

620 BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS AND TREATMENT OF MINORITIES

NEW MEXICO FEDERATION OF TEACHERS,
Albuquerque, N. Mex., October 8, 1966.

HON. ADAM CLAYTON POWELL,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

SIR: The Executive Council of the New Mexico Federation of Teachers protests the disclaimer made by Tito Valdez, Director of the Textbook Division, New Mexico State Department of Education, prior to his testimony before the House Education and Labor Committee on August 31. At this hearing, which concerned the treatment of minority groups in textbooks, Valdez said, "People of the state are either happy or they have been silently unhappy about the books the kids are studying. . . . There are no complaints." We also protest the support given this statement in a press release by officials of the New Mexico Education Association which stated that there had been no complaints in regard to minority groups.

We wish to point out that parents of Spanish-American or Indian students who themselves are deficient in English, are hardly likely to be the vocal type of parents who would express organized protest over textbook selection. This hardly means that there is no deficiency. Dropout figures would also seem to be a valuable indicator of discontent in the schools.

New Mexico has the highest number of students per capita and the second highest dropout rate in the nation. As shown by the June 1, 1966 report from the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratories, racial minorities constitute the majority of these dropouts. Based on a population of 444,503 New Mexico residents presently 16 years and over, 27% of the Indians and 6% of the Spanish-Americans had no schooling whatsoever; this compares to 4% of all races combined. Ninety percent of the Indians and 82% of the Spanish-Americans had not gone beyond the eighth grade, whereas the figure for all races combined is 12%. Only 9% of the Spanish-Americans and 13% of the Indians completed high school; 24% of all races combined completed high school. Although separate figures were not available on the Negro, we believe that this minority would also show up substantially in dropout statistics. It is clear that these figures are in some ways out of date since they do not reflect possible advances in the last decade or so, but all indications suggest that the trend remains the same.

Educators in the State of New Mexico cannot remain complacent. These shocking figures are true, and they remain true. There are a number of possible causes for the high dropout rate among minority groups. Certainly the failure of New Mexico to adopt a policy of using integrated textbooks is of prime importance.

The NMFT brings to your attention the fact that the NMEA view is in direct contradiction to that of its parent organization, the National Education Association, which in a recent report on racial minorities in the southwest entitled, "The Invisible Minority," pointed out the tragic feelings of inferiority in a Spanish-American schoolgirl. "I am a Mexican. No matter what I attempt to do, my dark skin always makes me feel I will fail." The report offered as a possible solution the use of integrated textbooks and bilingual teaching methods, which would help the minority groups adapt to the dominant Anglo culture, while encouraging pride in their native traditions.

We are appalled that NMEA and state administrators take such a complacent view of minority education. We are concerned that culturally disadvantaged minorities in New Mexico, which represent a larger percentage of the population than in most southwestern states, are given virtually no recognition in school textbooks. Unless a more realistic approach is taken by the state education administrators and the NMEA, the situation could become a disgrace of such proportion that much needed federal funds would be withdrawn.

Yours very truly,

THORND C. NILSON,
President.