

known for his conservative views. The fable, attributed to Native Americans, told about animals emerging from the darkness to "find" sunlight. Several members of the panel suggested that Bennett's name alone would be sufficient to distress many teachers and parents. They did not suggest that fourth-grade children taking the tests would be distressed, since Bennett's name would be unknown to them. The panel also rejected the fable because it implied that "darkness" and "blackness" were synonymous with fumbling around or not being able to see. The members saw this linkage as bias, presumably suggesting racial bias. Only one of the bias experts on the review panel argued that it was censorship to delete this passage simply because of the political views of its anthropologist. However, even this member agreed with the other panel members that the fable should be removed because of its unfortunate references to darkness. So far as the panel was concerned, to show a preference for light over darkness was a manifestation of bias.

DELETING MOUNT RUSHMORE

Perhaps the most startling analysis by the bias reviewers concerned a short biography of Gutzon Borglum, who designed the monument at Mount Rushmore. This monument, consisting of gigantic heads of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, is located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It is one of the most famous, most widely reproduced images in the United States. Millions of tourists have traveled to South Dakota to see it. Whether one likes it or hates it, it is there. For most people, the monument has positive connotations, suggesting a sense of history and patriotism.

The bias panel recommended that the biography of Borglum be dropped because Mount Rushmore is offensive to Native Americans. The panel maintained that the monument "is an abomination to the Black Hills because many Lakota people consider the Black Hills to be a sacred place to pray." This is surely a dilemma. The Borglum sculpture on Mount Rushmore exists; it is an acclaimed national monument. Yet American children should not be allowed to read about it or its sculptor on a test because this might offend Lakota Indians, who wish that the sculpture were not there. The desire to rewrite history is one that continually plagues bias reviewers, as we shall see.

CLASS DISTINCTIONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

The bias panel did not like a story about growing up in ancient Egypt. The story contrasted how people's ways of living varied in accordance with their wealth and status. Some lived in palaces, others were noblemen, others were farmers or city workers. The size and grandeur of one's house, said the story, depended on family wealth. To the naked eye, the story was descriptive, not judgmental. But the bias and sensitivity reviewers preferred to eliminate it, claiming that references to wealth and class distinctions had an "elitist" tone. The fact that these class distinctions were historically accurate was irrelevant to the reviewers. In the world that they wanted children to read about, class distinctions did not exist, not now and not in the past, either.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DWELLING

One of the most charming informational stories that our committee reviewed was about a rotting stump in the forest that provided shelter and food to a succession of insects, birds, plants, and animals. The story probably would have passed muster with flying colors in light of its environmentalist emphasis on nature's ways of recycling except that it made the fatal mistake of comparing the rotting stump to an apartment house for the many different creatures of the forest. The twenty members of the bias committee voted unanimously to reject this passage because, in their view, it contained a negative, demeaning stereotype of apartments and people who live in them. If this passage were included on a test, the panel claimed, poor inner-city children would be upset: "Youngsters who have grown up in a housing project may be distracted by similarities to their own living conditions. An emotional response may be triggered."

This was a strained reading of the story. First, it is untrue that only those who are poor live in apartment houses. There are luxury high-rise apartment houses, as well as apartment buildings occupied by middle-income people. Second, the story tried to show the environmental beauty of the rotting tree stump, to describe the stump as a gracious and inviting home, as well as a restaurant, to all sorts of creatures. The story did not portray either the tree stump or the insects and forest animals in a negative light. Yet the bias committee imagined that