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P R O C E E D I N G S

PRESIDENT SHANKER: First, I'd like to welcome all the members of the press and the panelists, and other guests.

Today marks the release of a ground breaking analysis of some of the most commonly-used secondary school world history textbooks. Be believe that this will be the beginning of a very important process in American education.

The study follows a statement, which was issued several months ago, on the importance of teaching Democracy: a statement signed by a large number of distinguished Americans. Those who have seen the list of signatories have all remarked on the scope and the spread in terms of political, social and other views represented by the signers.

That was a statement telling that there was very wide agreement on the need to teach about Democracy and also on an approach: that the approach should largely be done through teaching of history which would give the background of how Democracy evolved and the major events in history that need to be understood in order to understand Democracy itself, as well as an understanding of the alternatives, other forms of government and how they developed.

The American Federation of Teachers is one of

three sponsors. The Educational Excellence Project and Freedom House are the other two.

Our own commitment is very long-standing. I was reminded just about a half an hour ago that John Dewey was charter member number one; and that the slogan on our stationery is "Education in Democracy; Democracy for Education", and it's been on our newspaper logo and letterhead since 1917.

I think we previously indicated that some of the stimulus for this came from the Jefferson Lecture which was given by Sidney Hook several years ago, which was widely reprinted, in which Sidney Hook persuasively argued that Democracy doesn't just continue to exist because it's here today; that it requires an understanding and a commitment, and that the schools have a very important mission here.

Now, the previous statement has been widely reported on and, for the most part, very favorably commented on.

The study that's released today is an analysis of the major textbooks that are used. It shows that since teachers do rely heavily on textbooks and since students rely on them, an analysis of what is in these textbooks leads to

the conclusion that those who use them are not covering the significant events in history that are needed to understand Democracy and alternative forms of government.

As I read it, none of these textbooks is a complete zero. There are parts of history and events and things that some of them handle well; but taking each textbook, one can say that none of them presents a good enough picture so that the teacher using the textbook of the students using it come through with what it is that they need.

Now, there are recommendations in this for a focus on certain events in the history of western civilization. Any textbook author or publisher can look at this survey.

I think we'll be able to go back to some of those books in later editions or in rewrites and come up with something which is far better than what they have at the present time.

As for the American Federation of Teachers, we are happy to announce that in addition to this report, which is being issued today authored by Paul Gagnon who is here, that we have been able to secure a grant which will allow Dr. Gagnon to meet with groups of teachers throughout the country

to discuss the issues involved in both the original statement and this report.

I hope that by the time we're finished we will have, in each state in the country, a number of teachers who have studied the issues that will be effective as citizens in appearing before school boards, in appearing before state selection committees, meeting with state commissioners of education, superintendents of public instruction, state boards of education; and to involve teachers all across the country in the process of, one, improving textbooks, and secondly, in pressing for an emphasis on history and dedication of a sufficient amount of time within the school program for this important study.

Now, I'd like to say a word or two about each of the panelists and then they will have their say about this particular program and it's importance.

Sitting next to me is Diane Ravitch, Chairman of the Textbook Advisory Committee. She is a well-known historian, an author of many books, professor of history and education at Teachers' College, Columbia University, and a person who has written a great deal critically about the nature of social studies teaching and "pop sociology", as she

called it in a recent article in the American Scholar, and the need for an emphasis on history.

We have Paul Gagnon who has a doctorate in history from Harvard University. He is Chairman of the History Department at the University of Massachusetts/Boston; has been an instructor at a teacher institute sponsored by the National Endowment for Humanities. He has written extensively and he is basically the author of the original document and report which you have before you today.

Bill Honig is Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of California, he was elected by an overwhelming vote last year for a second term; and he serves as Executive Officer and Secretary to the California State Board of Education and Director of the State Department of Education. He has been, and is, a major national leader in the movement to improve textbooks, curriculum, a lot of controversial stuff on science books with a great emphasis not just on methods, but on content.

Lynne Cheney became Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1986 as a former magazine editor and widely-published author. She also serves as a member of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United

States Constitution.

Alonzo Crim is, at present, the Superintendent of the Atlanta Public Schools. He is now on the Visiting Committee for the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He's a Board Member of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; has been involved with a number of projects FEDEA, CED report, a long list.

We are waiting for--she had some transportation difficulties, but she may arrive in the middle of this--Manya Ungar, who is National PTA President for 1987-'89 and has been involved with the PTA for about 30 years; former Chairman of the New Jersey Association of Public Schools and is now a Board Member of the New Jersey Public Education Institute. In addition to the PTA, she has worked extensively with the League of Women Voters and the National Field Service' International Intercultural Exchange.

The panelists will now make their statements. When all the statements are finished, I will ask that you not ask a question unless you are a member of the press. This is a press conference to which others have been invited; but we'd like the questions to come from the press.

Diane?

STATEMENT OF DIANE RAVITCH

MS. RAVITCH: I want to say just a word as the Chairman of the Textbook Advisory Committee.

Firstly, the Committee did consist of a number of really outstanding public school teachers--naturally, they're members of the AFT--and also several scholars and officials. The Committee worked actively with Dr. Gagnon in both the formation of the study as well as following it as it developed.

Dr. Gagnon was very, very forthright in circulating drafts, and in taking people's comments and suggestions and criticisms into consideration.

I should say that one of the reasons that everybody on the Advisory Committee thought this study was very important is because we did have a shared concern about, when children study the world, whether they were also learning about the story of Democracy and whether the story is being well told; and particularly concerned about whether there's a kind of a standoffish attitude in which the textbook author is neutral amongst all the systems and says, in effect, "Well, everyone has a right to do it their way."

I just came back from China a couple of weeks ago.

One of the things that concerned me most in my travels was that there were some Americans who took the attitude that if you believe in civil liberties, if you believe in civil rights, if you were concerned about people's dignity that was very ethnocentric because those are things that only Americans and Western Europeans, apparently, care about.

That was the kind of attitude, I think that the Textbook Advisory Committee thought should not be in textbooks. We really do want American children to understand that everybody, everywhere longs to be treated with dignity, longs to have the right to be heard, the right to practice their religion, the right to travel--all the rights that are listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights--and that our own contribution is important.

We think that these are not just American ideas: that they are ideas that should be taught in the schools and taught very critically and debated, and the story should be told through the history with a great deal of debate and discussion.

A couple of other things you should know about this collection for textbooks. Dr. Gagnon worked with Ruth Weittenberger for the AFT and other staff members here

compiling lists of textbooks which are adopted in many states all over the country.

In looking through these lists, they tried to select the texts that, as best they could tell, were the most widely adopted. As you probably know, textbook publishers do not give out their sales figures. So it was impossible to simply say which were the three, four, five or six most widely-used textbooks, so that there had to be this kind of preliminary survey which they did conduct; and ended up using those textbooks.

I also want to add that this study is the first of a two-part study. The other part that Dr. Gagnon is also writing will be a study of American history textbooks. I'm hoping that they will have that ready sometime later this year.

STATEMENT OF DR. GAGNON

DR. GAGNON: I could speak for a very long time, of course, since I wrote the whole thing.

[Laughter]

As Chairman of the Department, I have a Tuesday and Thursday schedule. So I'm accustomed to speaking for an hour and a quarter.

[Laughter]

But I would prefer to leave mostly the major points to the press kit that you already have and to allow as much time as I can for questions afterward. I would like to start out saying, however, that I'm somewhat embarrassed whenever I'm cast into the role of a critic of hard-working textbook writers.

I've written texts myself, not in competition with any of these, I hasten to add.

[Laughter]

I wanted to say that of all the textbooks used in high schools in history as cultural studies, perhaps the hardest of all to do a good job on is the world history text because the course is an impossible course to teach in a single year; and the textbook authors have to struggle with the problem of getting everything in that they are sure everyone else will put in.

They have to assume that the students who are taking the course in the ninth or tenth grade have had no background whatsoever. So their task is almost impossible: to create a basic book that will satisfy the needs of a single year's course for students whose prior knowledge they

cannot assume.

The older texts that I looked at years ago on ancient history, on English history, on European history were generally a lot better, even from the viewpoint of their complexity and their interest, in treating the background history of Democracy.

That, I think, is precisely because they had two whole years in which to cover things.

So I would begin by apologizing for the authors, but also to them. I look upon this study not so much as a critique of texts as it is an extended conversation with teachers who have to struggle with the world history course; and in the hope that, as I test ways in which to put certain kinds of detail of life and debatable material in the books or in the class, it will help them to pick out the theme of the history and the adventures of Democracy as one of the two or three themes they can pursue throughout the course.

Obviously, in a single year you cannot teach the whole thing: pick out two or three continuing themes. Or the hope here is one endless cycle of unconnected fact.

There are several themes people can choose from. Modernization is one of them: transformation of traditional

societies into modern societies. Cultural interchange is another theme; the spread of the major religions is another.

The theme of Democracy and its origins and its adventures is simply one among two or three that I would recommend; but I think it's terribly important for all the reasons we have already expressed in the statement and which are expressed over and over again in the study itself.

Also, I think, the course of world history in the ninth or tenth grade could do so much to improve there interest, the liveliness of the United States history course in the eleventh grade: to put it in the perspective of the world, of other people; to put it in the long historical background and put it in the long debate over the ideas of human nature, whether we're good or bad, or neither of the above, how we are best to be governed.

My concern, I suppose, is, of course, with the teaching of Democracy principles and value; but I would say my greater concern, which would encompass the teaching of ideas, is that the high school curriculum in social studies and history, in particular, do everything it can to increase the level of political debate.

That is, I'm interesting in texts as helps to

creating sophistication--sophistication of history; sophistication of politics especially--to help people confront the kinds of complexities, the kinds of impossibilities to find the simple, quick responses to human problems that have always been extraordinarily complex.

I think as far as specific examples of the kinds of perspective that I think we all ought to have, perhaps I could leave it to the question period as well as some of the major--what?--understanding of politics that I call sophisticated.

I come at this from the point of view of a middle-of-the-road liberal Democrat, I suppose. One of my models for the--what?--sophisticated or, at least, complicated political debate I hope all graduates of high schools could ultimately engage in was the later Hubert Humphrey; and that the whole micro-thrust here is to have people understand more and more how Democracy came to be; what conditions have allowed it to work out; and, most particularly, perhaps, what conditions and problems have prevented it from working out or surviving in certain societies in the past.

I think one learns anything primarily from experience; and I think history, well taught, is an extension

of experience. I don't think you can grasp anything very important about political conduct, political values, political guidelines simply by taking them as slogans or constants.

I think that one has to feel the drama and the human reality of Democracy and dictatorship, of peace and war, or justice confronted in a good story; and history is a good and compelling story if it's well taught.

For specifics and for questions about other assertions in the manuscript, perhaps I had better leave that to the question period.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Bill?

STATEMENT OF BILL HONIG

MR. HONIG: I want to thank Professor Gagnon and Diane Ravitch because California has just adopted a new history/geography framework. Professor Gagnon helped us out initially in thinking through which way we should go; what's wrong with existing textbooks, as has been presented here today; and, also, what should we do about correcting the situation.

Diane participated on our framework, on our Committee, and actually did the work through on this

document. So they have helped take some of these ideas you're hearing here today and put them into a document which we think will influence textbooks coming into California and the way we teach history and geography in social science over the next three or four years.

I'd like to just give you my personal view of this and why I think this kind of meeting is so important for us as educators and for us a country.

If we cannot figure out how to convey to each new generation the strength and the beauty of a Democratic ideal, then we're putting this Democracy at risk. That has been clear right from the start, when we initiated this experiment called the United States.

It was clear education was a major part of developing a civic understanding; and it's just as clear today, in what we're doing in California, at least, where the student population is 48 percent minority.

We have to figure out how to make this idea come alive for the diversity of students that we're dealing with; but we don't. That's not just the textbooks here: it's the whole enterprise that does not infuse enough understanding or passion or engagement with our young people.

We are all going to pay a price if we can't figure out how to do it better.

It came home clear to me when, a year ago, in a meeting in New York on the Bicentennial of the Statue of Liberty while all of us look-alikes were prancing on television, they had us closeted in a small room in New York talking about Democracy.

There were lawyers there and there were representatives of different professions and different parts of the United States, parts of our population.

It took a day before the idea that the real protector of this Democracy is not the Supreme Court, is not law, is not statutes, it's not even ideas of textbooks. The real protection of Democracy rests in the people themselves.

That's where we should primarily look; and that's the reason why you invest so much in education. Thinking it through, that's that radical idea of Democracy: that people actually can govern themselves; and that was a revolutionary idea when it was created.

Nobody today grasps how much a leap of faith that was. At that time, if you really took a realistic view of it, there was no way that the people of a country could

govern themselves.

It never had happened before; it always had been corrupted.

So this country was founded on a dream, on an ideal; and we somehow have to get the power and the beauty of that idea across to our young people. It is a beautiful, it is a grand idea; and the concept, as Professor Gagnon says in most people's minds now in our intellectual leadership in this country, that that is only fit for Englishmen or only fit for those who come out of a European experience is a corruption of the beauty and power of that basic idea.

When we see Democracy erupting in Korea, we see Democracy erupting in the Philippines or in Argentina, that should set our blood running, quickly. There's an irrepressible among people: "I want to choose. I want to be part of my own future. I want to be part of governance."

So we're dealing with something that is powerful and should have worldwide significance. We're guardians of the flame, in part, because we're one of the first ones to start it, make it work, and it is still up to grabs.

The jury is out, which is a fitting analogy because the jury comes right out of this tradition: the idea

of a jury of your peers. The jury is still out on whether it can work and whether it can work in a diverse society.

Whether it can work with diverse peoples in a pluralistic society still have to be fought for. No way are we going to win if we can't transmit to this generation and each coming generation what it's all about.

Professor Gagnon said some very telling things in his work here. He said it's difficult to keep a Democracy going. You have to understand it; you have to be willing to participate in it; you have to have some allegiance to it.

One of our jobs as educators is how to put that together, package that so kids can understand it. That's going to take some intellectual effort.

One of the most important things is that an actual professor of history would take the time to read textbooks and tell us what's wrong with them. This is the first time that's happened in a long time.

Usually that has no been legitimate, for people in university to do that. Hopefully he has tenure.

[Laughter]

So he can do what he darn pleases about it. Lucky for us.

But we need that kind of help. We need people like him to say, along with people in AFT, master teachers, who are actually doing this day by day but nobody knows about it, to put them together and say, "How do we teach kids in East LA these principles of Democracy effectively?"

That is a five- or ten-year task at best. Al Shanker talks about a small grant to work with teachers. It has to be a lot more than that.

We have to invest our resources in full-scale training. We have the documents; we have the ideas; they have consensus and legitimacy. But that doesn't mean anything unless we can somehow get teachers, wholesale, to go through the kind of experience that it takes to internalize and make these ideas live with them.

They have to know the circumstances, the stories, the events, the people, the documents; how to present them; where kids go off on it, where they don't understand it.

There's an aphorism that always gets me: We somehow figure out how to make the selling of soap very exciting; and we take something as potentially as exciting as history with real people and real events and things that are central to who we are and who we should be, and make it dull

as dish water.

We have to put some of our resources into making this subject appealing. We think kids are just going to grab it because it means so much to us. It doesn't work that way. Those of you who are teachers know that.

So the content methodological issues are important to us.

A couple of other points about the California framework. We did try to obviate some of the problems that these people have pointed out.

We're going to spend more time teaching history. For example, we now, in our framework,--Diane was very instrument in this--are going to change the whole idea of expanding horizons. It's been in textbooks for elementary for 40 years: no justification, no research, no back-up; very boring.

You don't really start with the cop on the block or the grocery clerk as a way of getting kids thrilled with what the world is all about. You start with people and stories, and things that make some profound meaning to kids.

So the first three years are going to be revamped. We are going to teach state history in the fourth grade as

other states do.

Then, at the fifth grade, we're going to start with a very heavy investment in history, geography--three years of U. S. history and three years of world history--so that there's plenty of time to get into the details, the ideas and the events and the people so that kids can grab hold of it; so that it doesn't become abstract: it's not just how many facts can you cover in one year of world history.

We're going to get into it in detail. We have outlined and listed some of the areas we think are important which we hope is consistent with this work here.

Fifth grade, U. S. history in general; sixth grade, starting with ancient civilizations and the first social bands and the first civilizations, and going up through Greece and Rome--and China and other parts of the world so it's not just western: it's a much broader local perspective in that sense of the word.

Then we are going to spend time in the seventh on the whole Middle Renaissance and Middle Ages through the world; and some of the experiences in England so forth. Then, again, to U. S. history, but not all the way through.

Some of you who aren't educators, we go through

U. S. history three times, all the way through; and you rush through it three times in a row.

This time, we're going to stop early on, only go through the 19th century, so you can concentrate at that eighth grade level. That's a radical change in how we do it that we hope other people will follow.

Ninth grade is electives. Tenth grade, we get back to world history again and give the modern perspective with Democracies, and the French and English and American Revolutions, and start to go into Enlightenment in enough detail so that kids get a grasp of this.

Then in the eleventh grade, we'll go back to U. S. history in modern times: the 20th century, Industrial Revolution, world power and so forth. Then we'll cap it off with one-half year of Principles of American Democracy to kind of get the political theory and the Federalist Papers about this country, what we believe and what the assumptions are we have made so if you are a truck driver or going on to be a college professor, you have grasp of this; and also a half year of Economics so these kids come out with enough time.

That's what they do in France. The invest the

time in France, as Professor Gagnon has pointed out. They do think that the average person growing up in that society can grasp these sophisticated ideas.

They have that assumption, which is an assumption of Democracy, and they follow through on it.

We have had a Democratic principle, but we have had an elitist form of education in which we think only some can get these ideas and the rest, we just figure, "You don't need them."

That is a very serious idealistic philosophy in a Democracy. We're starting to go against that right now.

So anyone that says that this is an elitist philosophy I think has it backwards. This really assumes that kids can grasp these basic principles of our cultural and of our political wisdom, and can handle them.

A final couple of comments. We haven't shirked religion or ethics or morals. We put that in.

We think that the curriculum, instructional program, should help young people not only understand Democracy and participate and be willing to think not just about their individual selves, but the whole society.

We also think that Democracy rests upon the

willingness of large numbers of people to be ethical human beings: whether they get it from religion, whether they get it from politics or whether they just do it doesn't matter. It depends on their willingness to be ethical and strive for some standards.

Those standards we call culture. The wisdom of the past is an ennobling weapon in education.

Somehow, for 10 or 15 years, we've looked at it as oppressive and holding kids down. It's just the opposite: if it's done right, this is the product of 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 years of cultural development and these ideas, at the least, are very powerful in the education of young kids.

We have to systematically put this culture before them if we want to give them a shot at having true choice in this society.

Finally, just a note about religion itself. We have said specifically in this document that you can't duck the issue. You have to include instruction. People came here for religious reasons; religion played a major part in the the Democratic revolution.

The sermons in New England were as much a part of it as the Committees on Correspondence; and the idea of

dignity before God is a precursor to dignity before political organizations.

So religious ideas had a major part in who we are and what we have become. Religion also plays a part in our modern life which kids should know about. When they read a story in literature, you should be able to go through a basal textbook and have some story where a family actually goes to church. That's a realistic expectation.

There are families in this country who do go to church and kids should at least see that in some of the stories. They don't right now.

Finally, the whole ethical issue of religious part is a part of that: that we don't teach sectarian or doctrine or dogma. That's out of bounds: it's unconstitutional. You also teach ethical relativism; but you can read the Bible or look at what Confucions say or Buddhists about the ideas of truth or honesty or justice.

There is some very high thought that is the product of some of these ideas that our kids need to know if they're going to be illiterate; and I'm sorry to say I think there are illiterates coming out of our school.

That's some of the things that we have bitten off

in California. It's 15 years of hard work. We look forward to a cooperative effort to make it happen.

FRESIDENT SHANKER: Thank you, Bill.

Lynne?

STATEMENT OF LYNNE CHENEY

MS. CHENEY: It's one of my great pleasures to be here because I like Bill and was so pleased to see an honest to goodness academic taking an interest in what goes on in our elementary and secondary schools.

We, at the National Endowment for the Humanities, think that if our schools are to improve, this is something that must happen: people from the academy must look at the schools, must take an interest in what's going on.

If there ever was a golden age of education--and I know that it is a subject of great debate if it ever did exist--it existed around the turn of the century, for the first decade or so of this century; and one of the characteristics of it was that there were fine professors of history and literature who were interested in what was happening in our schools.

So my first reason for being here is simply to congratulate the good professor on having undertaken this

initiative.

Secondly, though, the particular idea that he has hold of is such an important one: the idea of Democracy; the idea of the theme of Democracy throughout history.

It's been a powerful human yearning that you can see in the historical record back thousands of years. Somebody showed me, a few days ago, a beautiful quote. I didn't mean to use this today, but the professor will know if I have the wrong author. I think it was Herodotus.

I know it was 2,000 years ago and I can remember the substance of the quote. Herodotus, I think it was, listed all the things that are terrible when a tyrant ruled. He said, "When a tyrant rules, the women are carried off and the homes are burned and the men are put to death at whim."

Then he said, "Ah, but when a people govern, first the very name of it is so beautiful; and when a people govern, none of these things happen."

So it is a human yearning that has been present throughout history that people have striven to fulfill again and again. The Founders, in the Constitution, as Bill Honig points out, took a great leap into the darkness when they tried it with an extended country such as ours.

They were well-versed in their history. They knew that Athens had tried it and Athens had fallen. They knew that Rome had tried it, that Rome had fallen.

A country of an extent like ours, though, had never even tried it. So they called it an experiment and it's an experiment that we are still working to keep alive.

I'm here, third, because at the Endowment we have been looking at elementary and secondary education, particularly at textbooks, and have become very concerned with the lack of emphasis in education and in textbooks on content.

Now, this might strike those of you who don't spend your lives in the world of education as a peculiar thing. How can you talk about a textbook and not have content in it?

Well, indeed, you can.

Our textbooks seem to be more oriented towards skills--toward teaching people how to think--and less interested in, less oriented toward giving them important and substantive things to think about.

As Bill mentioned, you can see this especially in the social studies texts in the early grades: the first four

grades dominated by the expanding environments concepts. It is almost an art form that I can hardly believe--but it has been--

[Laughter]

--that you can write textbooks for children for the first four grades and have almost no content in them.

So the content of our textbooks, the content of humanities education is so important; and I think that unless people like Professor Gagnon take an interest in textbooks and talk about what's in them, we will fail to have content emphasized in the way it should be.

Bill has led California into a state of enlightenment where they are beginning to talk to textbook publishers about things like, "Give us a story that makes the events of the past unfold in all their significance; give us a narrative that shows people caught up in human drama and that makes the drama of the past clear."

But, in many states,--in fact, in almost every other state besides California--these are not the criteria that are set forth for textbooks.

Just for your enlightenment, I brought today a textbook checklist from a state which shall remain mercifully

unnamed. It sets forth what is looked for by adoption committees who are choosing textbooks.

It falls into four categories: skills, organization, reading and, fourth and last, content. Let me just give you some of the kinds of questions that this mythical--except it really exists somewhere in the Midwest--

[Laughter]

--state is looking for, these committees are looking for.

"To what extent are graph and chart skills stressed?" "To what extent is the table of contents adequate?" "To what extent are there opportunities for alternative teaching strategies?"

"To what extent does the text provide for phonetic pronunciation of new words?" "To what extent does the text lend itself to independent individualized instruction?"

Now, when I ask that last one, I'm into the contents section. There are the questions are considered content.

[Laughter]

"To what extent are charts and graphs integrated into the content of the text?" "To what extent are the

illustrations, graphs and charts up to date?" "To what extent do informative captions accompany all illustrations?"

"To what extent are photos carefully selected for their teaching content?" Here are charts and graphs again: "To what extent are charts and graphs integrated relevant to the content?"

Well, now you can see that if you are sitting on an adoption committee and you have this chart with you, you are not going to be looking at the right and important things when you pick out a textbook.

Skills are important; charts and graphs are important; but most important, I think, is whether the textbook can capture a child's imagination, whether a textbook can unfold the events of the past so that the significance of them is clear and so that their importance is clear.

Because I think those things are crucial, I'm very happy to be here today with Professor Gagnon.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Thank you.

Lonnie?

STATEMENT OF ALONZO CRIM

MR. CRIM: I'm here in the role of a cheer leader

today. I certainly wish to applaud AFT's Democracy Project; and I want to enthusiastically receive Paul's textbook study.

Actually, I would like to just make a few comments from the prospective of the practitioner. Atlanta has participated for the last ten years in the Council of Great City Schools' Student Exchange Program. We have had students from Japan, the Republic of China and Taiwan, and most recently Zimbabwe.

Our student ambassadors generally report that students in those countries know more about their countries than students in the U. S. ordinarily know; and, in fact, they ordinarily know more about the USA than our student ambassadors frequently visiting those countries, and that includes the language.

[Laughter]

One of our student ambassadors to Zimbabwe recently told me--and I think this is significant because when I speak to the Council of Great City Schools, for most of us in the large cities, the 50 large cities in the United States, our pupils population tends to be a majority of minority pupils--of an experience which just veritabily transformed his life.

On the way to Zimbabwe, they stopped off in Senegal. While in Senegal, they had the opportunity to go to Gory Island. Gory Island, you know, is that last departure point for the slaves during the time of slavery.

The oral historian there in Gory Island shared with these students the story of the imprisonment of the slaves in the little caverns all about the island, as well as the perils of the transport of the slaves from Gory Island first to London and then to the New World.

He told them--these were predominantly black students--that "You black Americans ought to know that you're super people because your forefathers survived that imprisonment and the perils of their transport."

I had to wonder if these kids had perceived of themselves in that way what a difference that would have made.

The study of Democracy--and Paul and Bill have made the point--as it relates to minority students in particular, I represent predominantly black students, is an imperative for those students. It's not an elitist topic at all.

They should know and appreciate the struggle of

their forefathers and how recent it has been for Democracy to come to this. When I went to Atlanta, 14 years ago, the president of my board of education, Dr. Mays,--who, if he would have lived, would have been 93 this coming Saturday-- shared with me.

Here is a man who's president of Moorehouse College, that had received two graduate degrees--a doctorate degree at the University of Chicago--who shared with me that he voted for the first time at age 56; and he received a honorary doctorate degree for every one of those 56 years that he was unable to vote.

But, indeed, our young people have to know that They are standing on the shoulders of people who have gone before if we are to anticipate their need being able to make significant contributions to our nation.

I'm distressed by the lack of excitement in our Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution. I would hope that through such efforts as this and others, maybe for the 300th Celebration of our Constitution we will have a great deal more excitement.

Lastly, having had the high privilege of working with Mortimer Atter and the PEDEA group, in those particular

reports let me point out that maybe the three major objectives of education ought to be employment, citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Those objectives are really extrapolations of Aristotle's "Man is a Maker; Man is a Doer; Man is a Thinker."

I like to think that as we pursue the deliberate study of Democracy, also that we're going to have to look at the context of how we deliver that kind of instruction. Of course, if Mortimer were here, he would want to speak that we must teach not only by telling, as we are now doing, but we also have to teach in coaching and, most importantly, as all of this says so significantly, we teach through ideas in an exchange with students where students themselves will participate in their own learning.

I think that we have to join not only the content, but also the instructional delivery modalities if we're really going to obtain the kinds of outcomes that we desire.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Thank you, Lonnie.

All right, the press. Yes?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: I wonder, are you talking about

teaching Democracy or are you talking about having a cheer leader for Democracy? I worry a little bit about indoctrination rather than teaching.

MR. HONIG: Well, the last thing we need are a bunch of unthinking Rambos in the country.

We are talking not about cheer leading; we are talking about thinking; we're talking about knowing about our past; we're talking about knowing the unhappy, the unfortunate and the evil things, as well as the struggles to overcome them.

No, this is not propaganda and it's not indoctrination. It's education in the best sense of the word.

MR. CRIM: May I speak to that?

I don't know if you can see this, but let me just tell you what it is. This continuum is from zero to 18; and the younger the child is, the more indoctrination. The young child, however, will begin to reason.

As the child grows older, we apply more reasoning and, at the young age, it is literally indoctrination. To say that we would not be doing some indoctrination, I think, would be false; but, indeed, we have to reach reasoning

simultaneously.

There comes a point that they will cross and, hopefully, where more reasoning will apply.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Yes.

QUESTION: Where does this process for improvement begin: at the state level, with the textbook industry, with the teacher, or all simultaneous? It has to get started, but in what form?

MR. HONIG: All simultaneously. States have a power here because they set the general curriculum and, in some states, adopt textbooks. They have the potential for leadership to get people together to buy these ideas.

So you can create the climate under which a lot of this can happen if you work on that.

A couple of people here mentioned a crucial aspect of this professional agreement: that it hampers teachers, it hampers superintendents, it hampers the profession if there are disparate voices saying, "You have to do this," "You have to do that," "You have to do this."

If people buy what Profession Gagnon said--"Hey, here's what we're trying to accomplish and here is something that's wrong"--and that's agreed upon, then you can go

through it and carry out the steps.

If we go through the effort in California of getting large numbers of people to buy this general approach, which we have done and there's some controversy--for the most part, there's general agreement and consensus on this--then it clears the air.

Then you have the five or ten years of hard work of doing professional development and how teachers are trained and curriculum development, textbook adoption and the time you make it happen at the particular school site level.

So it takes both general definition and clearing the air and consensus-building, at the same time site agreement: "This is what we're going to have to do in order to make it happen in our school."

MS. CHENEY: In terms of textbooks, though, it's important to point out that Bill is in an almost unique position. Those of you who don't typically write about education may not know that California textbook selections are among the most important in the country.

Maybe Texas is a little more highly regarded, but only because they put fewer books on the shelf.

In any case, as I understand it one of the people

who testified for the new history framework was a woman from Nevada who said, "Please adopt this framework so that we can get better textbooks."

So what Bill is doing--and this answers the question about where it starts--is at the state level. American education is local.

The state level is so important in what Bill is doing it can have ripple effects that will be felt across the nation.

MS. RAVITCH: I want to make a comment on the issue of indoctrination. I think the California curriculum is a terrific curriculum, having been involved in the conception of it.

I must say that to produce a curriculum like that requires a state leader like Bill Honig and the people that he has appointed around him because it takes tremendous courage to allow a curriculum to be historically-based and not to make so many compromises that you end up with the same thing that everybody else has all over the country.

He showed the courage to let this go through and fight for it through all of the interest groups.

First of all, the teaching of Democracy begins in

the early grades not as indoctrination, but as teaching the value of sharing and respect for other people. It begins in kindergarten, first grade, second grade.

It means things like taking turns, listening to the other person, listening to the person who disagrees and giving them respect as they disagree, and it also involves a multi-cultural understanding: kids from different cultures and that not everyone has to be alike.

Those are Democratic values that are part and parcel of the curriculum. As the telling of history begins, there is an emphasis on controversy, on accuracy, and on drama; and there's no attempt to paper over any of the failings of Democracy.

Quite to the contrary: The good, the bad and the ugly are there, and so is the idealism and the magnificence of the ideals, and our failure very often to attain them.

But I think it's that combination of controversy, accuracy and drama, and honestly, that is needed to make a better point.

DR. GAGNON: If I could add on the issue of indoctrination, too, it seems to me--and always has--that the study of history is a kind of immersion in an, what I

called earlier, extended experience: other people's experiences.

It doesn't necessarily make for liberals or conservatives. You can think of prominent people at either end of the political spectrum within the Democratic bounds who have prided themselves on and have been, indeed, committed students of history.

I think I value it, in large part, precisely because it prevents indoctrination and it provides the kind of prospective and appreciation for complexity and human variety that ends up, it seems to combining a tendency to treasure what is best and most humane with a tendency to be skeptical about almost any kind of political formula or answer.

What it does, it seems to me, is it seems to raise the level of the day: you can't get away with simple answers whether you're coming from one part of the spectrum or the other.

This is one of its attributes, I think.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Yes?

QUESTION: We've heard a lot about, in previous years, textbook publishers claims that they're going to make

textbooks teacher-proof: that teachers were not bright enough to teach these kinds of complex ideals that so many Americans now seem to not be able to grasp.

What is it in the project that is going to make sure that teachers are, in fact, going to be able to teach these more complicated ideas that will be in textbooks?

MR. HONIG: Well, I think you certainly see, in this study, that there is no effort to teacher-proof. Quite the contrary.

There is the emphasis on need to involve teachers in elementary and secondary schools with scholars in the universities and to bring about greater involvement. The next step in this is essentially going to be a teacher involvement in a teacher education process; and that's slow. It takes time.

But there is no effort here to try to create a bunch of materials while will somehow be directly going to students and bypassing teachers. We won't work that way and we're not trying to do it that way.

QUESTION: Is there a generation out there that's been short-changed, or more than one generation, in not learning about Democracy the way that you're proposing it?

MS. RAVITCH: I'll respond to that only because I have a book coming out on September 10th.

[Laughter]

It's funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and it's called What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?. This is a report on the first National Assessment of History and Literature, and there are a quite a number of questions on the assessment dealing with issues of specific literacy, knowledge of the Constitution, and a fairly basic understanding of Democratic history.

I would say that there is a substantial portion of this generation that has been short-changed based on the results of the assessment. If you looked at things like the history of civil rights, there are many areas where our students just don't know.

I can give you one specific. It's sort of important, I think, to know about the Civil War because that testing of the Nation from which all sorts of things followed, including three very important constitutional amendments even though they really were not put into practice for many years afterwards; but it's basic American history.

I think it was close to three-fourths of our kids

on the survey who didn't know in what half century the Civil War occurred. My co-author and I found that a fairly startling statistic because it's very hard to understand American history if you have no sense of what the issue were in the Civil War and what provoked it and what it led to.

So I would say that it's a subject of concern.

QUESTION: But do we know, is it just this generation? Do their parents know?

MS. RAVITCH: In all candor, there is not the comparative data. Anybody who says that it's worse than it used to be isn't telling you the truth because there is no comparative data.

There are spot surveys here and there, but there's nothing where the same question was asked or the same test was given over a long period of time; and nothing else is really comparable.

MR. CRIM: Let me just quickly say: The only thing good about the good old days is that their gone.

[Laughter]

QUESTION: If schools are going to be comparing the United States to totalitarian systems and countries like the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, where

are we going to get accurate information about those nations and what life is really like there to replace some of the misconceptions that are being taught today?

MR. HONIG: I don't believe there is a lack of information.

QUESTION: There was some information on the People's Republic of China in saying that they have freedom because everyone has a job, everyone has medical care. In fact, we know that that's actually the kind of information that the government has provided.

Where are you going to get some really accurate information?

MR. HONIG: Well, that was a test question.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: Let me respond.

MR. HONIG: Sure.

PRESIDENT SHANKER: What we did is we picked some historical examples where there was pretty accurate historical work: What did Lenin do to extinguish freedom and rights in Russia? We have a pretty good idea of that.

What did Stalin do when he killed millions of people in the Ukraine, which was an intentional governmental action? It was a genocide, if you will, and it was a class

action and it was an action against a class and it was for a political reason.

There are historical materials. We put in the Cambodian example; we put in Argentina with torture: we have a pretty good understanding of what happened there.

What happens in an abuse of power when people pick somebody up off the street and torture them just for the pure joy of it? That's something you have to protect against.

We had the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide. These are historical examples of why you have Democratic protection.

It's interesting. The Armenian Archbishop in California called me when we were talking about how much to put in here and his first statement was, "The reason this is so important is not because it happened to Armenians. The reason it is important is because this is what can happen if you don't have Democratic protections."

We have lost the ability, up until just recently, of saying something concrete: "Hey, this is not something we like. It's not good to torture people"; "It's not good to extinguish freedom of the press," or ". . . put your enemies in jail," or these things of things, and it happens and it's

not right. Our books are too bland in that statement.

When you get back to the indoctrination, the danger of too much fear of indoctrination is a bland book because you're not willing to take a strong enough stand on things that are important.

I don't think we should care that we hold firm beliefs or passionate beliefs or believe that certain things are better than other things as long as we do it with a certain amount of respect and understanding that the essential Democratic idea is that you're eventually going to make your own choice.

See, we have our own corrective indoctrination because if we're true to what we're trying to indoctrinate, as Lonnie says, initially you have to give a social stamp of approval. One of the social stamps of approval we give is: We want you to think for yourself. We want you to make up your own mind.

But you have to choose from enough knowledge and perspective that the choice is a real choice.

That's somewhat different than in other countries who say, "Here's the way it is and here's the way it always was, and we don't really want you to think about it."

MR. HONIG: There's also information. The Chinese don't deny that you're not permitted to criticize the government. It's pretty clear when there's a Democracy War or student protests.

There's vast information available from Soviet sources on the rapid decline in longevity. It's available from Soviet sources.

Standard of living figures are available; the enforced abortion program in China is pretty open. There's a tremendous amount of material on what elections mean in those countries, what the limits are of political participation, the existence of these underground circulations is an indication of what happen with the press; there is evidence of what happens with freedom of religion.

QUESTION: It's going to start getting into the school.

MR. HONIG: Yes. Right.

DR. GAGNON: Could I address one point?

Among historians, one of the heroic questions is journalism: that is, the information that we are going to have to have will come from the same kind of people who reported out of Germany in '33 or '34, or out of Cambodia or

Vietnam.

I think that as you study political history, especially,--say the origins of the world wars--you begin to worry about the level of information and you see that some countries don't know enough about others. You begin to get hints about the dangers of jumping to simple conclusions.

It's does place sharply where the importance of the question is.

QUESTION: Professor Gagnon, in your study of these five textbooks did you think they were too neutral and didn't take a strong enough position that the Democratic government is the best government? Did you find that these textbooks are too neutral in saying that Democracy is just one choice: that it wasn't better or worse than others?

Or was that not something you found?

DR. GAGNON: No, I did not find it.

I found that they are bland and uninteresting, in part because they have stuck in so many details. They sometimes tend to be pious toward the religious and cultural and social morays of Third World countries and to imply that we or the Soviets, for that matter, are somehow--what will I say?--less spiritual or rewarding or moral.

There is a kind of unwillingness to examine, say, the treatment of women in Third World countries because they appear reluctant to be critical. The problem with their presentation of Democracy is that it isn't alive, it isn't complex, it isn't interesting: you don't know where it's been.

QUESTION: But they are affirmative toward Democracy, I take it.

DR. GAGNON: Generally, yes.

QUESTION: That was one of the quotations that came out in the statement a couple months ago, that the schools somewhere weren't being positive enough about Democracy.

I take it you found that that was not so: in fact, they were positive. They weren't interesting, but they were positive.

DR. GAGNON: In these texts, I did not find that I worried over that. No, that's right.

QUESTION: Now, what about the issue, also, in one history about including different group histories. That has come up: I mean, the place of blacks in history, women, immigrant groups; that sort of thing.

That's become a big debating point in the presentation of history.

Are you critical of these books for putting too many specific group histories in them? Do you want a sort of common general group history? Is that what you're arguing for? Do you think there's enough group history or there should be more?

DR. GAGNON: I think that's a tough question, especially with the world history texts. That's a question that I'm going to have to tackle much more directly in the U. S. history texts, which still haven't absorbed the group history sufficiently; or where they do give--what?--other non-traditional historical actors a place, it's often an embarrassingly artificial place.

So for the history of minorities, of women, of native Americans the spacing in the U. S. texts is often ample, with pictures and everything else; but, quite often, the historians who write text haven't brought everyone in naturally.

They sometimes are rather over-pious, I'd say: they take a kind of Parson Weems approach to Third World countries or minorities over here.

I don't think it's a question of space. It's a question of the text picking out those themes that are important and actually giving the students enough material.

QUESTION: I think what you were arguing for is that there isn't enough space given to western European human history, particularly that most directly connected with the development of the United States.

MR. HONIG: There's an article in the American Historical Journal about eight months ago that said we went through a period of political histories: the great histories where they had a theme; it could have been economic, it could have been political, it could have been growth of Democracy. There's a story there.

Then we went and did a lot of research work on the social history, the new history.

Now, a lot of that stuff is very engaging for students. It's interesting. But we went to almost no themes, no broader implications; and it was just this disparate view of this, that and the other thing.

What they're saying now in the historical profession, as I understand it, is somebody ought to put that all back together again. You have to have over-arching

themes: you have to incorporate this.

You can't leave out the social history, the history of people that took place within the history because it happened and it's intriguing for kids; but it has to be done together.

Now, we have not had the geniuses to sit down and work that through and write those kinds of texts. If we had the kind of intellectual attention that we put to selling goods in this country to selling Democracy, we'd figure out how to do that.

That means people like Paul, who now critique the book--we have to get some people like him or whoever will do it to write those books and make that integration both political and social.

I think those would be very great texts if we did that.

MS. CHENEY: I intended to ask about the literacy question. I wondered how many people here understood Professor Gagnon's reference to a Parson Weems version of history.

Parson Weems wrote this very heroic biography of George Washington that George Washington could do no wrong.

Historians refer to that as a Parson Weems approach: being very pious and uncritical.

Just as a point of cultural literacy, I thought we might translate that.

[Laughter]

PRESIDENT SHANKER: I want to thank you very much for coming. I'm sure the members of the panel will be available for a few more minutes for members of the press who still have pressing questions.

[At 2:25 p.m., the session was concluded.]