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RELEASE: JULY 3, 1981

SEX EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

Two factors make the subject of sex education even more controversial in New Jersey than in other states. First, the State Board of Education has adopted "mandated sex education" (that means it will be compulsory in every public elementary and secondary school), and secondly, the mandate was adopted with the approval (some would say collusion) of the New Jersey Conference of Catholic Bishops (which also mandated sex education for all New Jersey Catholic schools).

Back in 1967, the State Board of Education "recommended" that local boards provide sex education. Under this voluntary policy, only 40 percent of local districts opted to provide sex education to public school students, and very few of those present the sexually explicit material now demanded by the sex ed promoters.

The sex ed pressure groups now want to make their program compulsory and require all teachers to teach it. The State Board's regulation requires local districts to adopt a curriculum by this September, and to have it in operation by September 1983.

The Catholic Bishops' statement illustrates the semantic problem in dealing with sex education. For example, the Bishops' statement says, "The purpose of education in human sexuality is to enable individuals to understand, value, develop and responsibly exercise their sexuality." The phrase "responsibly exercise their sexuality" is not defined. It is reasonable to infer that what the Bishops mean by that phrase is pre-marital chastity, marital fidelity, and respect for the traditonal family unit.

If you familiarize yourself with the books, manuals and jargon of the sex ed promoters, you will find that even the most radical could enthusiastically endorse the Bishops' statement -- but the words mean something entirely different. To the sex ed promoters, "responsibly exercise their sexuality" means engaging in any kind of sexual activity without having a baby and without feeling guilty. That would include homosexuality, pre-marital sex, contraception, abortion -- any activity just so long as no unwanted baby results.

Public school sex ed courses teach students how to engage in sex acts without

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telling them that anything is wrong. If no sex act is ever called wrong, then the students' reasonable inference is that all sex acts must be morally acceptable.

Sex ed courses seldom tell the truth about the horrendous physical, mental, psychological and emotional consequences of promiscuity, such as incurable VD, cervical cancer, the trauma of an illegitimate pregnancy, and the psychological damage to future family life.

Sex ed courses operate on the assumption that all the students are "sexually active" and therefore create peer pressure to turn that assumption into reality. Those not sexually active are thus subjected to psychological pressure to "join the club" and find out what they have been missing.

The classroom discussion of intimate acts and private parts of the body, and the use of a sexually explicit vocabulary, destroy the natural modesty and privacy that young people have about sexual activity. Modesty and a desire for privacy are part of a girl's natural psychological defenses against invitations to promiscuity.

There is ample evidence that many sex ed courses include materials that would be considered obscene by most community standards; "obscene" means designed to appeal to prurient interests. The sex ed book called "Show Me" would fit in that category.

In March, a comic book was distributed to eighth graders in Ocean City, N.J., which featured "the startling exploits of Ms Wanda Lust and Capt. Veedee-o on Venus." The two characters rode in a spacecraft called "V.D. Claptrap" and encountered such objects as a flying condom. The comic book was published by Syracuse University's College for Human Development in 1972, was approved by the New Jersey Health Department, and was defended by educators because teenagers find comic books "easier to read."

We know that the public schools are doing a generally unsatisfactory job of teaching reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic because of the steady 18-year decline in the SAT and other standardized test scores. So what would give anyone the idea that the schools are competent to teach about sex, a field in which there are no criteria for evaluating teaching effectiveness?

No one has suggested lengthening the school day, yet the sex ed promoters want this new subject taught in K-12 (Kindergarten through 12th grade). No other subject is taught in so many grades. Since the facts of life can be explained in about 15 minutes, hours upon hours of valuable school time will be spent in discussions which many parents believe are embarrassing to the pupils and promote promiscuity. (end)