PS1 for 6-18-87#THE SEATTLE TEXTBOOK STORY

When it comes to the matter of selecting curricula for public school pupils, there seem to be two classes of people. There are those who believe that parents are the primary educators of their children and have the constitutional right to safeguard the child's religion, ethics, culture, and attitudes, as well as family privacy, and to reject materials that downgrade or interfere with any of the above.

Then there are those who believe that the schools have the right to select and impose any curricula of their choosing, including experimental courses, films, textbooks and other materials, and that parents should ""get lost.'' In other words, if parents object to any of the above, or seek a change, they should be brushed off, stonewalled, and generally put down as the intellectual inferiors of the ""professionals'' in the schools.

All over the country, parents are rising up against this phalanx of school personnel who are so snobbish about parents. More and more, parents are being successful in asserting their rights. One such example recently took place in Seattle, Washington, and it's an example of the lesson that perseverance pays.

In early 1986, Jim and Sally Bostad of Seattle heard some parents complaining about objectionable high school sex and drug courses. Their first reaction was, ""Those things might happen in places like New York City or San Francisco, but not in our local school.'' But they told their son to bring home his Health textbook, anyway.

When the Bostads looked at the book, they went into orbit! The book taught that promiscuity should not be criticized, that homosexuality is normal, that prostitution should be legalized, and that morality is whatever any individual decides it is.

The textbook favorably discussed alternate lifestyles to

traditional marriage, such as trial marriage, open marriage, and even group marriage. Then the textbook asked the pupils, ""Do you feel you might be interested in becoming part of such a group?''

One passage even told the children that it is ""not considered deviant behavior'' to be a Peeping Tom, defined as one who watches other people engaging in sexual activities while looking through windows, holes in walls, or binoculars. The name of this incredible textbook is ""You and Your Health'' by William Fassbender (John Wiley & Sons, publisher).

The Bostads then discovered that this text has been used since 1978 in a mandatory ""Health'' course in the Seattle public schools. Apparently no other parent had ever seen the textbook.

When the Bostads complained about this textbook, the school district defiantly stated that the book would continue to be forced on students in this mandatory class. The school district wrote the Bostads on June 12, 1986 that its ""overall feeling is that with careful guidance of trained staff, sensitive areas in the book would be covered professionally and objectively.''

In the fall of 1986 and again in the spring of 1987, the Bostads alerted many other parents about the textbook and distributed copies of some of the offensive pages. Finally, some of the radical statements in the textbook found their way into the Seattle newspapers.

At that point, the Seattle School Board scheduled a meeting of its curriculum committee on April 13 of this year. Mrs. Bostad attended, along with other critics of the textbook and a large delegation of local media.

After Mrs. Bostad showed the actual book and made copies of many pages available to the media, the controversy hit the fan. Among the ridiculous quotations from the textbook that were featured on the

evening news was the book's statement that ""AIDS is NOT a sexually transmitted disease.''

What happened then would have been a comedy act if it weren't so tragic that hundreds of Seattle public school children had been (BF)forced(end BF) to study from this evil book. Nobody defended the book or would take responsibility. Various school personnel began accusing each other of selecting it. Nobody could explain how the book got into the school.

All of a sudden, the school found money to buy a new textbook and announced that the normal six-month testing period for new books would be waived. All of a sudden, parents were invited to participate in the textbook adoption process.

Every day, on the tube and in the press, we hear someone say, ""Education is the answer to AIDS.'' But the real question is, what kind of education will our children be getting?

Will they be taught from books like the one used in Seattle? If so,
they will be taught things that are untrue, behavior that is unhealthy and contrary to the morals they were taught at home, and all probably in violation of the First Amendment rights of the parents.

The Seattle textbook case proves that parents (BF)can(end BF) win these textbook battles, but it takes patience and perseverance.