

# World and Nation

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



## Reading ability of 17-year-olds getting better

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The reading ability of 17-year-old students improved in the past four years after a decade of stagnation, but 9- and 13-year-olds have stopped making progress, a federally backed testing agency said Wednesday.

At all three age levels, pupils read better now than in 1971, the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported, and the biggest gains have been registered by blacks and Hispanics.

But "The Reading Report Card," a study based on tests administered to 250,000 school children over the past 14 years, also dramatized the big gap remaining between minorities and the white majority.

The average black and Hispanic 17-year-olds can read "only slightly" better than the average white 13-year-old, it said.

It graded reading on a five-step scale — from rudimentary to basic to intermediate to adept to advanced.

Secretary of Education William J. Bennett said, "We are not raising at present a generation of illiterates."

But he expressed concern that almost 36 percent of the 9-year-olds have not acquired the basic comprehension skills needed to succeed in third- and fourth-grade work, and that 40 percent of 13-year-olds and 16 percent of 17-year-old students lacked the intermediate skills "to handle much of what is studied in a sixth- or seventh-grade class."

The 17-year-old students were the only age group to improve their performance over the 1980 assessment.

Only 5 percent of the oldest students reached the highest rung on the reading ladder, the advanced skills, Bennett said.

## Weinberger: U.S. subsidizing military buildup of U.S.S.R.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Soviets have been much more successful than previously thought in stealing Western technology and as a result, "we are subsidizing the military buildup of the Soviet Union," Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger said Wednesday.

Weinberger released a study asserting the Soviets have targeted specific American defense contractors and universities, are acquiring thousands of technical reports that are not classified but are useful and are diverting high-tech equipment designed for one purpose but which can be used in weapons programs.

"By their own estimate, more than 5,000 Soviet military research projects each year are benefiting significantly from Western acquired technology," Weinberger said at a news conference.

The report said that while comprehensive figures are not available,

the Soviets estimate they saved at least \$640 million in 1980 alone on selected military research projects by obtaining Western technology.

Neither Weinberger nor Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Perle, who later briefed reporters on the study, would elaborate on the sources used to measure the Soviet effort.

But the report, Perle said, should lead to efforts by the United States to "even up" the number of Soviet diplomats allowed to operate here compared with the Americans in the Soviet Union. The United States and its allies should also consider "a system of blacklisting" to prevent Soviet agents who are expelled from one country from gaining posts in another allied nation, he added.

Perle said he would recommend that President Reagan not discuss any broader scientific and educational ties with the Soviets when he meets with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in November.

The study was described as the product of a special Technology Transfer Intelligence Committee including officials from the Pentagon, the CIA and 20 other U.S. agencies. Much of the general information in the study was disclosed previously. But it gave what it called more examples of how the Soviets collect information and products and what they do with such technology.

Although the Pentagon believes it is now doing a much better job controlling access to technical documents, NASA, the Patent Office and the National Technical Information Center remain key sources for the Soviets, Perle said.

"What we are hoping to achieve... is to sensitize the scientific and technical community to the fact that there is a very large and well-organized Soviet apparatus that has targeted scientists and engineers and universities and the like for military purposes," Perle said.

## Federal official says 1 in 4 young adults has tried cocaine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A series of drug abuse studies released by the government Wednesday indicate more than one of every four young adults has at least tried cocaine, a top federal health official said.

Dr. Donald Ian MacDonald, head of the federal Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration, said cocaine "is one of the most pow-

erfully addictive drugs known.

"For years, people thought cocaine was harmless — a so-called 'recreational drug,'" MacDonald said. "Now, we know the truth: cocaine can be a killer. Emergency room admissions associated with cocaine use tripled between 1981 and 1984. The number of deaths associated with cocaine also tripled."

Michigan researchers reported

that use of cocaine, unlike other illicit drugs, tends to increase among young people after they graduate from school.

"Overall, we find a disturbingly high proportion of young adults in America place themselves at risk of developing a dependency on this highly reinforcing drug by taking the initial step of trying it," Drs. Patrick O'Malley and Lloyd D. Johnston

of the University of Michigan said.

The two researchers, reporting on the progress of surveys under way for the last 10 years, said that about one in every six of high school seniors in the class of 1984 reported experimentation with cocaine.

Among young adults aged 18 to 25, 28 percent have tried cocaine, MacDonald said. And an estimated 60,000 12- and 13-year-olds have tried the drug, he said.

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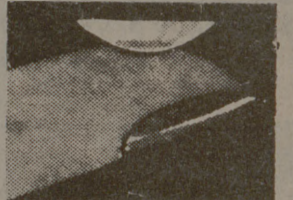
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