

complexity of American reality. But that which is truly representative of the American experience is its diversity: We are city and suburban, black and white (and yellow and red, too, for that matter), blue collar *and* white.

Further, though our ethnic and geographical variety is a key to American life, it cannot be the only rationale for textbooks; they must convey ideas as well. A variety of environments can introduce the child to a world that is wider than either city or suburb alone. The child needs to know that his point of contact with his fellow man is to be found in himself, in the nonenvironmental world of human responses. Conceptual and verbal horizons must be enlarged; this is not achieved merely by changing environments to right old wrongs.

Books can help children develop useful and strengthening concepts of self by stressing the inner reactions which are shared by all children. If education is to expand horizons, the literal environment must be subordinated to the self-evident truths of human experience. A Celtic myth or an African one, for example, is both more valid to non-Irish and non-Africans than any truncated and sterile recitation of backyard or street adventures. The issue is man's heritage, not the black man's or the white man's.

This move to "either-or" books raises yet another issue. By developing different books for specific ethnic or geographic subcultures, we make it too easy to forget that, to quote the president of the American Textbook Publishers Institute: "Textbooks that recognize and respect all kinds of human differences help young people to develop a sense of common destiny." If we produce books that "relate" only to one group, how can the members of that group develop that "common" destiny?

The call for books that, so belatedly, repair old wrongs has not only produced texts that starve the child with a diet as limited in its own way as his previous one. This dictum also tells some publishers only that they must produce—not integrated books—but merely integrated books to parallel existing and continuing segregated ones. Separate but equal, as it were.

I would raise the question, therefore, whether "separate-but-equal" books do not indeed nullify the best efforts of educators. At best, it seems anomalous that texts should be created which pander to the prejudices that we have officially abandoned. At worst, the production of one set of books for segregationists and another for integrationists circumvents moral imperatives, and does so in a particularly unpleasant way. If the President of the United States has suggested that the issue of segregation is moral and not political, when will we decide that it is also not commercial?

There was a day when Darwin was omitted from biology texts destined to be sold in Tennessee, when the Anglo-Saxon heritage was the only American heritage, when separate but equal satisfied too many of us. That day is past, and atavistic texts and opportunistic publishers are particularly out of place.

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THE ALL-WHITE WORLD OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

(By Nancy Larrick, former president of the International Reading Association, and well known writer about children and their education)

"Why are they always white children?"

The question came from a five-year-old Negro girl who was looking at a picturebook at the Manhattanville Nursery School in New York. With a child's uncanny wisdom, she singled out one of the most critical issues in American education today: the almost complete omission of Negroes from books for children. Integration may be the law of the land, but most of the books children see are all white.

Yet in Cleveland, 53 percent of the children in kindergarten through high school are Negro. In St. Louis, the figure is 56.9 percent. In the District of Columbia, 70 percent are Negro. Across the country, 6,340,000 nonwhite children are learning to read and to understand the American way of life in books which either omit them entirely or scarcely mention them. There is no need to elaborate upon the damage—much of it irreparable—to the Negro child's personality.

But the impact of all-white books upon 39,600,000 white children is probably even worse. Although his light skin makes him one of the world's minorities, the white child learns from his books that he is the kingfish. There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, in-