

THE CULTURE WAR

Sex Ed: A Timely Diagnosis

Writing in the October issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, author Barbara Dafoe Whitehead offers a timely and lucid critique of what she calls the "Failure of Sex Education." Whitehead presents a detailed analysis of New Jersey's comprehensive sex education program, observing, "Few states have worked harder or longer than New Jersey to bring sexual enlightenment to schoolchildren." The New Jersey program has received a five-star rating from the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Mary Calderone, a founder and former president of SIECUS, declared that radical sexual emancipation (which would include tolerance for nearly every variety of perversion, including incest) is a "new religion."

Whitehead digests the gospel of sex education into four tenets: First, that "children are 'sexual from birth'"; second, that "children are sexually mis-educated" by their parents and other sources of social authority; third, that sex education is the necessary remedy for "sexual miseducation"; and fourth, that sex education, to be "effective," must begin as early as possible.

Among the sexeducrats interviewed by Whitehead is Susan Wilson of the New Jersey Network for Family Life Education. Wilson insists that the purpose of sex education is to resolve the "conflict between morality and reality." Wilson helped write *Learning About Family Life*, a high-priced "textbook package" published by Rutgers University Press for use in New Jersey public schools. The approach taken in the text is to provide "sexual knowledge" to grade school children and to help adolescents in "building sexual skills." Wilson insists, "It is developmentally appropriate for teenagers to learn how to give and receive pleasure."

Whitehead also describes a teacher training conference conducted by the Network for Family Life Education presided over by Deborah Roffman, an independent "sex-education consultant." Roffman leads teachers through "feelings-and-values exercises" designed for classroom use. Whitehead points out that "the purpose [of the exercises] is to

help students 'normalize' and share common growing-up experiences" — that is, to break down barriers of privacy and emotional autonomy and make students more malleable.

Furthermore, Whitehead states, "Because of its intimate subject matter, the feelings-and-values classroom institutes a new code of classroom conduct. There are confidentiality rules. Roffman's



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middle school students are told that nothing said in sex-education class goes out of the class without students' express permission."

"Sex education is not new, of course," Whitehead writes, "but never before has it attempted to expose children to so much so soon." As a result, there is a "new sexual revolution" encompassing schoolchildren of all ages, who are wrested from the protection of the home and the church and left to fend for themselves in what Whitehead calls a "Darwinian sexual environment."

The Nihilistic AIDS Culture

Two recently published items offer interesting glimpses of the "Darwinian sexual environment" created by the sexual revolutions. In the October 10th issue of *The New Republic*, editor Andrew Sullivan, an open homosexual, reflects upon what he calls "the years of the plague." Noting that half of his friends "in their twenties and thirties [are] infected or sick or dead," Sullivan recommends a publication entitled *Diseased Pariah News* (DPN) as a reflection "of the way positives [AIDS carriers] — of all shapes and sizes — often view the virus not as a permanent affliction, or a prelude to dying, but as a herald to a new — and newly intense — way of living." Sullivan offers a few samples of the magazine's macabre and nihilistic "humor" and exults: "DPN is a breath of morbidly brilliant air." The

apparent message is that AIDS need not ruin a Sybarite's fun.

Richard Heyman, a former mayor of Key West, Florida, is a recent AIDS casualty who will be immortalized in a rather unusual fashion. Heyman was elected mayor in 1983, becoming one of the first open homosexuals to be elected to public office. According to the September 17th *New York Times*, "Although Mr. Heyman ran as a gay candidate, he focused much of his work on the difficulties of finding environmentally sound ways to dispose of human waste.... The Key West City Commission next week plans to re-name the sewage plant he helped build, dubbing it the Richard A. Heyman Memorial Waste Treatment Plant."

Abortionist's Lament

The October issue of *The Progressive* magazine contains an essay by Elizabeth Karlin, an abortionist from Madison, Wisconsin. Inveighing against "radical Christian forces" which oppose abortion, Karlin laments that abortion is still considered disreputable: "Some of our patients make an appointment without even being able to say the word 'abortion.'... Here it is, 1994, twenty-one years after Roe v. Wade, and every day I hear from at least one patient who believes that abortion is a secret, horrible crime...." Karlin is terribly frustrated that many of her customers tearfully say, "I don't believe in abortion."

According to Karlin, the "marginalization" of women who have abortions is a crime akin to shooting abortionists. She writes: "We need to know that doctors will no longer allow the marginalization of women and doctors who help them [obtain abortions]. We need to know that when people hear bigotry from the pulpit, they will challenge it. We need women to come out and say, 'I have had an abortion.' We need to meet in Pensacola, to soak up each other's strengths, to support the medical students who are starting out on a long and dangerous road. I hope we have arrived at a time when we will have a National Abortion Day, to salute the women who have made this difficult choice...."

Perhaps National Abortion Day could occur in March, between Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in February and Earth Day in April. ■

— WILLIAM NORMAN GRIGG