . . There is definitely no scientific proof of evolution, and all the available scientific data fit at least as well (and usually better) in the creation model. Consequently, by all standards of academic freedom, civil rights, and scientific objectivity, the creation model ought to be accepted on at least an equal basis with the evolutionary philosophy in all our public schools and other tax-supported institutions.

If the evolutionist objects that the concept of a Creator is itself “religious,” he should be reminded that the concept of no creator is equally religious. Atheism requires a much higher degree of faith than creationism, since it negates the fundamental scientific law of cause-and-effect.

Naturalistic evolutionism requires its followers to believe that randomly moving particles of primeval matter had the ability and knowledge to develop a complex universe of living organisms, and even to evolve intelligent creatures who could exercise faith in evolution! Creationism at least postulates a first cause which is competent to explain such effects.¹⁴

Dorothy Nelkin writes in the *Scientific American* about, “The Science-Textbook Controversies.” She states: “Most textbook controversies issue not from rural folk in Appalachia but from middle-class citizens, many of whom are technically trained.” She says further, “It is not accurate to dismiss the critics of science textbooks as being merely an antiscience fringe group.”¹⁵ The fact is that creationists’ basic argument is scientific—they claim that an unbiased scientific examination of fossils and living

evidences supports special creation, not evolution.

In 1925 Clarence Darrow faced William Jennings Bryan in the famous Scopes trial in order to defend the right to teach evolution. Ironically, more than half a century later, groups in many states are now defending their right to teach scientific creationism.

Attorney Wendell R. Bird prepared a resolution for a “Balanced Presentation of Evolution and Scientific Creationism,” stating “The theory of special creation is an alternative model of origins at least as satisfactory as the theory of evolution, and that theory of special creation can be presented from a strictly scientific standpoint without reference to religious doctrine.” He points out that “school districts in at least five states are currently teaching both theories of origins or are implementing instruction in both theories.”¹⁶

Objectors to scientific creationism try to claim separation of church and state to support their insistence on a strict evolutionary teaching of origins. Supporters of creationism, however, reject the view that special creation is uniting church and state. They claim: (1) They are not proposing to teach a Genesis account of creation. (2) Creationism is as scientific as evolution. (3) Thousands of qualified scientists and professionals are adherents of the theory. (4) They do not forbid the study of evolution; their desire is equal time to expose students to a two-model approach to origins to enable students to make an intelligent choice between evolution and creationism.

ACLU has been in the forefront of the battle to eradicate any trace of scientific creationism in public schools. However, one of its lawyers, Robert F. Smith, after closely following creationist literature, lectures, and debates for five years, made this frank confession:

Based solely on the scientific arguments pro and con, I have been forced to conclude that scientific creationism is not only a viable theory, but that it has achieved parity with (if not superiority over) the normative theory of biological evolution. . . . Creationists have been scrupulous to adhere to strict discussion of science alone. Not religion! Statements to the contrary are false.

Contrary to the allegations. . . no creationist professors are seeking to “require public schools to offer courses and textbooks that support the literal Genesis account of creation.” Nor can it be legitimately suggested that scientific creationists are “disguising

fundamentalist religion in scientific jargon,” or that they are working for some covert “advancement of sectarian religion.”¹⁷

Dr. John N. Moore, professor of natural science at Michigan State University, taught evolution, but upon reexamination of facts rejected evolution for creationism. As a result of his studies, he began to collect material on theistic creation. “Now hundreds of references have been acquired,” he says, “indicating that reputable scientists in each decade since Darwin’s book was published have been critical of evolution.” Moore then asks this puzzling question: “Why didn’t my professors inform me of that when I was an undergraduate in college?”¹⁸

When the American people were asked in an Associated Press- NBC News poll whether public schools should teach both the scientific theory of evolution and the biblical view of creation, 76 percent voted for both theories; only 8 percent favored the strictly scientific theory.¹⁹

Creationism Censored

“Three high school biology textbooks,” reports the *New York Times*, “have been rejected for use in the New York City public schools because of what Board of Education officials say is an inadequate treatment of the Darwinian theory of evolution.

“The publishers of two of the three books have been told that their books are additionally unacceptable because of what school officials termed an uncritical endorsement of the creationism theory, which is based on the Bible.” Following are excerpts which caused the New York Board to “reject” these books:

Another hypothesis about the creation of the universe with all its life forms is special creation, which gives God the critical role in creation. In some school systems, it is mandated that the evolution and special-creation theories be taught side by side. That seems a healthy attitude in view of the tenuous nature of hypothesis. (*Natural Science: Bridging the Gap*, Burgess Publishing Company, Minneapolis.)

Some people believe that evolution explains the diversity of organisms on earth. Some people do not believe in evolution.

These people believe that the various types of organisms were created as they appear. No one knows for sure how the many

different kinds of living things came to be. But many people have developed theories to explain how this diversity may have come about. (*Life Science*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood, N.J.)²⁰

Educational leaders have for decades eliminated facts that contradict the theory of evolution and censored scientific creationism. Now when parents object that textbooks promote anti-Americanism, religious mockery, racial slurs, profanity, drugs, and immoral sex, they cry suppression of academic freedom.

Protesters of today's textbooks are not on some witch-hunt trying to impose sectarian beliefs. These parents are not listening to the cries of suppression of academic freedom; they are demanding *responsible* academic freedom. They are greatly disturbed that educational leaders have used public schools as forums to censor our historical, social, and cultural values in order to reshape student behavior. Many parents believe that society, particularly the schools, should uphold high ethical, moral, and civic standards and not descend in the name of relevancy to the baser elements of our culture; these parents want proper selection guidelines. Since the Supreme Court has recognized the right of communities to establish their own standards for materials, parents are demanding their rights by insisting that teachers be provided with textbooks that will build, not destroy, our heritage.