

Drawing upon a remarkably rich variety of resources, we are proposing an Institute for Teachers on the subject of "Religious Pluralism." Our overall intention is twofold: (1) to conduct a systematic study of this subject with the teachers who have been selected for it; and (2) to complement the systematic study with carefully-planned field trips to sites where the subject can be encountered directly. Thus, we have chosen the University of Hawaii at Hilo as the place wherein this Institute will be established by virtue of its unparalleled access to the sites where the subject is alive. Virtually all of the major religious traditions of the world are represented on the Island of Hawaii (the so-called "Big Island"), and the Hilo campus of the University of Hawaii has the necessary library collection, together with an established academic program in the study of religion. We believe that this setting is ideally suited for the inquiry that we intend to pursue. We are confident that the teachers who participate in the Institute will come back to their schools not only with necessary "book knowledge" (from reading and studying the sacred texts of the traditions as well as their respective histories) but with living experience from real and direct exposure to the ritual practices and ways of life of persons deliberately living in accordance with such precepts. As noted, there is no place within the fifty states of our nation where such resources are in closer reach.

We envision it as a three-week program, beginning on Sunday evening August 5, and concluding on Friday, August 25, 1990. We are planning four full-day sessions per week, alternating between full-day study sessions and full-day field trips. The study

sessions will be devoted to disciplined presentations, with discussions, on the nature of religion as well as the history and teachings of the great religious traditions of the world. The field trips will consist of journeys to churches, temples, shrines, et al., in which such histories and teachings are embodied. The teachers selected for the program will be required to do the requisite study, which will consist primarily of assigned readings, and to keep records and make reports of the field trips. By focusing both on the nature of religion and on the history and teachings of the religions we are directing our collective efforts toward two aspirations: first, we wish the teachers to acquire reliable information and trustworthy knowledge of the religions themselves; and second, we wish the seminar to be focused on questions concerning religious pluralism. We recognize these are enormous aspirations for a program of very limited time. But we intend the work that is initiated in the Institute to continue on throughout the 1990-91 academic year. Thus, our primary obligation is to place the work of the Institute on firm foundations and to mark out resourceful procedures from that initial point forward.

The two principal directors come to this study from distinctive but interrelated backgrounds. Dr. Friedrich Seifert is professor of religious studies on the Manoa campus of the University of Hawaii, where he has served since 19 , and was Chair of the Department from 19 to 1987. His primary research is in biblical studies. In addition, he has taught most of the courses within the religious studies curriculum in an academic program that is deliberately interdisciplinary and cross-cultural. In recent years, Dr. Seifert

has been instrumental in developing cooperative programs between the University of Hawaii and a number of institutions in Japan. He is currently involved in an effort to link his institution with institutions in China. He has had extensive experience teaching about religion in a religiously plural context. Indeed, he is co-author of a textbook that approaches religion from a religiously-plural vantage point. Again, there is no institution within the fifty states of our nation that is better positioned to take and exercise this methodological posture with respect to the subject of religion.

Dr. Evyn Adams, is a veteran member of the Hilo faculty, where he has been professor of religious studies (in a joint philosophy/religious studies department) since. Among Dr. Adams' numerous strengths are years of living in Japan (which language he speaks and writes) and over twenty years' experience in living in Hawaii. He is more familiar with the various religious communities on the island than anyone, and is recognized and accepted by the leaders and people within such communities. He is a very popular teacher, and has been actively involved in faculty governance on the UH-Hilo Campus. He will take primary responsibility for making local arrangements, which includes establishing meeting places and times with the leaders of the various religious communities.

Dr. Walter Capps, professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he has served since 1964, and where he was director of the Institute of Religious Studies from 1971 to 1976, will serve the Institute as chief consultant. In 1983 and 1984 Dr. Capps served as the official consultant, under funding providing by the National Endowment for the Humanities, to the Hilo

humanities faculty, with specific responsibility for assisting in the development of a religious studies curriculum. As part of that assignment Professor Capps familiarized himself with the curricular offerings of virtually all of the colleges and universities in Hawaii on the subject of religion, and has been invited back, from time to time, to continue discussions with UH faculty members regarding the continuing development of academic programs in the study of religion. In addition, Dr. Capps has directed a number of Summer Seminars for Teachers on the subject of Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America, with special interest in the theme: "religion in a democratic society." He has a special interest in how values can be taught in the schools, particularly religious values, and has been interested for years in possibilities regarding teaching about the great religious traditions of the world in high school settings.

Seifert, Adams and Capps will be assisted by numerous guest presentors, selected for their expertise regarding the religious traditions that will be studied in the program. Several members of the University of Hawaii (both Hilo and Manoa campuses) will be invited to make presentations (see Outline of Program, attached) and to assist the participants to interpret their reading assignment and field-work experiences. Adam and Seifert, however, will take primarily responsibility for Institute presentations, each of whom will describe the ways of the great religions while familiarizing the participants with the history and intentions of religious studies. In this latter regard, the teacher-participants will be given ample opportunity to consider how "religious pluralism" intersects with separation of church and state in decisions about what does and does

not belong in a prescribed course of study on this subject in the high schools.

We understand this venture to belong to the current interest in creating workable and resourceful educational programs concerning "the Pacific Rim." The religions and cultures that we shall be encountering and studying belong distinctively to "the Pacific Rim," and, in a number of instances, offer their most vivid and representative examples in the Pacific-Rim setting. In this regard, the Institute will focus on the religious traditions of the Pacific World. In addition, however, the subject of the seminar -- religious pluralism -- is a subject that belongs increasingly to all segments of the nation. The majority of national reports on the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary American education, that have been issued since A Nation At Risk, in 1983, have called attention to the urgent need, as more than one report phrased it, for "the internationalization and diversification of education." Religious pluralism is a fact of American social and cultural life, not simply in Hawaii or California, or New York, but throughout the nation. In a previous day it was appropriate to describe American religious diversity as involving distinctions between Catholics, Protestants and Jews. But at the present time the range of religious possibilities has been significantly expanded. Buddhist, Islamic, and Hindu traditions are now very evident features of the social, cultural and religious landscape. New Religions have made a strong impact. Interest in Native American traditions, including Native Hawaiian traditions, have gained increased scholarly attention. And all such traditions and movements have gained stronger

representation in the collective intellectual and spiritual life of the nation. Thus, when teachers teach about religion, they need to be familiar with religious traditions other than their own, indeed, even with religious traditions that, a few years ago, could fairly safely be relegated to marginal places. The enormous influx of peoples from other lands and cultures into American life has only increased and accelerated the need to learn the facts about such religions. And, as we have been reiterating, there is not place within the fifty states of our nation wherein the necessary resources for concentrated serious study of this can be done more effectively than in Hawaii, where collective religious life is already deliberately and consciously pluralistic. The purpose of the Institute is to provide the instrumentation for reliable information about these religious traditions and direct exposure to them, and in a manner that can be drawn upon resourcefully when such subjects occur -- either quite naturally or through deliberate intention -- in American high school education.

Each of the participants in the seminar will be required to attend all of the planned sessions faithfully, and to complete all assignments successfully. Such assignments will include the reading of the materials on the syllabus, and on library reserve, as well as completing the assigned essays. We will ask the teachers to prepare reports on their field experiences, write critical analyses of some of the assigned reading materials, and to work together toward creating curricula and study guides for use in classrooms. In this latter regard, we are not envisioning that the focus on the study guides will be to create religious studies classes, or religious

studies programs in the high schools. Since participation in the seminar is open to teachers in both private and public schools, we anticipate that some teachers of religion (and/or religious studies) will apply and will be accepted. But the majority of the participants will be teachers of history, literature, and social studies whose classroom treatment of the subject of religion occurs not in specific religious studies terms but within the context of their teaching of history, literature and social studies. Thus, in addition to creating specific guidelines for the study of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, et al., the Institute will direct its effort toward designing ways in which information about the great religions of the world can be incorporated in the established curricula and study guides of the subject areas that are taught in the schools. Religion, that is to say, will be approached as being a subject that can be approached in its own terms and on its own grounds, and religion will be approached within the context of other subjects for which the teacher-participants have been otherwise trained. From both vantage points, the intention of the seminar is to add substantially to the knowledge that teachers have of the subject, and to determine ways that such vital information can be communicated to and with students so that contemporary secondary-school education might be much more resilient and carry greater substance in this subject area, regardless of which of the two ways have provided access to it.

In addition to the preparation of study guides, we will establish a work agenda for the 1990-91 academic year. Teachers will go from the seminar back into their respective school situations with

an assignment to incorporate information about religion in the courses they teach. They will be asked to write reports of these endeavors, to be shared with the others, to be due at regular, state times. The co-directors of the Institute will respond in writing to the reports that are submitted, and these responses will be distributed to all of the participants. In addition, the co-directors of the Institute will write a report about the project for publication, as well as a basis for a presentation to be made to selected professional organizations. We are thinking primarily of meetings of teachers, educational meetings, and of regional and annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion. Since, to our knowledge, this is the first concentrated effort to work directly with secondary-school teachers on the subject of religious pluralism as a national phenomenon, we anticipate that there will be considerable interest in the undertaking both within the education community and within the religious studies community. We intend to share our impressions with colleagues in both of these communities. In establishing such a study opportunity, we will be encouraging others to take up the task in their own regions, perhaps by finding ways to develop disciplined intellectual approaches to the varieties of religions and religious communities that can be found or discovered there. We anticipate, in short, that the project will have a catalytic effect.