P.S. to the NEWS
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S.A.T. SCORES DECLINE

"There is manifest in the country -- for the first time in our history -- an active loss of enchantment with our schools ... from kindergarten through graduate school. ... Americans in significant numbers are questioning the purpose of education, the competence of educators, and the usefulness of the system in preparing young minds for life in these turbulent times." So said Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., U.S. Assistant Secretary for Education in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Dr. Marland is correct. Americans are disenchanted with our schools. And why shouldn't we be disenchanted? We have seen the cost of education soar seven times faster than the population while, at the same time, the quality of education falls lower and lower.

What American parents and taxpayers have intuitively sensed about the failure of the schools to teach our children the fundamentals, is now proved by the statistical record. The Schlastic Aptitude Test, the principal admissions examination used by most colleges, recently reported a steady ten-year decline in the scores of high school students. Every year, from 1963 to 1973, showed a significant drop in average scores in both

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the verbal and the mathematical tests.

The S.A.T. scores are an embarrassment and a puzzlement to the educators who have been telling us that students have been getting smarter. The fact is that the S.A.T. scores prove that elementary and secondary schools are not preparing students as well in verbal and mathematical skills as they did in former years. College Board officials admit that the drop in average scores cannot be explained by a larger number of students taking the tests because the number of students leveled off several years ago.

It shouldn't be any mystery why today's students are so deficient in these basic learning tools. When the educationists eliminated phonics from the teaching of reading and substituted the "look-say" method, and when they replaced drilling in multiplication tables with the New Math, they handicapped our students in learning verbal and math skills as much as if they had put a blindfold over one eye of every child.

When a student hasn't been taught phonics, he cannot spell and he has an artificially limited vocabulary. This is why it has become popular to read the classics in comic book editions. When a student hasn't memorized addition sums and multiplication tables, he cannot solve the simple arithmetic problems that confront us in everyday life such as adding up a restaurant bill or balancing a check book.

Progressive educationists seem to stubbornly adher to the dogma that anything new must be superior to whatever is old. It isn't, and the S.A.T. scores prove it. What education needs is a fresh willingness to replace the failures of the present with the successful teaching techniques of the past.

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