

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." - Voltaire

Editorial—

A Pioneer in Special Indian Education

We are of the opinion that there are overtones of greatness in the significant efforts of Father John Bryde, now Dr. Bryde, who has been pioneering a new method of educating Indian children at the Holy Rosary Mission School on the Pine Ridge, S. D., Indian reservation. His important work has now been recognized by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs and that agency has now contracted with Dr. Bryde to develop instructional materials and teaching guides at Fort Yates, S. D. for use in the schooling of the Indian child.

During the 22 years of teaching Indian youngsters, Dr. Bryde has noted strange psychological problems that kept recurring in the learning processes of the children usually at the seventh grade level while using conventional grade school textbooks in routine use throughout the United States. This disturbing development, Dr. Bryde discovered, was due to the omission of the child's racial values and that he had "no effective awareness of his historical racial identity," as Dr. Bryde said.

Prior to the seventh grade level, the Indian pupils in general, were bright and quite able to take their lessons in stride, even to overachieving the national norms in tests. This was an obvious evidence that Indian children had adequate mental equipment and capacity to learn but that a breakdown occurred after the students' reasoning powers developed progressively in higher grades. Perhaps without really knowing why, or subconsciously, the students at that stage began to sense that the classroom lessons were not really meant for them and, in some cases, downgraded their values as Indians.

This was the point when the psychological disturbances took hold and with them came feelings of alienation, even from themselves, rejection, followed by depressions and utter feelings of being lost. Surely, an educational system need not have resulted in such an impasse.

It took a keen observer—an observer with humanist attributes—to see through the Indian children's difficulties in school and courage to follow through with exhaustive studies aimed at correcting disparities in the education of the Indian child.

We feel also that the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be warmly commended for its openminded acceptance in obtaining the services of Dr. Bryde in developing instructional materials and teaching guides for use in Indian schools. Such a working agreement should

initiate, and develop, a proper backdrop for educating the Indian youngster in which he would take pride in knowing that he, also, has values of which he can be proud.