

548 BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS AND TREATMENT OF MINORITIES

[From the Washington (D.C.) Post, Aug. 13, 1966]

INTEGRATED TEXTS AIM OF VIRGINIA RIGHTS COUNCIL

(By Richard Corrigan)

The Virginia Council on Human Relations has undertaken a statewide campaign to promote the use of "desegregated"—rather than what it calls "Southern version"—textbooks in the public schools.

In brochures and pamphlets being mailed to educators and administrators, the Council charges that some textbooks now in use discriminate against Negro students by picturing the United States as strictly a "white society."

For example, the Council says that in one history textbook the standard edition notes that Benjamin Banneker, a Negro, assisted in the first surveying of the City of Washington but that the book used in Virginia drops this reference.

The Council, which earlier this year appealed to the State Board of Education for the adoption of "multi-ethnic" textbooks, blames publishers and school officials alike for the books now in use.

The Council report is the result of an education committee study headed by Portsmouth attorney Louis Brenner. The Council is an independent organization affiliated with the Southern Regional Council.

The State Board of Education, which under the Virginia Constitution is charged with selecting textbooks for public schools, is scheduled to approve a series of new books in December.

Asked for comment yesterday, Board president Mosby G. Perrow Jr. said he was "quite familiar" with the Council's campaign and added: "Anyone familiar with Virginia can simply look at the membership of the State Board and be satisfied that fairness and adequacy would be the sole motive for selecting any textbook."

Woodrow W. Wilkerson, superintendent of public instruction, said through a spokesman that books will be chosen "on the basis of merit, without regard to race, color or creed."

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STUDY DISPUTES VALUE OF "INTEGRATED" TEXTS

(By Peggy Streit)

Results of a recent study indicate that disadvantaged Negro school children do not judge a book by the color of its characters.

Nor do they necessarily learn better from books with integrated figures.

A group of New York educators claims that "the differences in taste between middle class white and Negro children has been emphasized far beyond reality." Their findings are confirmed by some District elementary school principals.

Thomas Poore, principal of Hayes Elementary School, said yesterday that his pupils, asked their initial reaction to new readers featuring pictures of children of all ethnic types, said merely, "These kids have on modern clothes."

"In many cases," said Poore, "the children didn't even notice that for the first time they were seeing Negroes pictured in their texts. What seems to make the difference in their attitudes," he said, "is the quality of the story and not the skin color of the children pictured."

The research study, conducted by Albert J. Harris, for the Office of Research of The City University of New York was executed under an Office of Education grant. Almost 1200 children from "culturally and economically deprived families" participated in the study.

One of the findings, Harris observed, was that plot was particularly important in capturing children's attention. Multi-ethnic illustrations were desirable, he claimed, and in some cases youngsters were lured into the book by them. But interest quickly faltered if the plot did.

Old spellbinders such as "The Three Bears" and "Peter Rabbit" and new classics such as "Make Way For Ducklings" by McCloskey and "Caps for Sale" by Slobodkin were beloved by all, regardless of class or race, the study asserted.

Even the stories of princes and princesses such as Cinderella—in which the disadvantaged child can have some identification for the poor disadvantaged Cinderella—are successful when well presented, Harris maintained.