AMERICA WAKE UP, Broadcast No. 50

YOU CAN TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ

ANNOUNCER: AMERICA WAKE UP, in cooperation with the Daughters of the American Revolution, State of Illinois, presents Phyllis Schlafly:

MRS. SCHLAFLY: One of our most popular television programs is "Meet the Press". When Admiral Rickover was the guest and his topic was "What is wrong with our schools?", "Meet the Press" received more favorable fan letters than for any program in its entire 15-year history. Since then there have been many other manifestations of the growing concern in America about elementary education.

This year, one of our largest women's magazines, the LADIES' HOME JOURNAL, published a sensational article entitled "You Can Teach Your Baby to Read". The thesis of this remarkable article is that: "The teaching of reading gets harder every year. If your child is five, it will be easier (to teach him to read) than it will be when he is six. Four is easier still." And if you are willing to go to the trouble, you can begin even earlier!

The need for parents to teach their children to read is shown by the continued appearance of a quarter-page advertisement in many newspapers. It pictures a worried and discouraged child bent over a book. The headline says: "If your child is a poor reader -- See how phonics can help him." The text makes clear the necessity of phonics as the key to reading, and offers a home course any family can easily use.

For the last generation, parents have been misled by the slogan: "Leave education to the educators." This slogan has convinced parents that education is such a complicated matter that they can't possibly understand it or cope with the needs and problems of their own children, and, therefore, education should be left completely in the

hands of the professionals. As a result, parents spend all their time caring for the material and physical needs of their children, providing them with spending money, transporting them hither and yon, seeing that they have the right clothes to wear and the right food to eat -- but parents have divorced themselves from the most exciting and important part, the feeding and developing of their children's minds. What has been the result of leaving elementary education wholly in the hands of the professionals?

Every fall, millions of five and six year olds start to school, eager to learn to read. Three months later, they are bored and disorderly, for they still haven't started to learn. Instead, they have been subjected to a lot of boring, unnecessary and repetitious exercises, caused by the myth called "reading readiness". Normal, healthy children are kept sitting in first-grade classrooms playing with blocks or coloring for months, because it has been decreed, on the basis of inaccurate, misleading tests, that they lack a magic something called "reading readiness". The reasons why a child may lack "readiness" are silly and contradictory; they include: because they are too young emotionally, because they have too few or too many brothers and sisters, too much or too little television, or too much or too little sleep. Thousands of children every fall are cheated of their right to learn because they are not supposed to be ready. Any normal six year old child is ready to learn to read. All he needs is for the school to be ready to teach him.

When, at long last, the child has acquired "reading readiness", he is subjected to volume after volume of boring, repetitious, stupid books, in which the child is taught to memorize a few dozen words by guessing at them from the picture on the page. This is called the "whole-word" or "look-and-say" method. The poor child is inflicted

with endless pages of "Look up, Look up, Look down, Look down, Quack, Quack, said the duck", and similar nauseating nonentities. Three years later, many children still cannot read, and many more cannot read well. They limp along from year to year, frustrated and discouraged. When they get to high school, they have had so many years of what is called the "controlled vocabulary" that they cannot read the classics, so they are fed great literature which is briefed and rewritten in the vocabulary of the elementary grades.

When we begin to examine how this breakdown in learning to read came about, we find that it is one of the results of the movement known as "progressive education". This is a general term which has come to mean the educational theories which flowed from John Dewey and his disciples, and which resulted in the elimination of standards, values and discipline. The Dewey theory is that there is no such thing as right and wrong, there are no absolutes, discipline must give way to a "permissive" attitude toward the child, and standards of achievement must be replaced by "life adjustment" education. This means that, no matter how disorderly the classroom, no matter how decadent the community morals or irreligious its atmosphere, the chief purpose of education is to accomodate the child to the group. This is called "educating the whole child."

This has been carried to such a ridiculous extreme that in one British school, children from 5 to 16 were allowed to smoke in class. The teacher defended this on the ground that: "We are producing sociable, self-reliant children, untroubled by hidden fears." Fortunately, progressive education did not reach this extreme in America. However, in our country the failure to teach mental and moral discipline has resulted in disorderly classrooms of undisciplined ruffians and widespread juvenile delinquency. The book called UNDERCOVER TEACHER by George N. Allen shows how bad this situation is in New York

schools.

The easiest way to prove to yourself what has happened to elementary education is to get the old McGuffey readers which our grandparents studied in the little red schoolhouse, and compare them with any of the modern readers such as the widely-used "Dick and Jane" or "Alice and Jerry" series. Two facts are immediately apparent:

(1) The McGuffey readers teach morals. Every story teaches some old-fashioned virtue, such as love of God, patriotism, thrift, honesty, respect for elders, where there's a will there's a way, the golden rule, true courage, manliness, kindess to the less fortunate, obedience to parents, the value of prayer, the consequences of idleness and truancy, why virtue and love are worth more than material riches, and many other moral lessons. Religious faith and family love are basic to McGuffey. McGuffey also teaches an appreciation of literature, poetry and history.

The modern readers, on the other hand, are as different as day and night. Dick, Jane, Alice and Jerry do nothing but run and play; they look up and they look down; they hear the duck quack and the cat meow. But their lives are utterly devoid of the standards, the values, the morals, the inspiration and the ideals of the McGuffey characters.

(2) The McGuffey readers are about two years advanced over the modern readers at the same grade level. The comparison proves that we have suffered a deliberate slowdown in reading and all the related skills, including vocabulary, spelling, writing, comprehension, pronunciation, grammar, and especially in intellectual and spiritual content. Our children simply cannot read the stories our grandfathers read at a corresponding age. The first grade McGuffey reader, for example, uses more than three times the vocabulary of the first grade

"Dick and Jane" reader. Can it be that our grandparents, in the one-room schoolhouse, with wooden stools and little heat in winter, got a better education than our own children in their fancy new buildings, with gymnasiums and cafeterias?

Several years ago, many good books began to be published which explain what has happened to modern education. THE RIGHT TO LEARN by educator Glenn McCracken shows in detail what is wrong with elementary education. BENDING THE TWIG by Colonel Augustin G. Rudd gives a documented, readable analysis of progressive education.

The book which shook the educational world when it became an overnight best-seller was WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ by Rudolf Flesch. This remarkable book cut through the semantic fog and explained in simple language how and why the schools have failed in their principal duty, that of teaching our children to read. Mr. Flesch showed the fallacies of the "whole-word", "look-and-say" primers about Dick and Jane and Alice and Jerry. He showed that, when the whole-word method came in, phonics went out the window, and children cannot be taught to read without phonics. He recommended that parents teach their children to read at home when the school falls down on the job. He suggested using READING WITH PHONICS by May and Wingo. The latest advertising brochure for this phonics primer makes this boast: "Any normal child can finish the first grade with the reading competence of at least one full grade above today's accepted national reading norm!" From experience with my own children, I know this is true.

Since these books appeared, the term "progressive education" has gone out of use, although the methods remain under new names! Most schools today insist that they do use phonics. This can be a half or quarter truth to deceive the parents. Usually, if taught at all, phonics is taught only in a limited way, or as a separate subject,

or not until the second or third grade after the child has learned a lot of bad reading habits.

The problem is not with our teachers, most of whom are hard-working and conscientious. They, just as much as the children, are the victims of the system which is imposed on them, and the texts that are put into their hands. Far-sighted educators believe that parents should reassume a major responsibility for the education of their children. For example, Dr. Willis D. Nutting, in his book SCHOOLS AND THE MEANS OF EDUCATION, specifically advocates that mothers teach their children to read at home.

Not only can this be done with success in any average home, but it is one of the most thrilling and rewarding experiences any parent can have. Parents teach their children to ride a bike, to roller-skate, to play baseball, to dance, to cook, to sew, to drive a car, and many other skills. Why not teach your child to read -- the most important skill of all, and give him the key to future learning. You will find this the most rewarding experience of all.

ANNOUNCER: The Daughters of the American Revolution promote citizenship training and the study of American Government and institutions through national, state and local Americanism committees. DAR members of these committees attend naturalization court ceremonies and present new citizens with United States Flags, welcome cards and patriotic literature. Members continue to visit the new citizens following their naturalization, take them to church, to libraries and historical places, and assist them to register and vote. The DAR sponsors Americanism essay contests for children in the public schools: 1,405 prizes were presented to winners last year. Many thousands of dollars are spent each year by DAR members to help

our foreign-born learn more about American institutions and become responsible and useful citizens.

Listen in again next week at this same time for another in the series of programs called AMERICA WAKE UP.

WOKZ Broadcast, November 16, 1963.