

Memo of the Month



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Assistant Secretary for Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF ALL OPERATING UNITS

SUBJECT: Gender-free Terminology

In my prior memorandum on this subject dated August 14, 1978, I recommended that the 1977 Dictionary of Occupational Titles be the reference source for checking sex-specific job titles. I used as an example the terms *stevedore* and *longshoreman*, and stated in a footnote that since *longshoreman* did not appear in the Dictionary, *stevedore* should be used in its stead.

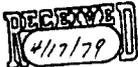
It has come to my attention that, contrary to the contention of the authors of the Dictionary, *stevedore* and *longshoreman* are not the same job.^{1/} Therefore, please advise your employees that the term *longshoreman* may be used when necessary to interpret the provisions of a statute. Otherwise, *longshore worker* is the preferred gender-free term.

It remains the policy of the Department of Commerce to replace gender-specific terms with non-sexist language whenever possible. Our intent is to use gender-free job titles where alternative titles exist, not to alter the substance of jobs. Although the 1977 Dictionary of Occupational Titles appears to have erred with respect to this particular job, it shall remain the general reference for checking job titles.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. A. Porter".

Elsa A. Porter
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

- 1/ A *stevedore* is an employer who is responsible for the loading and unloading of ships. A *longshoreman* is an employee (of the stevedore) who actually loads and unloads ships. The International Longshore Association informs us that its female workers are called "longshoremen."



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“Where are the Children?”: The New Data Game at HEW

by Geoffrey O’Gara

It is Dr. Edwin Martin’s ninth year as Deputy Education Commissioner for the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH), and, to the outsider, things seem to be going well. Since 1973 BEH has grown from a small research bureau into the third largest agency in HEW’s Department of Education, and its mission—doling out federal grants to the states to pay for the education of handicapped children—seems to insure it of a long life and ample budget. It is hard, after all, to be against education for the handicapped. Parents are for it. Teachers are for it. Congressmen must be for it—they can’t afford to be pictured as bullying blind kids or kids in wheelchairs. And Martin has made sure of these political truths—working hard to build a militant constituency among the people his agency serves, courting the press and toadying up to senators, lacing his congressional testimony with references to the research grants that have been steered to the states of the legislators who hold the gavel. He has done a thorough job, and he can be proud of the results: \$800 million in annual aid sent to the states, a varied roster of research projects underway with BEH backing, and the general approval both of the lobbying groups that represent the handicapped, and the Congress—which has repeatedly given BEH more funding than the president’s budget requested.

But there is a problem that has been

nagging at Dr. Martin. He has returned to it, again and again, but it remains unsolved. You see, when the “Handicapped Bill of Rights” (as the National Education for All Handicapped Children Act was called) passed Congress in 1975, certain projections had been made. Specifically, BEH had put together a “panel of experts” to estimate how many handicapped kids there were in U.S. schools. Relying heavily on an HEW survey of clinics, schools, and state agencies—as well as studies commissioned by BEH from non-profit groups like the Council for Exceptional Children—the experts came back with a figure of 12 per cent. And BEH told Congress that, indeed, 12 per cent of America’s school-age children probably needed “special education”—they had hearing and vision problems, speech impairments, emotional difficulties, mental retardation, orthopedic defects, or the generalized “learning disabilities.” That 12 per cent figure had an intoxicating effect on congressmen, who actually wrote into the law books estimates of the handicapped population based on the BEH projection. The notion that there were millions of undiscovered, untreated handicapped kids out there in the schools became the rallying cry for an expanded BEH.

Dr. Martin’s problem is, now that BEH and the states have been counting handicapped children for five years, that the number of handicapped kids is falling way below expectations. No state can find the projected 12 per