Education Task Force Report

TEXAS N. O. W.

July, 25, 1981

The State of Texas is one of the largest purchasers of public school textbooks in the world, because a percentage of revenue from public lands was assigned to their purchase several decades ago. At the same time, Texas has developed a fair and democratic process for citizen input to textbook adoption on an annual basis.

Feminists first took advantage of the State textbook adoption procedures in 1972, when three women filed Bills of Particulars with Texas Education Agency in Austin. This made them eligible to testify before the State Textbook Adoption Committee that summer, and before the State Board of Education in the fall, on American History books.

Twenty-five loosely-organized feminists wrote Bills in 1973, and about seven of them testified in Austin. This was a major year for textbook adoption, with basal readers for all grades to be chosen from among publishers' offerings.

Texas N.O.W. took over the coordination of feminist textbook protest in Texas in 1974, just as N.O.W. became organized at the State level. They followed the pattern of protest set in 1972-3, but wrote formal guidelines for participants which helped develop our successful method of analysis of sexism in textbooks. This is a very objective method, called "content analysis." Participation increased tremendously; at least 128 people wrote Bills of Particulars (over 400 of them), and almost 40 people testified in Austin. N.O. W. was not yet able to fund this Task Force, however. We paid our own expenses, and so did the expert witnesses we brought to Austin to testify about the evil effects of sexist textbooks on children.

Participation by N.O.W. continued at a high level each year thereafter, and confrontations with publishers' representatives (who had millions of dollars in sales at stake) became legendary. But people within Texas Education Agency began to talk of sexism and became more sympathetic to us as the years went by. Some members of the State Board of Education were also our friends, particularly Dr. Virginia Currey of Dallas. By 1978, we were seeing some acceptable textbooks, on which our reviewers wrote "no-Bill" reports. The acceptable books became more numerous in 1979. When basal readers came up for adoption again in 1980, most of them had obviously been heavily revised if not re-written, in order to cut down sexism.

This Task Force has been corrdinated at the State level from the Houston area since 1974. The following women have served as coordinators, two or three at a time, since that year:

KAY WHYBURN - MARY BUXTON - MARJORIE RANDAL - TWISS BUTLER - ELIZABETH GLENN.

We feel that a great deal has been accomplished in these eight years, although it took longer tha we had expoted. There is still a danger of sexist textbooks being

adopted in Texas, and we feel some degree of continued vigilance is necessary.

Marjorie Randal has recently arranged for six Xerox-paper cartons of TEA bound copies of Bills of Particulars and Publishers Responses, 1973 through 1980, to be donated for research purposes to the University of Houston at Clear Lake City. (See attache letters of consignment and acceptance.) We retain the right of reclamation sould the University dispose of these records, and we consign them on condition that they be made available to researchers. Private Task Force records remain in the hands of Rema Lou Brown and Marjorie Randal.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Randal
July 25, 1981