Journal of Teaching and Learning

Volume 6 | Issue 2 Article 5

12-1981

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> People operate under some significant misconceptions in contemporary America. Parents will initiate great changes when they finally realize that many people, especially professional educators, differ significantly in their definition of morality. These parents would be shocked into action if they only knew the perversity which operates in our schools under the name of humanistic morality. Once they know they will react no differently than I have (Alice Moore, leader of the Kanawha County West Virginia Textbook Controversy).

The overwhelming victory of Ronald Reagan and the evangelically supported congressional candidates of the political right did not surprise Alice Moore, the leader of the Kanawha County Textbook Controversy in the mid-1970's. Moore, a consistent spokesperson for the political right and back to basics education, is representative of a new breed of political activists of the 1980's.

Beginning her career as a self-proclaimed "concerned mother," Moore developed a devoted constituency during her 1969 anti-sex education crusade and her 1974 textbook battle in Kanawha County, West Virginia. In 1978, she was re-elected to the presidency of the county school board by one of the biggest majorities in West Virginia history. A Reagan supporter in 1980, she has called for radical changes in our system of public education.

Moore has been victimized by a simplistic TV medium that in its attempt to construct reality in a concise, spectacular manner painted her not as a crusader for parental rights but as a moralistic zealot against "dirty books" in the classroom. Moore's importance in American education, contrary to her media image, does not involve an attempt to determine standards of morality. Her significance does revolve around the question of diversity in American society, who controls our educational system and the impact of the Moral Majority's victory on the immediate future of American education.

Like other individuals who support the philosophical foundation on which the Moral Majority rests, Alice Moore contends that modern American education's goal of emphasizing society's racial, cultural, and philosophical diversity is "anti-Christian, anti-American, anti-authority, depressing and negative." Other people, Moore freely admits, may not view education in this light, and, therefore, she sees compulsory education in a diverse society as impractical. As a solution to this problem of diversity she advocates a free enterprise system of education which would end public schooling as we now know it and give parents a range of choices concerning where, how, by whom, and for what purposes their children would be educated. Public education now severely challenges the parental moral assumptions on which many children were raised, she maintains, and no state institution has a right to challenge these parental rights. It is absurd, she concludes, for the government to impose compulsory education upon a diverse citizenry that is unable to agree upon the meaning of morality. Teachers, regardless of their political or moral perspective, cannot hide their feelings on divisive issues and thus will always deny some parent the right for his child to be educated in an atmosphere he considers appropriate.

Moore's view of what is commonly referred to as back to basics education, shared by ever-growing legions of Americans, is well defined by a document she authored during the 1974 textbook controversy.

The manifesto called for a prohibition in the public schools of literature and teaching which encouraged skepticism in the following: the family unit which comes from the marriage of a man and a woman, belief in God, the American political system, the laws and legal system of the nation and state, the free enterprise system, the history of America as "the record of one of the noblest civilizations that has existed," respect for other people's property, and the need for study of the traditional rules of grammar.

Moore's concern over parental rights is useful and well-articulated. Hopefully, educational policy makers will reflect on the implications of Moore's position before they make decisions. While her questions and criticisms of American education are quite valid, the results of her actions have served to deny the fundamental diversity of American life. School leaders who accept Moore's and the Moral Majority's outlook on diversity tend to ignore the subtle ways cultural differences manifest themselves in educational settings. The dismantling of public universal education is not an immediate possibility in America. Like other members of the Moral Majority, Moore tends to use her rejection of this concept as a means of avoiding the immediate implications of her crusade--the denial of the validity of non-white or non-Protestant cultural standards and thus the rejection of their inclusion in the public school curriculum.

Moore sincerely rejects majority rule and the Tocquevillian tyranny that often accompanies it; but until public schools are dismantled and replaced by her version of a free enterprise educational system, the inclusion of minority cultural expression in our public educational institutions controlled by people with Moore's perspective will require great effort. This will likely result in more estrangement and conflict between a variety of social, cultural, economic, and religious stratifications. Unfortunately, Alice Moore's conceptions of democratic control and parental rights within the confines of the present educational system imply a denial of parental rights and democratic participation by those minorities who

fall outside the local majority's definition of acceptable social and moral behavior.

Moore and her soul mates in the Moral Majority have established a tremendous network for disseminating their political and educational perspectives. The advocates of a moral and basic education have consistent and articulate spokesmen on omnipresent fundamental Christian TV programming. The Christian Broadcasting Network, the PTL Club, Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and the countless other evangelists who can afford to purchase TV time have begun to assert their influence not only in the theological sphere but in the social, political, and educational realms of American life as well. These crusaders have mastered the use of the media, as they use Hollywood techniques to promote Protestant fundamentalism and right wing politics. Taking pointers from Johnny Carson and Billy Sunday they issue pronouncements on education which consistently involve a call for a return to the basics. They challenge parents in the name of God to fight the anti-Christian, anti-American influences which hide under the name of secular humanism and cultural diversity. From their trendy TV studios they tell their viewers that secular humanism has become the "establishment religion" in our public schools, and, as a result, teachers unwittingly teach acceptance of abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and alternate lifestyles. The phrase "alternate lifestyles" is merely, they claim, a euphemism for old-fashioned perversion.

The evangelicals accurately claim that their TV audience includes more than fifty million viewers. During these broadcasts ministers routinely assail the evils of Keynesian economics, social programs, and the host of lifestyle issues previously mentioned. Jerry Falwell, whose media empire has grown so dramatically in the last few years, employs almost 1000 loyal followers and operates with an annual 56 million dollar tax-free budget. Through his weekly "Old Time Gospel Hour," Falwell informs his millions of viewers about the Christian school movement. Through the publicity of Falwell and other TV preachers and

support from parents like Alice Moore, the number of Christian schools in America has more than quintupled since John Kennedy was president. Recently several state legislatures have, at the insistence of the Moral Majority, removed standards requiring certified teachers in private schools--actions which will further accelerate the growth of private Christian education. While many of the evangelicals support Moore's vision of a free enterprise educational system, they are determined to work to further private Christian schooling and purge humanism and perversion from the public schools until they are dismantled.

Alice Moore expresses fear over how easily people can be influenced by TV. Like other members of the Moral Majority, Moore recognizes the power of the medium and understands its potential application for the benefit of fundamental Christian interests. It was the power of TV, she claims, which created the moral climate which allows the schools to teach atheism. "Television has been the greatest moral disaster this country has ever known. It has done irreparable damage to the home, family, and general moral stability." She points out that young people are exposed to decadent attitudes which never entered the minds of children a generation ago. TV has made the sick and perverse acceptable by making it appear presentable. Moral relativism has crept into our schools and the thinking of our teachers via the broadcast medium. Once established as acceptable in the eyes of our leading educators, it found its way into our textbooks and thus into the minds of our children. TV has been used for evil so long, she contends, now it can finally be used for good. Jerry Falwell, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Pat Robertson, and Paul Weyrick are certainly working hard to oblige Mrs. Moore and the millions like her.

Alice Moore and Jerry Falwell do not believe that they deny the fundamental diversity of American life nor that they are racists. It was at a meeting in Dallas of many of the Moral Majority's most important leaders in August, 1980 (a meeting at which presidential candidate Reagan was a featured speaker)

that the Reverend Bailey Smith struck an emotional chord with an audience of fundamentalist preachers when he proclaimed that God does not listen to the prayers of Jews. In Kanawha County Alice Moore and her corps of non-violent supporters claimed categorically that they are not racists and have no problem with social diversity. But, when one examines the authors who challenged the basic values of Christian parents and thus were banned from the Kanawha County schools, the list includes Gwendolyn Brooks, Dick Gregory, Eldridge Cleaver, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X.

Alice Moore contends that most attempts to teach interracial understanding have been used as methods of generating race hatred. As a result, she suggests, the schools should ignore the question of ethnicity and concentrate on the inculcation of true blue Americanism. Too often the teaching of multi-racial, multi-ethnic, or multi-cultural viewpoints legitimizes non-standard English. Language and the traditional rules of grammar are divinely sanctioned, Moore and her soul mates maintain, and those elements who subvert these rules are anti-Christian. Realistic presentations of ghetto life deny parental rights because they deal with topics that Moore and the Moral Majority do not want taught to their children. Though she attempted to discourage the flagrant race hatred which seeped into the West Virginia controversy, Moore, nevertheless, encouraged a more subtle, overtly innocent form of racism. Thus, to protect the parental rights of the Moral Majority, the schools must resist any temptation to teach about the lives of individuals who fall outside white or middle class cultural boundaries.

The election of Ronald Reagan has granted the leaders of the Moral Majority reason for great optimism. Moral Right strategists deemed Reagan far more likely to support their concerns than Jimmy Carter or John Anderson. Early in the primary season the moral coalition of evangelical interest groups gained power in the Republican hierarchy and proved their ability to deliver votes to basically sympathetic candidates like Reagan. Understanding the

potential power of the fundamental media empire, Reagan consciously catered to their needs and biases and thus captured the endorsement of the various leaders.

As the campaign progressed Reagan aides chuckled as power brokers like Falwell provided free endorsements of their candidate that were heard by millions of his devoted constituents via the "Old Time Gospel Hour." Better yet, Falwell's free political commercials escaped the federal campaign expenditure regulations by falling under the category of religious programming.

Reagan strategists recognized a bonanza and encouraged their candidate to remind the evangelical constituency that he indeed deserved their continued support. By the end of the primary season Reagan had begun to court the coalition with strategically issued pronouncements sure to please the grassroots fundamentalists. The candidate tacitly promised to maintain a hands-off policy toward Christian TV programming. He explicitly promised to support the teaching of the Genesis account of creation to counter Darwinian evolution, to maintain a tough foreign policy toward atheistic Communism, to fight the anti-Christian ERA, to use the presidency to denounce humanism in the schools, to protect the tax exempt status for the politically-motivated, right wing fundamental Christian pressure groups, to return America to the basic Christian values which made the nation the model for the rest of the world, to continue the federal subsidy of often times racially segregated Christian schools, to support the concept of parental rights in education, and to back the return of basics education in our schools.

The candidate Reagan spoke reassuringly to the conservative Christians. Leaders of the Christian right have their suspicions of Reagan's commitment to pursue actively the goals of their movement as President. Already his drift to the center evidenced during the final stages of the campaign, the administrative transition, and the initial weeks of his

presidency have aroused fear in the hearts of the faithful. New Right strategist, Paul Weyrick, had always admonished the evangelical soldiers to watch carefully the harmony between Reagan's past rhetoric and his actual performance as an administrator. Evangelicals familiar with Reagan's track record in the California governor's mansion were not reassured.

The Moral Majority is depending on proven champions such as North Carolina's inimitable conservative senator, Jesse Helms. A former TV political crusader himself, Helms is counted upon to pull Reagan back to his evangelical base. A phenomenal fund raiser and primary congressional leader of the right, Helms commands sufficient power to make life unpleasant for President Reagan. When joined by the new corps of congressmen who owe their seats to the efforts of the Moral Majority, Helms and company should present a formidable force. Reagan's incumbency will be marked by constant pressure by Helms and the forces of righteousness to remind the President of his campaign commitments to his moral constituency, counterbalanced by the incumbent's inevitable desire to broaden his base by drifting to the center. The outcome of the struggle will influence the temperament of American education in the coming years.

Reagan and the new Congress are not faced with any viable countervailing force from the political center or from the foes of basic education that could mitigate the influence of the Moral Majority. Outside of the NEA, whose philosophical unanimity is questionable, the opponents of evangelical education are weak. Former South Dakota Senator George McGovern's liberal Coalition for Common Sense is hardly a threat to the well-financed Moral Majority. Norman Lear, Theodore Hesburgh, and former Iowa Senator Harold Hughes' People for the American Way, pales in comparison to the professional organization of the Falwells, the Robertsons, and the Bakkers.

The friends of creative education are running scared. If there are truly substantial numbers of people who oppose the goals of evangelical education they must organize quickly or face an extended period

of right-wing control of American schools. In this period when preachers and politicians cry out for improved basic skills and absolute moral standards, innovative teachers will be forced to abandon creative and humanistic teaching strategies for tough-minded, catechismal, repetitive traditional methods. Placing great faith in the validity of standardized achievement tests, proponents of this basic education claim that the success of their strategies can be accurately measured by such instruments. Unfortunately, under social and political pressure to display improvement, teachers and administrators often bolster the results or teach the students to better their scores in ethically questionable ways. More importantly progress in those situations is short-lived, and the more subtle, broader concerns of education are neglected as instructors narrow their focus to teach the test.

As a result of this massive evangelical effort to return education to the golden days of the past, public school leaders with unique and innovative methods will be suppressed by the "tyranny of the back to basics majority." Creative teachers will be charged with experimenting with the sacred minds of youth--an attitude which insures the perpetuation of the stale teaching practices which have failed students for decades. With the victory of the Moral Majority and the political right, teachers will be under more and more pressure to transmit subjective fact as absolute truth. These "truths" will be passed along to students via teaching methods which stifle curiosity and subliminally foster passive unquestioning attitudes. As a result, Jerry Falwell's flock may grow even larger.