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PARENTS' AND PUPILS' RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

Education used to be a process of transmitting knowledge and skills from the older generation to the younger. But much of what is going on in schools today does not have that purpose at all; its goal is to change the values of the children with a technique called "values clarification."

The children's (and their parents') values are under attack from a variety of techniques such as violent and disturbing books and films dealing with parental conflict, sex, death, drugs, murder, suicide, mental illness, poverty, despair, and anger. Many books and films are negative about parents, morality, and America.

Questionnaires and role-playing are favorite devices used to "clarify" and change the values of the children. Sets of questions are assigned which require elementary school children to reveal private information about their own and their parents' intimate life and thoughts, and which cause the child to question his parents' standards.

Few parents seem to know that the Federal law is on the side of the parents and pupils in challenging such materials. It is instructive to quote directly from 20 U.S. Code, 1232h, called "Protection of Pupil Rights": "No student shall be required ... to submit to psychiatric examination, testing, or treatment, or psychological examination, testing or treatment, in which the primary purpose is to reveal information concerning political affiliations; mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of other individuals with whom [they] have close family relationships; ... without the prior written consent of the parent."

As more and more parents are waking up to the privacy-invading materials being used in many schools, state laws are being passed to help the parents assert their natural authority. This summer, Oklahoma passed the Parents' Consent Act which provides that all instructional materials used in research or experimental programs may be inspected by

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parents of the children enrolled in the programs.

The Oklahoma law requires written parental consent before a pupil may be subjected to any type of psychological or psychiatric examination. In the words of the law, teachers cannot, without parental consent, "elicit by written survey or examination" any information about "religious beliefs, sexual behavior or attitudes or potentially embarrassing mental or psychological problems."

California has a similar law providing that "no test, questionnaire, survey, or examination containing any questions about the pupil's personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality and religion ... shall be administered to any pupil in kindergarten or grade 1 through grade 12, inclusive, unless the parent or guardian or the pupil is notified in writing that such test, questionnaire, survey, or examination is to be administered and the parent or guardian of the pupil gives written permission for the pupil to take such test, questionnaire, survey, or examination."

The Illinois law on this subject states: "No pupil shall be required to take or participate in any class or course in comprehensive sex education if his parent or guardian submits written objection thereto, and ... an opportunity shall be afforded to such parents or guardians to examine the instructional materials to be used in such class or course."

The Illinois law also requires that "if any school district provides courses of instruction designed to promote wholesome and comprehensive understanding of the emotional, psychological, physiological, hygienic and social responsibility aspects of family life, then such courses of instruction shall include the teaching of the alternatives to abortion, appropriate to the various grade levels." It is quite a commentary on our school system that it took a lawsuit to force the Illinois schools to obey this law and teach abstinence as an alternative.

Schools should apply themselves to the teaching of reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, rather than sailing off into outer space with devious attempts to invade the moral or psychological privacy of the pupils. The law is on the side of the parents, if they would only use it.

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