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Defense $ Outstrips Education $

WASHINGTON — For each 60 cents spent on public education in the United States, one dollar is spent on the military establishment, according to a National Education Association research report.

These figures contrast sharply with the ratios in Canada, where $2.50 is spent on education for each $1 on military items, and in Japan where the ratio is $5.40 for public education for each $1 of military expenditures, according to the latest available data (1968).

Although the ratio of education-military expenditures in the Soviet Union is about the same as in the United States, the USSR puts a greater proportion of its gross national product into its schools than does this nation.

The Soviet Union spends about eight per cent of its GNP on the military and a similar percentage on education, whereas the United States allocates 9.3 per cent of the GNP to military expenditures and only 5.4 per cent to public education.

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During the past year various groups and organizations have demanded a change in the way tax dollars are spent in the United States.

They have called for "a reordering of national priorities for less emphasis on military spending and increased investment in America," Wilbert B. Bollinger explains in the report, "Financial Status of the Public Schools, 1971" which for the first time includes a section on "World Military and Public Education Expenditures."

Bollinger, a Pomona, Calif., teacher, is chairman of the Committee on Educational Finance which prepared the publication.

World military expenditures reached an estimated total of $204 billion in 1970, the eighth annual report reveals. This was an increase of 50 per cent since 1964, and a real net increase of 20 per cent, discounting inflation.

• • •

"If the United States were to reallocate all military and public education dollars on a 1-to-1 ratio, funds for public education would increase to $63.5 billion (currently an estimated $41.9 billion) with no increase in the combined military and education budgets," says the report.

The United States also compares unfavorably with several nations when educational costs are related to national income. "From all levels of government and from all sources of funding the United States is spending 6.9 per cent of its national income on education," the report points out.

"By comparison Canada and Israel are spending 9.6 and 9.2 per cent, respectively, on education; Denmark, 8.1 per cent; Sweden, 7.9 per cent; and the Netherlands, 7.6 per cent."

Among problems that continue to plague school financing in the United States, the report notes, are high interest rates and high rejection of school bond issues by voters. Interest rates on school bonds reached an all-time high of 7.12 per cent on May 28, 1970, and have declined only moderately since, according to the Bond Buyers Index.

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The all-time low was 1.29 per cent in 1946. During 1970, voters approved $1.6 billion of school bonds but defeated an equal amount.

School financing will be affected by the decisions on several cases brought before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1970-71, the publication notes.

Discussed are school desegregation cases that call for increased busing, a Florida case which limited the school tax rate to 10 mills, a West Virginia case concerning state constitutional and statutory requirements that school bond issues and excess tax levies must be approved by 60 per cent of the electorate rather than a simple majority, and cases concerning the constitutionality of the use of public funds for parochial schools.

Among significant facts revealed in the document is that private elementary and secondary school enrollment as a per cent of total enrollment in 1970 is at the same level as in 1950 despite the much publicized decline in private school enrollment.

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However, from 1970 to 1975 private school enrollment is expected to drop an additional 300,000 (3.6 per cent), while public school enrollment increases about 700,000 (1.1 per cent).

The report estimates that about 69,200 more beginning teachers were looking for teaching positions in fall 1970 than there were openings for them. Nevertheless, 35 states had a shortage of applicants in some assignment areas although an excess in others.

NEA leaders have emphasized that the teacher "surplus" would not exist if acceptable standards for education were reached. "Attainment of minimum levels of quality in educational programs and staffing would have required about 157,200 more beginning teachers than were available in fall 1970," the NEA researchers assert in the report.

Perhaps reflecting the nation's economy, school capital outlay in 1970-71 ($4.14 billion) was four-tenths of a per cent less than in 1969-70. That figure, in turn, had been 6.8 per cent less than the capital outlay for 1968-69. Despite this recent downturn, capital outlay increased 43.5 per cent over the past decade.

Mobile Van Acts As Grad School

By JANE SHOEMAKER

HARRISBURG, Pa. (UPI) — Teachers in rural Pennsylvania are returning to college classrooms by the hundreds without ever leaving their home communities.

Their classroom is a 40-foot mobile van which expands from eight-feet to 17 feet wide when parked. The teacher is an IBM 1500 computer, designed expressly for instruction.

Pennsylvania State University brought the computerized courses in remedial education to more than 800 teachers — most of them in poverty areas — during the past year.

The computer teaches through recorded tapes, pictures and charts flashed on an image projector, and through typed statements which appear on a television-like screen.

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The students, nearly all teachers, school nurses, administrators or guidance counselors, can respond either by typing answers which appear on the television screen or by touching a specified area of the screen with a light-sensitive pen.

For a rural elementary school teacher accustomed to controlling her own classroom, the idea of answering to a maze of terminals, connectors and wires can be disconcerting.

One teacher recently became so exasperated when the computer would not listen to her she began slamming the keyboard to make it pay attention.

"Teachers are a little nervous at first about the computer system," Dr. Keith Hall, supervisor of the program's technical aspects, said, "but once they have taken some course material, they all are enthusiastic."

• • •

Teachers enrolled in the course pay a nominal $10 fee then sign up for computer time — either day or evening — at their convenience. Each class is taught through a socratic question and answer dialogue.

The computer might ask the teacher to define an emotionally handicapped child. It then analyzes the response and tells the teacher he is correct, reasonably close, or completely off the track.

Depending on the answer, the computer either advances to another concept or keeps drilling the student until he understands the point under study. There is no way the teacher can "fudge" an answer and continue if the computer is convinced more drilling is necessary.

A correct answer can result in lavish praise from the computer. "Excellent! You understand the concept completely," it says. Because of the immediate feedback, many teachers have said they prefer the computer to a live professor.

"The author's personality does come through the program," Hall explained. "The students, after a while, feel they are conversing with another person and not with a computer."

Upon completion of the course, the teachers are expected to be able to know and identify the symptoms of handicapped children, screen all children in regular classroom programs for deviations, evaluate each child's strength and weaknesses as related to learning abilities, and, if necessary, refer children with serious problems to the proper rehabilitation programs.

• • •

Current funds will cover the mobile laboratory's $250,000 annual operating expenses for two more years. The costs include rent for the computer, salaries of the permanent staff and temporary proctors hired in each community, and moving. The van can be closed up and prepared for travel within about two hours.

Penn State has asked for more federal funds to send identical vans out to other states, but the requests are still pending.

"If we don't get another grant for this van," Hall said, "we will have to charge full tuition — probably around $90 — for the next course."

Hall predicted the cost would reduce significantly the enrollment since many rural teachers could not afford the tuition fee.

Southern faculty reunites chums

BATON ROUGE — It isn't too odd that two elementary school classmates find themselves reunited after a period of years in which each engaged in her chosen pursuit, one a Sister of the Holy Family and the other a school teacher.

But it borders on the amazing that these two childhood friends would both end up on the Southern University Mathematics Department faculty, each holding the doctorate degree.

Sister Mary Sylvester DeConge (Sister Sylvester or Dr. DeConge as she is known by Southern students) and Dr. Dolores R. Spikes were elementary school classmates through the eighth grade at St. Francis Xavier School here.

There came a parting of the ways in high school, however, with Sister Sylvester entering St. Mary Academy at New Orleans and Dr. Spikes moving across town to McKinley High School.

Dr. Spikes said that the two saw very little of each other until after college when they would ocasionally visit.

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Sister DeConge entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Name in New Orleans and later taught in parochial elementary schools in the Baton Rouge and Lafayette dioceses while Dr. Spikes became a public school teacher in Calcasieu Parish following her graduation from Southern University.

After earning the B.A. degree in mathematics and French from Seton Hill College Sister Sylvester attended LSU on a National Science Foundation program and earned the M.A. degre in mathematics.

She taught at Holy Ghost High School in Opelousas and at DeLisle Junior College in New Orleans before earning the Ph.D. degree in mathematics and French at St. Louis University.

Before becoming associate professor of mathematics at Southern, Sister Sylvester was an assistant professor of mathematics at Loyola University in New Orleans.

Dr. Spikes graduated from Southern with a B.S. degree in mathematics, earned the M.S. degree at the University of Illinois and, under Ford and National Science foundation fellowships graduated with the Ph.D degree in mathematics last spring from LSU.

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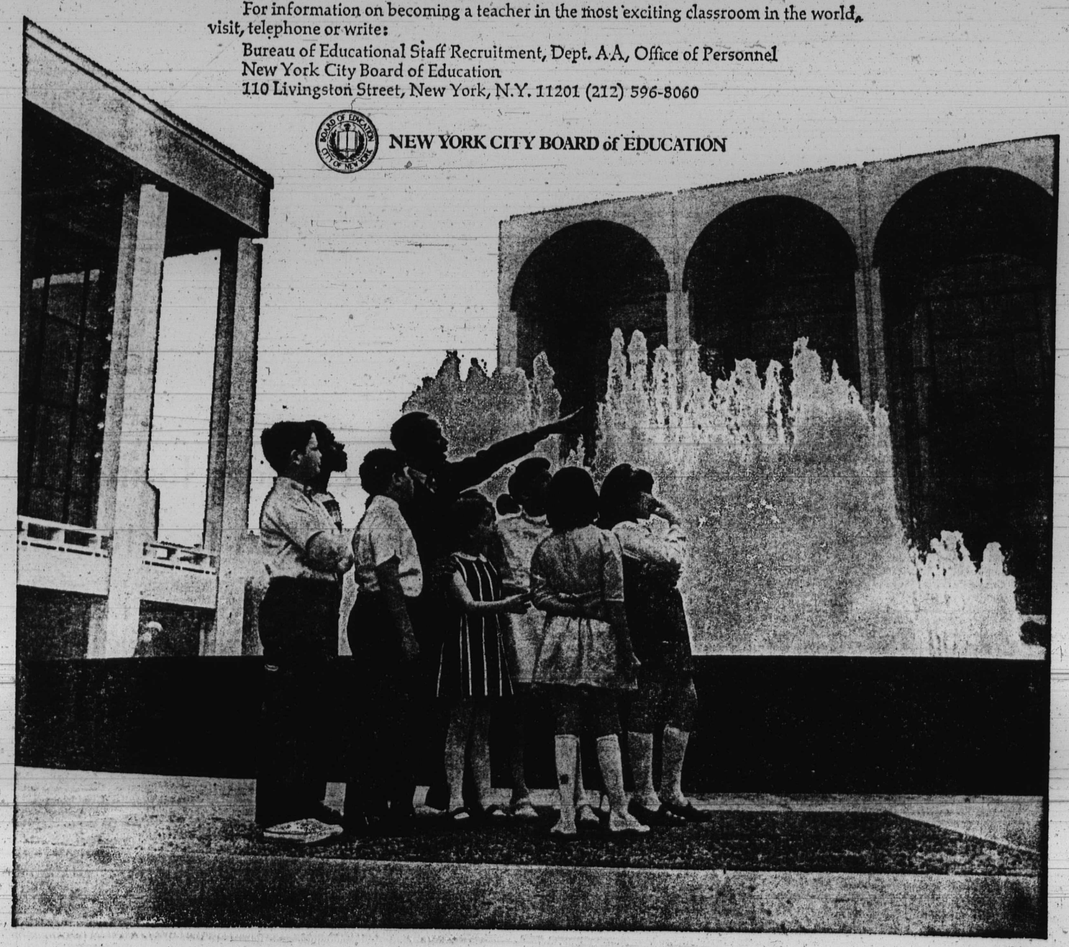
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