

Appropriate Books Sought by Educator in Slum Area

By FREDERICK H. TRESH
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Steve spent Sunday evening with Diane and Biff at their house. They played ping-pong and knock hockey. Steve left at nine because he wanted to be in bed early. He wanted to get plenty of rest so that he'd be in good condition for the game on Thursday.

On the way home he passed Wilma's house. All the lights in her apartment were on. He saw couples dancing. He could hear a record player blaring. Suddenly in the distance Steve heard the wail of a siren. In a few minutes three squad cars pulled up in front of Wilma's house.

"It's a raid!" Steve thought. He watched the policemen go into the house. After a while, they came back with several teenagers. Steve recognized some of the boys from the gang. Wilma was brought out last. She was struggling and kicking. It took two policemen to get her into the car. "Wow!" Steve thought to himself. "I wonder what happened."

Misses School

Willie was absent from school on Monday. Before school began on Tuesday, Steve saw him in the school yard. He told Willie that he'd seen the raid. He asked him what had happened.

"Somebody tipped the cops off," Willie said, "and told them that we were smoking reefers. I was in court all day yesterday but the judge let me go free because it was my first offense. Wilma and a couple of the fellows from the gang got sent away."

"You were smoking reefers?" Steve explained. "I only took one puff." Willie replied. "You took one puff too many," Steve told him. Does the story above sound

as if it were from a book of pulp fiction?

It's not. It's a chapter from a junior high school textbook. It was written by a New York City school teacher who is angry and frustrated at the lack of available texts which:

Lists Books Need

1. Are comprehensible by teenagers who read only at the grade school level.
2. Depict city life realistically and deal with subjects which can be related to by students who have never seen a farm or a suburban split level, children whose father isn't Anglo-Saxon, doesn't carry a briefcase and doesn't catch the 8:09 train to the office.

The teacher is Richard H. Turner, who teaches in a slum area "blackboard jungle" where there are serious academic and disciplinary troubles. The academic climate isn't very nice, but what really ranks Turner is that the available educational material is wholly unsuitable to his "culturally deprived" charges.

The problem is this: The students don't read well enough to use standard texts for their age group. And by reducing the reading level of texts, you come down to grade school "Come, Spot, come" or "See Dick run" books which worldly wise teenagers reject as kids stuff.

Different Mores
Aggravating the situation is the racial and ethnic background of the slum district school population which fails to relate to, or even rejects, books depicting happy, Anglo-Saxon, middle class, suburban, home-owning families.

As Turner puts it: "Our crying need has been for texts which combined a low reading level with a high interest level, and at the same time fulfilled our curriculum

requirements. And since the teenagers we teach have difficulty relating to the kind of life which is glowingly and unrealistically depicted in standard texts, still another of our needs has been texts which do depict the kind of life to which they can relate."

The problems which Turner and thousands of other big city teachers are confronted with daily are beginning to gain attention as potential national disasters if remedial steps are not taken soon.

A report of the Educational Policies commission, issued last April, warned America's cities that unless they find a way to better educate "culturally deprived" persons half their residents in 1970 will be "ignorant, incompetent, mal-adjusted charges of the community."

The so-called "culturally deprived" children in the United States now number several million. Large numbers of them are Negroes recently moved from the South but there are Puerto Ricans new to the mainland and "hillbillies," rural whites mainly

from the South, moving in large numbers to Chicago, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Detroit and other cities of the mid-west. In the southwest and west there are the Mexicans. In short, the problem of educating these disadvantaged youngsters is real and immediate in at least 10 or 12 major cities.

"Those of us on the firing line (in slum district classrooms) are fighting the culture of the country," said Turner. "The Negroes, the Puerto Ricans... these kids are left out. They're left out of books, they're left out of television, they're left out of movies, except in a distorted way. They're angry, and I guess I'm angry with them."

Writes New Books
Turner, launching a one-man counter-attack against the problem generally, wrote a series of six paper-back textbooks for use at the Junior High-Senior High level.

They are designed to meet the students' pre-employment needs in the areas of reading, personal finance, social problems encountered on the job

and in other personal relationships.

The series, known as the Turner-Livingston Reading series (New York University Press), is written at fifth grade level in a dialogue style. They treat city life realistically and avoid a preaching approach to social attitudes.

Because they are aimed at students from a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds, the books avoid pictures of people, a retreat from the "blue-eyed blonde" approach of standard texts.

But if the style and approach of Turner's books are unusual, some of his subject matter is outright controversial. He knew it would be, but he wrote it that way for a reason. He writes about such things as steady dating, cigarette smoking and narcotics addiction along with topics of a more conventional nature.

Students Drink
"These kids are 13 to 17 years old. They drink, smoke and play cards," Turner said. "Some educators objected to my reference to steady dating, but to these kids steady

dating is the very height of morality."

The six books are titled and deal with these life experience areas: "The Person You Are," "The Family You Belong To," "The Friends You Make," "The Town You Live In," "The Job You Get," "The Money You Spend."

Turner says his books are far from a solution to the task of teaching secondary students who can barely read. But they're a step-one of the few in the right direction, he believes.

Combines Talents

Turner combines in his textbook writing personal experience in the classroom and as a professional writer. He authored several television scripts, including "Snow Job," starring Joan Blondell on Playwrights '56 and "Once A Horseplayer," produced by the Rheingold Theater.

He also has acted in, directed and produced plays in resident theaters and summer stock in several east coast cities.

Turner, 42, who has taught

in "difficult" schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens

since World War II, hopes writing textbooks specifically soon to devote full time to for city school use.



NOT LIKE HOME — Terry O'Neill, 17, Alaska's entry in the 1963 Miss America's Junior Miss Pageant, is a bit puzzled by the balmy weather in Mobile, Ala. She found her parka was quite out of place in the 80 degree weather and switched to more comfortable bermuda shorts. Her home is in Fort Richardson, Alaska. (UPI)

Exchange of Letters Indicate Problem Facing Dr. Rafferty

Happy Camp — An indication of the rocky road that lies ahead of Dr. Max Rafferty, elected superintendent of public instruction in California last November, has become apparent here following an exchange of letters between Dr. Rafferty and John H. Sugden Jr., superintendent of the Happy Camp Union Elementary School district.

Late in February, Dr. Rafferty sent a form letter to the presidents of school boards in California offering suggestions in three general areas: better reading instruction, devoting more time for subject matter in schools, and the question of whether history, geography, and civics should be labeled separately or grouped together under the label of "social studies."

The letter drew a lengthy reply from Superintendent Sugden, who voiced the opinion that California schools are already doing well in the first two areas, and then disputed Dr. Rafferty's reasoning on the matter of social studies.

Contract Expires
Sugden concluded his reply with this remark: "My contract expires on June 30, 1963, and if you are interested in the position, I suggest you apply through proper channels."

"In the meantime, I am the district superintendent of schools in this district and I plan to, as I have in the past, exercise these responsibilities to the fullest."

Dr. Rafferty's first suggestion to the state's school board presidents was that they see if their teachers are using an essentially phonics approach to reading instruction.

Sugden replied that he felt

if Dr. Rafferty were to open the doors of most primary classrooms in California and walk in he would find the phonic approach already in widespread use "as well as other proven and successful methods."

More Advice Given
Dr. Rafferty's second piece of advice for school board presidents urged them to "see how much time is being spent in the classroom collecting money for worthy causes, taking the lunchroom count, listening to administrative announcements over the public address system and excusing the pupils to go to assemblies or athletic contests."

Sugden replied, "I am aware of the time misspent in classrooms and have been for sometime. I am constantly on guard against misused time as are other California schools."

"Calling a Spade a Spade" was the title of Dr. Rafferty's third suggestion. He said, "I am going to be doing my level best during the next four years to urge schools to teach history as straight history—and call it history." He decried the idea of "mixing" history, geography and civics together

under the title of social studies. "I've found that when you try to teach these things all mixed up together, the children end up the same way," he remarked.

Sugden's reply stated that when he was in school, history, geography and civics were rote taught with no emphasis placed on their meaning or interrelationship.

"Someone felt that for better understanding and because of their interdependence, they should be grouped and studied together for more meaning," Sugden said. "This grouping was then called 'social studies' which, by your terms, is like calling a spade a heart."

"Now I am sure that neither you nor I want California schools to go back to rote learning for history or geography or civics. So what you really want is for us to stop calling a spade a heart and start calling it a diamond or a club. Frankly, I don't care what you call it. I'm only interested in teaching all these subjects to children in a meaningful way."

Addressed to Board
Referring to the fact that Dr. Rafferty addressed the letter to school board presidents rather than superintendents, Sugden remarked, "Long ago many of us recognized, as should you, that improvement of instruction comes from improvement of teaching, not by school boards and other lay people spying or tearing down the existing system, even if it does need change and improvement. Change and improvement are continual processes like education itself."

Ironically, Sugden once lived in La Canada, in southern California, where Dr. Rafferty last served before being elected state superintendent. Sugden was graduated from La Canada Elementary school in 1941. Dr. Rafferty served as superintendent of the newly unified La Canada school district in 1962.

Atiyeh Attacks Musa's Views on Tax Proposals

Salem —UPI— A blistering attack on Senate President Ben Musa's tax views was issued today by Rep. Victor Atiyeh (R-Portland), sponsor of Gov. Mark Hatfield's tax bills.

Musa said that Oregon's income tax should be a fixed percentage of the federal income tax for the sake of simplicity.

Atiyeh termed Musa's statement an "eleventh hour desperation pronouncement" that "contributes nothing but discord to the working relations of the two tax committees."

Musa, when advised of Atiyeh's attack, said "it's unfortunate he didn't talk to me about it." Musa said that when he made the suggestion he said it might be the way to collect taxes, but he did not call for such action at this time.

Self-Promotion Charged
The Portland Republican charged Musa was attempting to "promote himself... at the expense of both parties who have worked long hours on the serious problem of taxation."

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