P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: April 19

PHONICS: THE KEY TO READING

Every fall, millions of 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 are 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 child is inflicted with endless pages of "Look up; 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. Courses in "remedial reading" endeavor to teach them in the fourth or fifth grades what they should have learned in the first.

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 has been rewritten in the vocabulary of the elementary grades.

You can measure the decline in reading skills by comparing current readers with the old McGuffey readers which our grandparents studied. The McGuffey readers are about two years advanced over modern readers of the same grade level in all the reading skills, including vocabulary, comprehension, spelling, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and intellectual and spiritual content. The first grade

(more)

McGuffey reader, for example, uses two or three times the vocabulary of most modern first grade readers.

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?

It was 19 years ago that Rudolf Flesch's book, WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ, became an overnight best-seller and shook the educational world by exposing how the progressive educationists had eliminated the teaching of phonics from the first grade. He exposed the fallacies of the "look-and-say" method and conclusively proved that phonics is the indispensable key to reading the English language. The ~~fault~~ blame for poor readers should not be put on the teachers, but on the system that is enforced through the selection of primers.

As a result of Flesch's book, a few phonics lessons were reintroduced into the schools. Most schools now stoutly maintain that they do use phonics. But this usually means that it is taught separately from reading, and usually only in the second or third grade after the child has been given a year of bad reading habits. Phonics should be used as the key to reading at the very start of the first grade.

I followed Flesch's advice and personally gave all my six children the first grade at home, using a 100 percent phonics system. Now that they are all well along in school and college, it is time to report that my project was a total success. Parents teach their children to ride a bike, to swim, to cook, to sew, to drive a car, and many skills. Why not teach your children to read -- the most important skill of all, and give them the key to a sound education?

(end)