

COMMENTARY

R. EMMETT TYRRELL

Sex education homework

I have suffered an insight! It may dictate a momentous change of heart. Heretofore when I watched such moral colossi as the Hon. Richard Gephardt and the Hon. Tom Daschle caught in the throes of emotion as they pled for Civility in politics and an end to Gridlock, I thought: hog-wash. They blame, thought I, conservatives for wrongs they themselves initiate. After all, the Republicans have been elected by a clear majority and twice. It is the Democrats who now thwart progress and engender Gridlock. Let the people's vision be realized!

But now I see that I am wrong, and it took a little-noted development in our nation's capital to enlighten me. True the Republicans have temporarily finagled a majority in Congress, and they are in possession of growing majorities throughout the states. Yet that does not invalidate a fabulous fact that the likes of Messrs. Gephardt and Daschle know well, to wit, liberals are right and have been right on every enthusiasm they have advocated for decades. Conservatives are wrong and often inhumane.

What evoked this insight in me is a recent series of stories about a very happy event here in the District. Sex education is a success! All the conservatives' pessimism about educating our young in the mysteries and discipline of sex has been mistaken and probably inhumane. Children as young as 9 years of age have mastered sex, even safe sex. Teen-agers have a firmer grasp on the advanced stages of sex than their parents who often find such

esotery as inscrutable — according to highly scientific findings by our sexologists — as molecular physics, if there is such a thing as molecular physics.

According to the aforementioned news stories Washington's Martha Winston Elementary School has

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become a veritable show case of effective sex education. On April 7, nine fourth graders, ages nine through 12, left class to practice "sexual relations" though it was neither part of a homework assignment nor for class credit. It was all voluntary. These fourth graders, five boys and four girls, are to be commended for their excellent use of valuable class time. One of them had been barred from a classroom after he "challenged the authority" of a teacher. But did he malingering in a hallway or heave paper airplanes at classmates as might have been done in a prior generation? Not at all, he went directly to a nearby "preparation room." There he coaxed other classmates to join him and, according to The Washington Times, all "disrobed and practiced sexual acts on each other."

Now if only the students' math instructors were to become as expert at teaching math as Winston Elementary's sex education instructors have become in teaching the scortatory science. Why can not the nation's teachers of foreign languages and the sciences learn to confer on their subjects the same excitement and seriousness that our sex instructors confer on their discipline? Think back to when you were a fourth grader. In your free time did you ever slip off to a quiet room and practice with your school-

mates your lessons in, say, geography or phonics? And the fourth graders at Winston practiced together, boys and girls. Obviously there is no gender phobia at old Winston. My only criticism is with the school's name. I hope it bears no relationship with the Winstons of cigarette fame. That would be a bad example for impressionable students.

The triumph of the Martha Winston sex education program is not unique. According to D.C. Board of Education President Don Reeves, "If the media wanted to go around and look at other schools, they'd see incidents like that going on all the time." It is at this point, however, that the story of the Martha Winston sex curriculum gets confused. Some of the reactionary politicians of the area cannot, as we say, "deal with it." They want school officials reprimanded, even fired. Apparently the school's progressive principal boasted that the sexual exercises of the fourth graders was "consensual." He was attempting to head off complaints from the reactionaries.

His calm and cool observation has provoked the conservative Republican, Trent Lott, Majority Leader of the Senate, to mockery. "The principal," Mr. Lott says, "is saying, 'Well, we can't do anything because it's consensual.' For 9 year olds? I mean, something is not right here." Once again the conservative is being wrongheaded and inhumane. Perhaps the Hon. Gephardt and the Hon. Daschle could take him aside and explain that, at old Winston, the sex is always safe. Moreover, it has taken years of expert sex education teaching to bring fourth graders to this level of sexual sophistication. Deal with it.

R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. is editor-in-chief of *The American Spectator*.