

Opportunities for physical exercise and group activities and the manner in which they are taken has changed a great deal during the past two or three decades. Instead of walking to school, students must be bused or drive their own cars. Rather than mostly informal group activities, we must organize and provide "opportunities" for young people's activities. For all this we need elaborate and costly facilities. Walking is an activity viewed with disdain. Do we really have our priorities in focus?



# CURRENT ISSUES

# A Call for Tolerance

Brian Dykstra

*TIME* in its July 28, 1986 issue and *The Grand Rapids Press* in a recent article reported on a group of Fundamentalist Christian parents led by Vicki Frost which is bringing charges against the public schools of Hawkins County Tennessee. Quoting from *TIME*:

... the Fundamentalists want to shield their children from basic readers put out by the publishing firm of Holt, Rinehart & Win-

ston and used by 15,000 school districts in all 50 states. The group objects to the books in part because they “teach other forms of salvation, other than faith in Jesus Christ alone.” The parents demand that their children be allowed to use alternative textbooks more in line with Fundamentalist beliefs.

The Fundamentalists are also

upset with the secular humanism which is endorsed by the books. Frost alleges that the books "promote pacifism, child rebellion, situational ethics, and feminism. She censored readings that reverse traditional roles for boys and girls. She objected to a story for its line "language makes us human," explaining that the sentence implies that mankind evolved and was not created by God. Timothy Dyk, lawyer for the school board, has said, "There is no way this woman could attend public school and not be offended."

While the Fundamentalists sound combative against the board and insistent on their First Amendment right for freedom of religion, the board in its case sounds moderate in that they are trying to avoid extremes in religion. This is, of course, the best that the public schools can ever hope to do, since they are operating in the melting pot of America. *The Grand Rapids Press* reports:

Faye Taylor, state director of elementary education, testified that the learning of the whole class would suffer if students are divided by religious objections.

"It's important for children to hear all views," Taylor said. "It would be a shame for other children not to hear the viewpoint of

the plaintiffs' children."

Taylor, 36, said allowing some students to use another reader would wreck a teacher's plans and jeopardize numerous teaching objectives such as citizenship, honesty, or tolerance.

Some obvious questions come to mind in this case. Is there a Christian school in the area? If there is, why are not these parents sending their children there? Is it possible for the parents to form a school on their own? Should Christians who have no choice other than public schools undertake such ventures, or should parents "reteach" their children at home? Will there come a time when we can no longer find textbooks of which we can approve? If so, what should be done?

What might be the most troubling, however, is the stress the public schools place upon tolerance. It is the view of most Americans that one can do or believe whatever one wishes as long as nobody is hurt by such actions or beliefs. Most students are being taught to be tolerant of others' actions or beliefs. Could this tolerance of all religions lead to some "world religion" in the end of time?

Where does this stress on tolerance leave us as Reformed Christians? Our belief in the antithesis requires us to say "yes"

closed if we refuse to teach our children to say “yes” to God and “maybe” to everything else? In these last days we will need spiritual courage to adhere to God’s Truth, but we can be thankful that our faithful Father will be with us so that we are able to worship only the one, true God.



*Response this time was generated by Gary VanDer Schaaf's contribution to "Viewpoints" of the spring issue. Perhaps you will recall that we considered at that time the matter of inter-scholastic sports. Mr. VanDer Schaaf took the "negative" side of that question; and, not surprisingly, there was some reaction. Even the dissent however is friendly, for it happens that Gary's own brother, Peter, chose to take issue with him. The latter VanDer Schaaf was himself once a teacher, at Hope School in Grand Rapids, and later in Covenant Christian High School, where he served also for several years as athletic director. We're glad to have this kind of discussion in our magazine, and, again, we encourage more of our readers to help us make of this rubric truly an open forum for ideas.*

Kudos to Gary VanDer Schaaf for his able defense of an unpopular position. I found his article timely, necessary, and extremely well-written.

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