

Pittenger Calls for "Clean" Education

Citing three years of effort to eliminate sexism in education in Pennsylvania, Education Secretary John C. Pittenger told U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare officials that "not only enforcement but also clear leadership is required from government if change is to occur".

Pittenger delivered testimony on proposed regulations to Title IX, Higher Education Amendments Act of 1972, the controversial rules defining prohibition of sex discrimination in education and education employment.

Pittenger preceded his comments on the proposed regulations with a view of Pennsylvania's progress in the elimination of sexism. He said:

"More than three years ago, immediately following the ratification of an equal rights amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution, we conducted a year-long study of sexism in both basic and higher education."

The study was undertaken at the initiative of Pennsylvanians for Women's Rights with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The study revealed "widespread sex discrimination at every level of our education system," Pittenger said. "I believe we were representative of the nation on that score."

Moves to change that condition, Pittenger said, included his issuing a series of guidelines to all public elementary and secondary schools and all state-owned, state-related, and community colleges and universities. The guidelines indicated specific steps the institutions might take to end

sexism in curriculum, co-curricular activities, guidance and counseling, employment practices, library materials, admissions, housing, and other areas of school life.

New offices of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunity were created at the basic and higher education levels of the Pennsylvania Department of Education to work toward the priority of eliminating sexism and racism, Pittenger added.

Basic education regulations were modified by the State Board of Education to include women's studies and intergroup concepts relative to ending sexism, as well.

Continuing activities include developing publications to aid schools in ending sexism and quarterly meetings with representatives of women's rights groups and state commissions dealing with problems of sexism and racism.

In the context of that experience, Pittenger said, he would like "to see the regulations provide for a defined state role, particularly where a state has demonstrated leadership in the elimination of sexism."

Pittenger testified that the Department of Education supports equalized benefit plans for education institution employees. This would provide equal payments and equal benefits with the mandated use of non-sex-differentiated premium tables. Addressing himself to HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger, Pittenger said:

"Our experience is that the actuarial method upon which sex-differentiation is based is, at the very least, highly

suspect."

Women are subject to the same stress, disease, and injury as men when they engage in sustained careers outside the home, Pittenger noted. "Differences in life expectancy would appear more closely related to lifestyle factors than to sex in and of itself," he said. He cited conclusions reached by the Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner's Advisory Task Force on Women's Insurance Problems.

Pittenger said the department also is pleased with the regulations relating to fringe benefits for permanent, part-time employees.

"Specifically, we support the concept of prorated fringe benefits for all permanent, part-time employees. Such benefits are only fair and equitable regardless of the sex of the individual employee. Establishing this concept now will provide important leadership for the future, as staffing patterns become more varied in response to the changing life modes of both men and women in our society," he said.

"Equally important, clearly, is the role this principle will play in ending an age-old discriminatory practice with a disparate effect against women, who have borne heavy responsibilities in the home and thus in many cases have been able to work outside the home only on a part-time basis.

"Finally, the provision of prorated benefits will help put to rest the devastating myth that women work only for pin money."

Pittenger told HEW that there are large areas of the proposed regulations "which

we enthusiastically support". Among them, he listed:

The requirement of coeducational programs and activities, including health and physical education, industrial, business, and other courses;

Regulations ending unfair and "often costly housing rules and requirements so common in higher education";

Coverage of education programs and activities, including those programs not operated by the schools but conducted in school facilities or by school personnel;

Equalized Health and Insurance Benefits, and

Equal treatment of persons without regard to marital or parental status.

Pittenger said he was concerned that the "remedial and affirmative action concepts developed in the proposed regulations... do not adequately convey the principle of recipient responsibility."

An important part of the regulations, he said, is in encouraging recognition of the principle that receipt of federal assistance automatically makes it incumbent upon the recipient to identify, change, and guard against discriminatory practices.

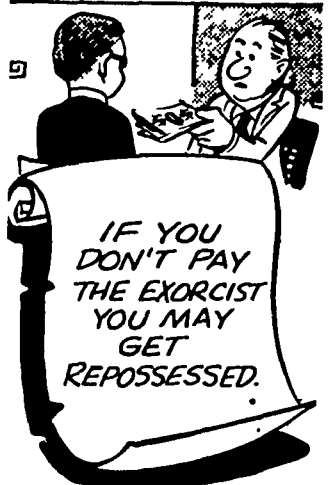
In a series of questions, Pittenger challenged HEW to strengthen the regulations to include assurances from state recipients that discrimination has been studied, changes made, and affirmative actions taken to overcome "past exclusion, purposeful or inadvertent."

Pittenger also pointed out that while the proposed regulations "very laudably"

eliminate sex-segregation in physical education instruction, "they are regrettably weak" in the area of interscholastic athletics. He also called them "obscure on the whole issue of intramurals".

Attaching copies of guidelines recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education school districts to his testimony, Pittenger said that similar guidelines should be included in the regulations to encourage self-examination of curriculum and instructional materials. Pittenger suggested that states and school districts should analyze and prepare schedules for achieving a more representative portrayal in textbooks and other materials of the roles, problems, and contributions of women."

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