

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 67

February 2003

First NCEA Results

The year 2002 was the first full year of schools administering the new NCEA qualification at level 1, replacing the old School Certificate. Proponents say that because English, for example, is now composed of nine Achievement Standards, each returning a separate mark (of NA = not achieved, A = Achieved, M = achieved with merit or E = achieved with excellence), rather than the single mark for "English" handed out under the old School Certificate system, students and employers can see more precisely where the student has strengths and where the weaknesses lie.

Opponents of the NCEA point out problems which are probably to be expected with a first-time exam system, such as big differences in the results of different Achievement Standards. Only 11% failed one of the English bits (maybe it was too easy), 49% failed one in Maths (just like the old predictable School Certificate rate of 50/50 fail/pass), and 75% failed a Technology one (maybe it was too hard). Consider also the fact that only 0.3% of the 8561 students who sat a certain Biology Achievement Standard managed an "excellence" rating, whereas in an Information Management Achievement Standard, 35.2% of the 10,934 students sitting it gained an "excellence" rating?¹ That is, the rate of gaining "excellence" in one Achievement Standard was 117 times larger than the rate in another....this hardly reflects an overall consistency in teaching or testing or grading or perhaps all three.

So there were huge discrepancies among the many grades returned. This raises a lot of questions: is the problem in the exams them-

selves, in the way they were marked or in the way the teachers taught? If in the exams, is it that they expected too much or were hopelessly worded or what? This will take years to sort out. In the meantime, NCEA Level 2 is being introduced this year, replacing the old Sixth Form Certificate, and NCEA Level 3 will be introduced in 2004 replacing Bursary. Each of these will have its own unique set of problems, each taking years to sort out.

Some said NCEA was going to eliminate failure. It certainly did not do that this year. But as Ruth-

erford School principal Cliff Edmeades says, "School Certificate had a 50% pass rate, NCEA has a 60% pass rate."² So maybe it is moving toward the fulfilment of that criticism.

But what does either a 50% or a 60% pass rate mean? The old School Certificate 50/50 pass/fail rate was clearly an exercise in social engineering, to divide the nation's 15 year olds into two equal groups: academic material and technical/trade/labouring material. Does the MoE want all students to be competent in essay composition, algebra and possess a specified body of knowledge in history and science? If so it will have to set an objective national standard in each subject area and test to

(Continued on page 2: NCEA)

Teacher Quantity & Quality Going Down

At the beginning of *last* year an official Government count of teacher vacancies confirmed that schools were short many more secondary teachers than at other years: 237 too few or 67 more than in February 2001.¹ This year they're short by 179, increasing to 600 by 2007.²

Not only does that mean classroom sizes are not getting smaller as is the Government's wish, it also means schools desperate to hire teachers are settling for less-qualified staff. In addition the shortage is blamed for leading training colleges and polytechnics to accept lower standards from trainees.³

Allan Peachey, head of New Zealand's biggest school, Rangitoto College, said about 400 out of 500 applications he received from teachers last year lacked the aca-

demical credentials he required for the subject or did not even make sense. "I am getting CVs with covering letters that if they were sent home to parents of students they would be shocked."³

A Secondary Schools Principal Association survey released earlier this year said many of its members were faced with employing teachers they saw as mediocre because there were so few applicants for vacancies. "Our staffing survey shows that principals around the country are really concerned about the quality of applicants they are getting for jobs," said Phil Smith, president of secondary teachers union the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA).⁴

Eight organisations made submissions to Parliament's Education

(Continued on page 2: Teachers)

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that. Pass rates of 90% or more would surely be viewed as great... 90% of students could then be said to be real contributors to the vaunted "Knowledge Economy"...unless the MoE again wants to ensure that a sizable percentage are labelled as non-academic types and so funnel them into the trades and labouring jobs. And of course this whole way of looking at things is already skewed in such a way that the academic pursuits are automatically considered superior or more to be desired than the manual/practical pursuits when in fact both are essential.

Or does the MoE want to grade each individual student according to his/her potential, reflecting a cherished view apparently held by successive denizens of the educational establishment since Minister of Education Peter Fraser's famous statement³ of 1939? That would entail a fully customised curriculum and testing regime for each student. And the closest anyone comes to that would be found among the more independent members of the home education community, those who make up

their own curriculum.

Because it is far from clear exactly who sets the standards in each subject area and how those standards are arrived at or determined and also how objectively they are graded in whatever system is used, long shadows are cast over how useful any marks really are in any such a system.

Then there is the cost. The fees have gone up more than 50% compared with School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Bursary. Queen Elizabeth College principal Johanna Wood said the fees – \$150 for Level 1, 2 or 3 – were excessive and another example of the Government not thinking through the qualification's implementation. It will cost \$75 to do 48 credits or less, but that was equal to just two subjects. The majority of students did five or six subjects.

Palmerston North solo parent Marie Bottin has three children attending high school this year, two doing NCEA and one sitting Bursary. Not being willing to make her children sit fewer than 48 credits to reduce the cost, she will have to pay more than \$400 to have her children sit these qualifications.⁴

Home educators, being outside this system and its controversies, confusion and costs, certainly are no worse off as a result.

Notes

- 1 "NCEA Internal Figures Were Inflated", 17 February 2003, <http://www.theschooldaily.com/articleView.asp?articlePK=18094>
- 2 *Western Leader*, 3 February 2003, "Principals: NCEA Too Easy", www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2231114a6016,00

3 "The government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers." Eve Coxon *et al* eds., *The Politics of Learning and Teaching in Aotearoa-New Zealand*, 1994, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, pg. 67.

4 *Manawatu Standard*, Fees for New Education Qualification 'Excessive', 11 February 2003, www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2256056a6502,00.html

(Continued from page 1: *Teachers*)

and Science Select Committee on Wednesday 26 February 2003, saying that some graduate teachers are not smart enough and do not have the right training to teach young people in schools.⁵

Pat Lynch, chief executive of the Catholic Education Office, said some teachers were going through the training system but did not have the necessary intellect. "Some providers have standards that let us down. Clearly if [trainee teachers] are not intellectually able, they can't do it," he said.⁵

A Principals' Federation spokesman asked, "Why are we getting teachers in our schools who we have to sit down and teach how to fill in class rolls?"⁵

Maori immersion schools were also struggling to find good teachers. Dr Pita Sharples, chairman of the Maori Education Trust, said Te Kura Kaupapa schools were being marginalised. "The standard of teachers in some of our schools is shocking. A very good initiative is seen to be failing because of a lack of resources, in particular good teachers," Dr Sharples said.⁵

On a more worrying, even sinister level, earlier reports from no less a person than Dr John Langley, director of the Teacher Registra-

(Continued on page 3: *Teachers*)

TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of the Home Education Foundation and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists and other items of general interest to home educators. Information herein is not to be construed as legal advice. Opinions expressed in TEACH Bulletin are those of the writer and should not be assumed to reflect those of the Home Education Foundation Trustees or Board of Reference Members. TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December) or two years for \$30.

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

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Contact:

Jenny
Ph. (06) 878-4115
Hastings

(Continued from page 2: **Teachers**)

tion Board, indicate that at least 50 teachers guilty of serious misconduct from sexual offences to fraud are believed to be working in the country's schools. Education lawyer Patrick Walsh said teachers guilty of serious misconduct or incompetence often settled their case out of court, were not referred to the Teacher Registration Board and

landed jobs in other schools.⁶

Perhaps it is a characteristic of the times in which we live that pedophiles such as the teacher Derek Humphries at Ross Intermediate in Palmerston North was able to sexually molest children in his care for over 20 years without there ever being a complaint about it from the students. There may be some connection between his orgy-like sessions with groups of students on camps and the elements of safe-sex and sexuality education being taught in the schools. Perhaps the luckless students merely thought of it as extra-curricular educational activities.

Aren't you glad you home educate your children?

Notes:

- 1 Government Confirms Worsening Teacher Shortage, 1 March 2002, www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1103,1119368a11,FF
- 2 *Waikato Times*, "Extra 600 Teachers Needed", 27 February 2003, www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2294328a7694,00
- 3 *Dominion Post*, Aspiring Teachers Fail at First Step, 18 February 2003, www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2271061a7694,00
- 4 "Teachers share Principals' Concerns Over Teacher Quality", 18 February 2003, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/inl/print/0,1478,2272314a7694,00>
- 5 *NZ Herald*, Teaching for Teachers Under Attack, 27 February 2003, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storyprint.cfm?storyID=3198010>
- 6 "Guilty Teachers Still Taking Class", Rebecca Walsh education reporter, 14 July 2001.

Kiwi Workers in Demand

Farmers in the UK and North America appear desperate for labour — and their preference is for Kiwis rather than hiring those closer at hand.

AgriVenture's New Zealand manager Anne Richardson says she now has more jobs available in these places than people wanting to travel there. AgriVenture coordinates and arranges travel,

work permits and host families for young people aged between 18 and 30 who want to work on farms in a family situation. "We literally organise everything for them, and the hosts really adopt the person into their family. New Zealanders are recognised as some of the best workers in the world because of the Kiwi way of getting things done," says Ms Richardson.

AgriVenture can be contacted on 0800-88 88 22. (From the *Tribune*, Palmerston North, 5 January 2003.)

Ignorant and Illiterate

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is the best-selling author of books focused on successful relationships, parenting ideas, morality and personal ethics. She recently wrote that after collecting newspaper clippings about schools and teachers for a year, she has fashioned her own theory as to why the turnout at American Presidential elections is so poor (around the 50% mark). She suspects it is not because of lacklustre candidates or negative campaigning but something far more serious. Dr Schlessinger asks the rhetorical question, "What if the real reason is that most of our citizens are not sufficiently educated about the basic concepts of democracy to understand the issues, and what if that ignorance is compounded by illiteracy?"

Recently the Center for Civic Information at the Manhattan Institute published the report of a telephone survey of over 1,000 fourth- and eighth-grade teachers. Among the not-so-surprising findings was that *only* about 25% of those surveyed said they most cared about whether a student got the right answers. More of them most cared that students tried hard or used a *creative* approach. When successive generations of teachers have been trained to believe there *are* no right answers anyway, what difference does it make?

And if there are no right answers, there obviously is no right and wrong. No one's behaviour can be

judged as evil because the most heinous acts can be excused on the basis of what the perpetrator may have suffered at the hands of his parents, the police, the inequalities of the system, inequalities of opportunity, of income, etc., etc.

Discipline is therefore discriminatory because there is no such thing as bad behaviour, just children with "special needs". No wonder teachers are trying to find ways to make their work meaningful. Accomplishment and achievement can no longer be benchmarks of success because the unaccomplished and underachievers in the class are likely to feel bad. Worse, their parents might sue for cruel and unusual punishment. Welcome to the USA!

For years Dr Schlessinger has been encouraging parents to pull their children out of the state schools and either home educate or find a decent private school with high standards. "I truly see no other options for raising and educating children to be morally fit, well informed, appreciative Americans and contributing members of society."

She reckons the state of Oregon may have the right idea. "They are looking to shorten the school year by 15 days. How long before it's clear to them and to us, that we should simply close them altogether?" Well said, Dr Schlessinger. Well said!

(Condensed and edited from WorldNetDaily.com, 27 January 2003, "Time for Public Schools to Throw in the Towel?", http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=30692 The author may be contacted by fax at (818) 461-5140, or by writing: Dr. Laura Schlessinger; P.O. Box 8120, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.)

I Became My Own University

"He's doing the most exciting things in our profession today," says superstar chef Paul Bocuse. Of whom is Bocuse speaking? A Spaniard named Ferran Adria whose culinary creations attract people way off the beaten track to El Bulli Restaurant near a small coastal town

called Rosas not far from Barcelona.

Adria began his career as a dishwasher, did military service in the kitchen and wound up as an apprentice at El Bulli. His secrets to success are the kind of thing every home educator can emulate: he says he is cold and methodical; that he starts with information and more information, whatever he can gather by travelling, tasting and above all by reading. On the way up Adria says, "I read everything I could. I became my own university."

Adria has collected an extensive gastronomic library and claims to have memorised thousands of tastes on his "psychological palate". He hates monotony, and this is reflected in his motto: Creation means not copying others.

(From *Time*, 13 November 2000.)

School Threatens Parents over Family Time

In October 2002 Palmerston North Boys' High principal Tim O'Connor told parents he was going to prosecute them if they continued to take their sons out of school during term time so they could go on holiday. Two months later Mr O'Connor was able to report that the number of "casual truancies", as he called them, had more than halved.¹

"We are getting too free and easy about what sort of institutions schools are." Mr O'Connor said parents needed to accept responsibility for getting their children to school and should take holidays at the appropriate time. Although Mr O'Connor admitted he was taking a hard line, he said every day absent from school had an effect on a student's end of year result.²

Schools are now overtly claiming they have a prior right over that of parents to demand the children's attendance at these state institutions and are publicly threatening parents with legal action. The argument does not comment on

whether the family time is valuable or even needed; it does not consider whether the holiday is more educational than the class time being missed. The heavy hand is played because the school reckons end of year marks are at stake. The scary thing is, the Education Act backs up the schools, not the parents.

Notes:

- 1 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, Truancy Hard Line Paying Off, 16 December 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/eveningstandard/0,2106,2140661a6502,00.html>
- 2 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, School to prosecute parents over holiday absenteeism, 29 October 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2095359a11,00.html>

I Got Out

I taught 8th grade language arts for four years, then 7th grade language arts for two years. I was among the very good teachers...but after being in the public school system and seeing the true effects of "socialization," I home school my children. It has taken five months to unteach the public school habits my 7th grade son had learned. I home school my children, because it's worth the loss of US\$3200/month to do what's best for my children. Public school socializes children to be afraid to speak out, or to only speak out when you know other students will agree.

(Posted 29 January 2003 to *The Badger Herald* of Madison, Wisconsin by Debra Crase, who can be contacted at: dcrase77@yahoo.com)

Schools and Prisons

Los Angeles School District C announced a new policy the other day. The official announcement says:

"The post-secondary commitment program is the story of thousands of student and family dreams, of goals realized, of college opportunities achieved and of careers begun. As a result, graduation in District C will

be a special commencement for every graduate and family. Each senior will not only be receiving a diploma but will also have a plan for their future. It is the result of a transformed counseling and school-to-career program in each District C high school, dedicated to the success and future of all students. It is the result of committed and dedicated counselors. It is the result of all staff seeing each student's potential and truly caring for them as individuals."

Strip out the happy talk and what this says is that all seniors must see a counselor and must present the school with a plan of life after high school or they don't graduate. That's pretty impressive. When I was about to graduate, oh, so long ago, I couldn't have told you what I wanted to do the day after graduation, and these kids have to have a map for the next several years all drawn up and bearing the school district's stamp of approval.

Hearing this reminded me of the pre-release paperwork prisoners must go through for early release. A few months before an inmate is scheduled for release from Bureau of Prisons custody, he/she must submit release plans and have them reviewed and approved by their case manager, counselor and release-location probation department. It sounds just like high school, doesn't it?

It's not surprising that government schools have come to resemble government prisons, as both institutions sprang from the same impulse. In 1816, Archibald Douglas Murphey summed up thinking about government schools: "...all of the children shall be taught in them ... in these schools the precepts of morality and religion should be inculcated, and the habits of subordination and obedience be formed." The idea spread — its appeal to those in government is obvious — over the course of the next four decades.

Prisons are also for those who do not form the habit of subordination and obedience. They were until recently called "penitentiaries" because the prisoner was supposed to do penance, reflect on his rebellious ways, and reform. What has been

called "the first American penitentiary" was established in Philadelphia, in 1790, just a year after the first government schools were established in Massachusetts.

With both institutions the government seeks to shape and control its citizens. But both, as often happens with government institutions, have failed dismally. I did not graduate from high school with the habits of subordination and obedience particularly well formed, and neither did you, and, as far as I can tell, neither did anyone I know. And as for prisons, repentance seems to be the last thing on the inmates' minds.

Prisons and schools both sprang from the same idea, were founded at about the same time, are staffed by the same kind of people (at least I thought so when I was in high school), they now have the same kind of pre-release plans, and are equally successful at what they do.

Why is this not surprising?

(Condensed from "Schools and Prisons: Separated at Birth?" by D.L. Brooks, 24 May 2002, <http://www.laissezfairebooks.com/index.cfm?eid=465&RequestTimeout=500>)

Why Boys Are Underachieving

Boys are underachieving at every level of schooling in New Zealand in what has become a major national problem, says Auckland-based counsellor and lecturer Warwick Pudney.

Mr Pudney said a lot of classrooms were "feminised" and not "male friendly", and that many boys also lacked father figures. In every subject at every level, boys were achieving less than girls, yet there was an "appalling lack of interest from policy makers".

Mr Pudney has written books about fathering and anger in children, is a counsellor at the men's social service agency Man Alive and also lectures at Auckland University of Technology in violence and trauma and counselling practices.

Boys and girls think differently, approach problems differently and have different interests, but classes favoured the female way of learning. Girls wanted to spend time talking about issues, whereas boys wanted to solve problems quickly and move on. "Both are valid but schools are often missing out on how boys do things," Mr Pudney said.

To boost their academic achievement, boys needed positive male role models both in schools and at home. A quarter of all boys were growing up without a man in their home. "We need a major social push to revitalise fatherhood," he said. Boys without fathers at home, or who had workaholic fathers and no male teachers were growing up with "a big black hole" which they filled with hyperactivity and use of alcohol and drugs. Said Mr Pudney, "A lot of boys are very angry about being cheated out of their dads or a positive male in their life."

The number of male teachers was decreasing. A major reason was that male teachers had not been appreciated, and schools were not male friendly. "Many men look after sports and may get loaded with some of the more difficult-to-handle boys. In some schools those classes are more of a male rubbish bin," Mr Pudney said. "It's a lack of valuing the contribution men can make and the way they work."

(Condensed from *Marlborough Express*, "Too Few Male Role Models, so Boys Fail, Claims Counsellor", 13 August 2002, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/marlboroughexpress/0,2106,2019044a6008,00.htm>)

Sadly Mr Pudney's message is probably a bit too politically incorrect to be taken seriously by the nation's policy makers. Home educators, on the other hand, need not be unduly inhibited by irrational ideologies. They are a lot freer than most to follow a more pragmatic course, especially when the evidence in front of them indicates a measure of wisdom in making a move against the grain of conventional wisdom. Home educating dads in particular can ensure they simply make time for their children and guard against becoming workaholics.

Coming Events

29 March 2003

Home Education Foundation Workshop

Venue: Harmony House, 541 Ruahine Street, Palmerston North

Cost: \$15.00 per person/couple or \$5.00 per session per person/couple. Young adults free with parents

Contact: Barbara ph: (06) 357-4399; hedf@xtra.co.nz

Programme

9:00am Registration and view resources

9:30am SESSION 1 (Welcome)

Fathers Role and a Vision for the Future - Craig Smith

10:30am Morning Tea

11:00am SESSION 2 (4 electives)

**Home Education on a Biblical Foundation - Craig Smith

**Training our Children's Minds, Tools of Learning and Motivation - Barbara Smith

**Hospitality as a Socialisation Tool - Eating and Meeting - Jenny Waldron

**Home Business - David Waldron

12:30 Lunch - Bring your own - hot drinks provided

1:30pm SESSION 3 (4 electives)

**Building a Healthy Marriage (for men) - David Waldron

**Building a Healthy Marriage (for women) - Jenny Waldron

**Keeping Going when the Going gets Tough - Barbara Smith

**Getting Started - Dealing with MOE/ERO, Pulling Children out of School, Filling in an Exemption Form, etc. - Craig Smith

3:00pm Afternoon tea

3:30pm SESSION 4 (4 electives)

**Home Education Through Secondary and Preparing for Tertiary Education and the Work Force - Craig Smith

**Sibling Rivalry or Sibling Friends - Jenny Waldron

**Training our Children and Youth in Purity - Barbara Smith

**Look at Curriculum and a tour of Dayspring

Dayspring will be open straight after this workshop

Break for tea about 5:00pm

7:30pm SESSION 5 (Panels)

7:30pm Young Adults Panel

8:15pm Veterans panel

9:00pm Supper

There will be tables available for you to bring your unwanted books to sell and look for second hand ones to buy.

4, 5 & 6 April 2003

The Mainland Home Education Conference

Venue: Middleton Grange School, 50 Acacia Avenue, Riccarton, Christchurch.

Cost: \$45.00 pp or \$60.00 per couple for the weekend.

\$30.00 pp or \$40.00 per couple for Fri/Saturday or Fri/Sunday

Saturday evening meal included

\$10.00 penalty incurred for registrations received after 1 March.

Billets available for the weekend.

Teenagers attending with their parents are free, if staying for Saturday evening dinner a surcharge of \$6.00 applies

Contact: CHEInc@free.net.nz, Website www.che.org.nz (link from here) or ph. (03) 347-7371.

Programme

Friday 4 April

6.00pm Registration and resources open for sale

7.00pm Keynote speaker: Craig Smith - Home Education: Getting Things Into Perspective

Supper

Saturday 5 April

8.30am Registration and resources open for sale

9.30am Welcome and morning tea

10.00am Session One - 4 choices:

**Successful Creative Writing - Val Robb

**Learning from the Masters: Shakespeare, Art Appreciation, and Poetry - Denise Walmsley

**Work of Art - Maree Grant

**Research Skills - Kerry Lyford

12 noon Lunch - resources open for sale

1.00pm Session two - 4 choices:

**Helping Your Child Improve Their Writing - Val Robb

**Defining and Refining Your Vision - Denise Walmsley

**Looking After Yourself - Margie Hulse

**Montessori - Patricia Polderman-Charles

2.30pm Afternoon Tea

3.00pm Session Three - 4 choices:

**Secondary and Beyond - Craig Smith

**Musical Notes - Heather Parsonson

**Rudolph Steiner - Karen and Fraser Palmer-Hesketh

**Getting Started - Barbara Smith

4.30pm Resources open for sale

5.00pm Dinner

6.30pm Session Four - 3 choices:

**Been There Done That: Ask us How - Parents and Young Adult panel

**Optimising your child's brain potential - Christine Ward;

**Developing Your Own Curriculum - Craig Smith

8.30pm Conclude for the night

Sunday 6 April

8.30am Registrations and resources open for sale

9.30am Welcome and morning tea

10.00am Session Five - 4 choices:

**The Three Rs - Lennie Harrison

**Games - Di Brown

**Fathers and Home Education - Dean McLennan

**Happy Snappy Unit Studies - Jennifer Pope

12 noon Lunch - resources open for sale

1.00pm Session Six - 4 choices:

**Speaking with confidence - Tecorians

**Lap Packs - Jill Hanna

**Career Guidance - Career Services (Directed at parents)

**Classical Education - Barbara Smith

2.30pm Afternoon Tea

3.00pm Session Seven - 4 choices:

**Stepping Forward With Charlotte Mason

**Unschooling

**Learning Styles - Christine Ward

**Educating children with special needs - Deraulle Hope

4.30 p.m. Conference closes

15-18 April 2003

The Gift of Music Family Workshop

Venue: Arahina Training Centre
457 Wellington Rd., Marton

Cost: (See Registration Form)

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Fax: (06) 327-8376

Email: info@iblp.org.nz

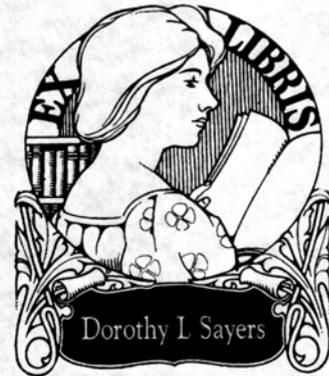
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