

Panel Finds Negro Omitted From History Texts

History textbooks now widely used in Michigan schools were found to perpetuate racism through inaccurate, misleading and distorted treatment of minority groups according to a report given to the State Board of Education last week.

The report, the work of a panel of nationally known historians, found 13 selected textbooks "very seriously deficient in their treatment of minorities in general and Negroes in particular."

A committee of three white and two Negro educators was appointed a year ago by Ira Polley, state superintendent of public instruction, who directed them to review social studies texts used in the state.

The committee was aided by a panel of six historians who each reviewed two books that committees research showed were most extensively used.

"Perhaps the most serious indictment that can be made against the books that were reviewed is that they are historically inaccurate," the report charged.

As an error of omission, the report said that the Negro does not "exist" in these books. "He is absent from colonial society, ignored in the Civil War, disappears after Reconstruction and there is nothing on the black codes, the KKK, white supremacy, poverty, and the other problems that plagued the Negro in the South after the Civil War."

IN ANOTHER CHARGE, the report shows how one book gives more attention to famed Civil War photographer Matthew Brady than to the Emancipation Proclamation. Another describes "the splitting of the atom in a way that seven-year-olds can understand but fails to mention the desegregation decision of 1954." The same book, the report notes, ignores the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and treats World War II without mentioning Hitler.

"If a seven-year-old can comprehend the splitting of the atom, he can understand genocide," the report said.

The report lists errors of commission as well. One textbook describes the "shouting and singing" of slaves at work, without comment, and another, in a teacher's edition, suggests the pupils sing spirituals "to illustrate one of the happier aspects of plantation life."

"This gives the distorted impression that to the slaves the source of spirituals was happiness, which is patently erroneous,"

OTHER ERRORS cited by the report included those textbooks which avoid the controversial, ignore the current civil rights struggle, rely on outdated historical research and refuse to take a moral stand.

The historians in this study find that the books they examined do not seem to take any kind of moral stand on any issue, even when such a stand would be clearly consistent with democratic values," the report said.

The committee added in their report that they were even more disturbed by the "system" which permits preparation and distribution of books that fall

Car, Truck Title Issue Hits High

LANSING -- Car and truck title insurance for the first five months of 1968 hit an all-time high.

Transfers accounted for the bulk of the May activity with about 109,000 processed. There were more than 85,000 new applications for title certificates.

The second week of the month, May 6-10, was the strongest with 17,500 new applications and 89,500 transfers.

Michigan Department of State processed 199,000 certificates of title in May to bring the five-month total to 918,894. That's 22,349 ahead of 1965, the banner year in the automotive industry, and 93,679 ahead of last year.

The continued surge indicates a 2-million year and quite likely a record. The top title insurance year was 1965 with 8,100,240. The May 1968 total was the second best in history, exceeded only by May, 1965, when nearly 206,000 titles were processed.

The Michigan figures reflect the national trend. The auto industry reported this week that May new car sales were the highest ever for that month.

so far short of "reasonable standards."

THE COMMITTEE suggested that local boards of education—

Continue investigating books now in use and drop those that "fall short of criteria" outlined by the committee.

Adopt policies committed to using books free of bias.

Hire personnel to choose textbooks.

Use supplementary materials to overcome deficiencies.

Limit selection periods so the most recent books can be used.

The State Department of Education should—

Encourage publishers to develop more adequate books.

Help local districts select books.

Bring pressure on publishers, along with the local districts, to discourage the printing of editions tailored to different parts of the county.

Review other textbooks "to determine the progress being

made in achieving fair treatment of Negroes and other minorities."

OFFERING GUIDELINES for selection committees, the report said the textbooks should show the backgrounds of minorities "like it was." This would include both giving "an adequate account of highly de-

veloped cultures in Africa prior to the discovery of the New World," and depicting the "stark realities of the slave trade."

The textbook should "cite the significant contributions made by Negro Americans in a diverse number of areas" and present in depth "the struggle of minorities against forces

for freedom, human rights and equality of opportunity." The report said textbooks should discuss "explicitly the various social institutions and factors that help, and are keeping, Negro Americans in a subservient position."

The guidelines asked that textbooks take up "racism in contemporary urban society"

as a special topic and "deal with the unique impact of enforced residential isolation on Negro Americans" in particular. The committee would also have future textbooks take up "the significance of social reform for all people" and "stress that the current reform spirit is on-going and comes from a long and proud history."

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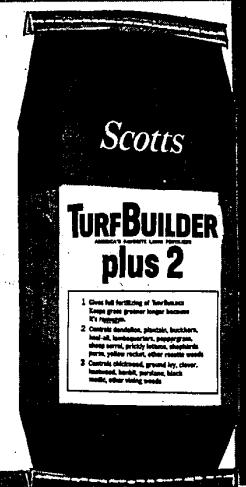
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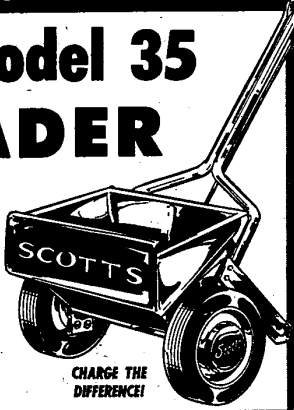
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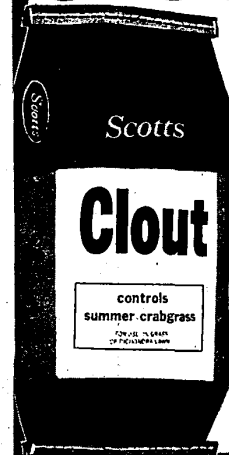
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