

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

A Visit To Iowa Where Educational Totalitarians, Robotic Bureaucrats, Hypocritical County Attorneys and Politicized Judges Confront Home Schoolers

As our readers know, we've been very concerned about the status of parental rights in Iowa where home schoolers face the possibility of having their children taken from them if they do not comply with the onerous state regulations governing home schooling. We've written about the Tama case (April 1990), in which Barry Bear, the 13-year-old son of Anna and Archie Bear, was placed in a foster home when his parents would not force him to attend school; and we've written about the Rivera case (June 1990), in which devoutly Christian home-schooling parents were found guilty of violating the compulsory school attendance law because they would not place their Christian home school under the jurisdiction of the Cedar Rapids School District.

In the Bear case, the state invoked the provisions of the CHINA — Child in Need of Assistance — law to remove Barry from his family. In the Rivera case, the presiding judge

suggested in his court order that the county attorney "consider the presentation of a petition to determine whether these children are in need of assistance." The simple threat of having their two school-age children taken from them, forced the Riveras to sell their home and prepare to leave Iowa.

Potential Reign of Terror

It is this potential "reign of terror" threatening the home schoolers of Iowa that compelled me to visit that state and see for myself what was going on. And so, on Saturday, Sept. 23, I flew to Des Moines where I stayed at the home of Sarah and Lynn Leslie and their four children, two of whom are being home-schooled. It was Sarah who had sent me the file on the Bear case which alerted me to the situation in Iowa. Sarah is the legislative liaison for the Iowa chapter of Con-

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cerned Women for America and has been monitoring home-school legislation in that state. The Leslies are also active members of Iowans for Christian Education, a group of home-school parents fighting to protect Christian educational freedom in Iowa.

During those four days I met with many Iowan home schoolers, was a guest on Jan Michaelson's popular radio talk show as well as on other radio shows, and spoke to audiences in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines and Ames. But for me the most important part of the trip was meeting the Riveras and the Bears and getting a first-hand account of their trials and tribulations.

I met Aaron and Theresa Rivera and their children at the Leslie home on Sunday afternoon, where there was a pot-luck dinner for home-school families. Aaron is a tall, dignified man, of Mexican heritage, born and raised in Iowa. He is an intelligent, calm, and reasonable individual who has placed his life in the hands of the Lord. He is the kind of Christian father who could easily serve as a model for others to emulate. His wife, Theresa, is soft-spoken, very pretty, and obviously very devoted to her family.

Obeying God's Commandments

The two of them have created a truly Christian family. They take Scripture seriously and are home-schooling their four children, two of whom are of school age, in conformity with God's commandment to educate their children in a Godly manner. The state of Iowa should consider itself fortunate to have such a moral, upstanding, God-fearing family in its midst. But the state doesn't. The bureaucrats want the Riveras to bow down to the idol of the state.

The fact is that the Riveras bent over backwards to comply with the spirit of the compulsory attendance law by supplying the authorities with an abundance of infor-

mation about their home school. But they could not, in good conscience, because of deeply held religious beliefs, comply with every arbitrary, burdensome and meaningless rule and regulation imposed by the Cedar Rapids School District. For this reason, the Riveras were found guilty of violating the compulsory attendance statute and sentenced to 20 hours each of community service.

I wanted to meet the Riveras to let them know that they were not alone in their struggle, and that there were Americans all across this country who admired them and supported them in their stand. Many had read Aaron's eloquent letter to the authorities in which he expounded in great detail the Biblical foundation of his family's home school — a letter which should be read by every Christian home schooler in America. In his own way, Aaron Rivera had made a very valuable contribution to the home-school movement by his unrelenting pursuit of justice and his defense of Christian freedom.

Prosecutors Target Home Schoolers

I was also anxious to meet the Bear family. The state of Iowa had singled them out for undaunting prosecution, and I wanted to find out what was so special about this family that made them the target of such unusual and prolonged harassment. Sarah had called Anna Bear and arranged for us to visit the Bear home on Tuesday, Sept. 26. But before describing that visit, let me give some background. On January 12, 1989, the *Des Moines Register* carried the following item under the heading of "Statehouse Briefing":

Iowa prosecutors are seeking more power to intervene in truancy cases and have suggested law changes that could give county attorneys more tools to use against fundamentalist Christians who want to teach their children at home.

Recommendations from the Iowa County Attorneys' Association include a change in the state's juvenile code to add truancy to the list of reasons officials can start proceedings that can lead to removing the child from the home or to terminating the parents' rights to their child.

In other words, Iowa prosecutors had decided that the best way to cripple and finally destroy the home-school movement was to threaten to take the children away from their parents. There were two ways to accomplish this: pass a new law making truancy a cause for CHINA proceedings, and/or produce a test case in which the court could order the removal of a "truant" child on the basis of the existing statute.

Why were Iowa prosecutors so anxious to destroy homeschooling in that state? Their stated reason is that they were concerned for the welfare of the children. But their unstated reason is that they were doing the work of the education establishment which now feels that home schooling, if it continues to spread unchecked, will eventually undermine the compulsory school attendance laws from which the educators derive their enormous power.

The Educators' Feifdom

In Iowa the education establishment is probably the most politically powerful single entity in the state. It commands an enormous percentage of the state budget and has turned Iowa into its private feifdom. This is a state where the "public servants" have become the public's masters and are quite willing to use their accumulated power to show Iowans who's boss. Any weakening of the compulsory attendance law is seen as a threat to their hold on political power. Educational freedom is the last thing the educators and their allies want in Iowa.

For their test case, the county prosecutors targeted a vulnerable family living on the Mesquakie Indian Settlement in Tama County — the Bears.

Why were the Bears vulnerable? They were poor, they lived on a remote Indian settlement, they were a mixed marriage, they were in conflict with others living in the Settlement over property rights, they were not involved in the organized home-school movement and were therefore socially isolated, and they could be prosecuted without media attention. But, in the end, when the case was finally decided against the Bears by the Iowa Supreme Court, the story was reported in the press, and home schoolers became alarmed that a dangerous precedent had been set: a child had been removed from his parents and placed in foster care merely for a violation of the truancy law.

The fact that the child was moderately retarded and suffered from a variety of ailments, and the fact that the mother had taught school for twenty years did not deter the court from ordering the separation of the child from his family "for his own good." While all of the state's expert witnesses — all of them on the public payroll — testified as to how desirable it was to remove the child from his family, the court never inquired as to what emotional or physical harm this forced separation might cause the child. The court was so motivated by political imperatives that a hypocritical "concern for the child" was shamelessly used to impose state power over the private family.

An Unusual Family

Although the county prosecutors, in two lengthy phone conversations, had told me derogatory things about the Bear family — particularly Mrs. Bear — Sarah Leslie and I got entirely different impressions from our visit to their home. I had expected a large woman with a battle ax to greet us. Instead, Anna Bear turned out to be just the opposite: a small, vulnerable woman with a strong sense of justice.

Anna and Archie Bear are an unusual

couple. He is a tall American Indian of dignified demeanor and she is a small white lady of keen intelligence and remarkable spirit. Their story is worthy of a novel. In fact, Anna Lee Bear, nee O'Bryan, is quite a good writer. Here is what she wrote in an autobiographical sketch published in a history of Tama County:

"Though I was born in a shack near Parmalee, South Dakota, on November 22, 1929, and lived in that state most of my life until I came to the Settlement to teach at the Sac and Fox School in September of 1964, the Settlement has been my only home in Iowa."

Concerning how she met her husband, she writes:

"During the years I lived in a teacherage on the Sac and Fox Indian Settlement near Tama, Iowa, mostly Indian men frequented my door, to ask for various favors of information, to use the school showers, make a phone call for a taxi, or to share their heartaches. Nearly always, I was treated with perfect respect and courtesy until that evening in the fall of 1966 when Archie Bear, Jr. stopped in to thank me for coming to a religious ceremony for a deceased man Tribal people claimed was his uncle. Archie was especially courteous and well behaved toward me, but within days, I realized I was no longer safe from some of the other Indians, to the degree that I felt I needed him around for protection.

"It wasn't long before I knew that Archie Bear was unhappy. His wife had recently died. He sought help to find suitable care for his little girl while he worked, but was forced to send her to a foster care home. He was told he could not see her for six months, but was guaranteed he could have her back — but it was only a few weeks before welfare agents were pressing him to give her up for adoption. . . .

"One thing led to another. Eventually we married at Bullhead, South Dakota Decem-

ber 26, 1967, and we began a bitter battle to reclaim the daughter of his marriage to Dorothy Mae Mauskemo, Jennie Jessica, from the foster care home. Not long after I returned to the Settlement the following May, this was accomplished, and we immediately set about building a larger house to accommodate a larger family. It is still unfinished but comfortable.

"Our children of date include Jennie Jessica, born October 9, 1963, four sons, Archie Robert, born January 11, 1969; Val Jean Francis — May 31, 1970 [presently in the Navy]; Merle William — September 19, 1971; Barry James — June 14, 1977; and daughter, La Donna Lee — January 26, 1973."

A Talent for Research

Marrying Archie Bear also meant that Anna would get deeply involved in the ongoing dispute over property rights and inheritance at the Settlement. "So through the years," Anna writes, "I searched out many of the Settlement leaders, elderly townspeople, Acts of Iowa Legislature and Congress of the United States, Letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs — Sac and Fox from 1845-1880, National and State Census records of the Settlement and all the annuity census records on file at the National Archives Center in Washington D.C. from 1867-1934, and many available publications about the Settlement."

Obviously, such undaunting efforts to establish the hereditary property rights of the Bear family were met with hostility from others at the Settlement. Whether this had anything to do with the authorities singling out the Bears for prosecution is not known, only suspected. The county attorneys, altruists at heart, were only interested in seeing that Barry Bear got a good education, was properly "socialized," and was put on the royal road to independent living.

Our Visit With Barry

Sarah Leslie and I were able to visit with Barry Bear later that warm and sunny afternoon. By prior arrangement, he was brought to a public park in Marshalltown by his social worker, or case manager, to visit with his family and "friends." The case manager, a woman in her forties with a family of her own, was "doing her job" of supervising Barry for the Department of Human Services. She was one of the thousands of decent Americans who work for the government and carry out the policies of bureaucrats and courts. In this case, she was acting in the capacity of a jailer supervising a parental visit. Barry was not free to go home with his family or go anywhere else for that matter. Being in the custody of the Dept. of Human Services was tantamount to being a prisoner of the state.

Sarah and I arrived after the family and Barry had assembled at the park. Anna and Archie had brought their son Merle, 19, and their daughter La Donna, 17, to visit with their brother. These two handsome, well-behaved youngsters enjoyed being with their younger brother, and during our visit there was a good deal of affectionate sport among them at the play area.

Sarah and I were introduced to Barry, who was taller than expected for a 13-year-old, quite friendly, but obviously somewhat retarded in speech development. How serious was the problem? There was no way to tell in so short a visit. Barry had brought some of his school papers — a drawing, some printed words, some arithmetic — all at a first or second grade level. In other words, the great education the public school was supposed to provide was nowhere in evidence. Anna later told me that she believed that Barry had regressed. She had taught him cursive writing at home, but at school he was being taught manuscript.

Chatting With the Social Worker

While Barry was playing with his brother and sister, I chatted at the picnic table with the social worker. Archie sat beside me and listened in to the conversation. When the social worker found out who I was — the notorious writer of the newsletter on the Tama story — she virtually clammed up. As we chatted she kept straining to see what Barry was doing with his brother, sister, mother and Sarah at the play area. Maybe she thought that some sort of plan was afoot.

"Don't worry," I told her, "nobody's going to kidnap Barry." The truth is that Anna and Archie have obeyed the letter of the law. They protest verbally the injustice the government has done to their family, but they have no choice but to live with it. Both Anna and Archie also spent some weeks in jail as punishment for protesting too much. Archie seemed bewildered and hurt by what had been done to him and his family, but neither he nor Anna seemed to harbor the slightest bitterness about their predicament. They had expected justice to prevail. But, apparently, these days justice is a rare commodity in the courts of Iowa.

When it was time for the visit to come to an end, Barry embraced each one of us, except his case manager. We waved when they drove off. Poor Barry. He would have liked to have gone home with the people who loved him. I had asked the case manager where she and the prosecutors expected Barry to go once he was set free. "He'll go home," I told her, "to the family he belongs to."

Before parting, Sarah and I embraced the four Bears. For the first time that day, we noticed a bit of a smile on Archie's face. Hopefully, we had been able to do some good. My concern, however, was with Barry's predicament — his forced separation from his family. What was it doing to him emotionally? There is a well-known phenome-

non called "separation anxiety" which afflicts children, lovers, parents, and marriage partners who suffer inordinate fear of losing a loved one. It is particularly strong in dependent children, and it can lead to all sorts of physical manifestations — loss of appetite, loss of weight, despair, depression, addictive behavior, headaches, frustration, grief, etc.

Separation Anxiety

Apparently none of the psychological or medical "experts" in Iowa know anything about separation anxiety, for nowhere in the court record, in the testimony of the experts, or in the medical reports on Barry is there so much as a hint that such a phenomenon exists. Nor did the courts consider the medical problems that Barry had had as a child. They just assumed that Anna Bear was manufacturing these illnesses to keep Barry out of school. But it is well known by parents of retarded children that the latter often have physical problems that accompany their mental deficiencies.

Separation anxiety obviously exacerbated Barry's physical problems, for since his removal from home in September 1989, he's been hospitalized twice, has had vomiting spells, and has lost weight. The experts all attribute Barry's medical problems to his mother who was not even permitted to visit him when he was hospitalized. What the imbeciles in charge of Barry don't know is that the last thing Barry should feel is abandoned by his family. But the state of Iowa doesn't care as long as the judges, and county attorneys, and psychologists, and doctors, and social workers can all pretend that they are helping Barry.

So far, Barry has been in two different schools and two different foster homes. According to the Iowa Department of Social Services, Barry is due to be reunited with his family in June 1991. Meanwhile, he remains

a prisoner in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Drug-Sniffing Dogs May Be Used In Some Maryland Schools

A juvenile-justice task force in Prince George's County, Md., has recommended the use of drug-sniffing dogs in the county's schools. However, the state's attorney's office does not back the idea.

Patrols of drug-detecting dogs are "not really needed," said Jacqueline P. Byrd-Tillman, chief of the juvenile division of the state's attorney's office. Demonstrations of the dogs have shown that when they detect illegal substances, "they get out of control," and can be destructive, Ms. Byrd-Tillman said.

The task force, assembled two years ago, likely made the recommendation based on a drug situation that was more severe then than it is now, Ms. Byrd-Tillman said. Between fiscal years 1989 and 1990, she noted, the number of drug-related incidents on the grounds of county schools decreased from 34 to 30, and the number of drug arrests declined from 23 to 11.

State's Attorney Alex Williams supports the panel's nine other suggestions, including routine drug testing of all juvenile delinquents and mandatory treatment for all students involved with drugs, Ms. Byrd-Tillman said. (*Education Week*, 12/5/90)

Asst. Principal in Texas School Murders Administrator

An assistant principal at a Texas high school has been charged with murder after he allegedly walked into an administrator's

office and opened fire with a .357-caliber handgun, local police said.

Harvey Dixon, 44, has posted the \$50,000 bond on which he was held and is undergoing psychiatric evaluation at a Beaumont, Texas, hospital pending grand-jury action in the case.

Mr. Dixon, who worked at Hardin-Jefferson High School, apparently was despondent over losing an employment-discrimination lawsuit against the district when he allegedly shot Rodrick Hill, 45, in the head and hip earlier this month. Mr. Hill was director of instruction for the Hardin-Jefferson Independent School District in Sour Lake, and reportedly had testified in the case. (*Education Week*, 10/24/90)

Corporations Blamed for Not Testing Literacy of Employees

Corporate America must share the blame for burgeoning illiteracy rates because of its reluctance to test reading skills, set up literacy programs, or even demand high-school transcripts, a new national study asserts.

More than 70 percent of the 163 large companies surveyed did not formally test entry-level job candidates for reading and writing skills, according to a study released this month by the Conference Board, a business coalition dedicated to education reform. Most firms did not know how many of their workers were literate, the study said. Fewer than half said they asked to see a diploma or transcript.

"It seems to employers that each succeeding high-school class is less employable than its predecessor," said Leonard Lund, education-program director of the Conference Board. "Yet they have not signaled to young people that school attendance and performance is directly related to acquiring

and holding a job."

The study notes that minimal reading skills have already begun to hurt workplace performance. About 14 percent of the firms surveyed said they can trace a variety of problems to illiteracy, ranging from clerks getting the facts wrong on instructions to plant workers allowing machinery to break down.

Executives interviewed for the report suggested goals for a business "literacy agenda," including developing a universal system to assess workplace literacy, creating a national literacy test for 11th graders, and pushing for more employer coalitions to support literacy programs. (*Education Week*, 10/24/90)

Comment:

What will it take to get American business to realize that the cause of growing illiteracy in this country is the failure of the public schools to teach reading properly in grades one, two, and three? It seems as if a huge wall has been erected to keep this information from reaching the business community. Yet real money is being lost every year because of this incredible lack of intelligence on the part of such prestigious bodies as the Conference Board.

Of course, the business community has been literally inundated with disinformation and misinformation by the education establishment for years. But you would think that by now some of the people in business would be able to see through the lies and deception and seek out better information. One can only conclude that along with the decline in literacy has also come a decline in business intelligence based by a very deep reluctance to apply to education the same common sense and realism that must be applied to making money.

Two Teachers Suspended For Breach of Test Security

Two veteran 4th-grade teachers in Hamden, Conn., were suspended for the year without pay for showing their students a question from the state's mastery test.

The suspensions are expected to cost the teachers about \$40,000 each.

The incident was the first security breach in the six-year history of the test, which is administered annually to all students in the 4th, 6th, and 8th grades.

The two teachers, Margaret Cuticello and Joyce Ryan, who have taught for 18 years and 15 years, respectively, admitted opening sealed packages of test booklets in advance of the test and telling their students an essay-question topic. (*Educ. Wk.* 10/24/90)

Administrator Pleads Guilty to Stealing State Education Funds

A former school administrator who was charged with stealing state education funds in one of the biggest corruption cases in Arizona history has agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in return for a reduced sentence.

Daryle E. Cue, a former superintendent in Gila Bend, Ariz., had been indicted on six counts of bribery and four counts of theft in connection with the misappropriation of \$450,000 in federal grants that were supposed to have been routed by the state to universities and county school districts.

Prosecutors have alleged that the scheme, which ran for more than eight years, was the brainchild of James Hartgraves, a former deputy superintendent in the state education department.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Mr. Cue pleaded guilty to two counts of theft and agreed to make full restitution of the

funds. In addition, triple damages may be assessed in the case under the terms of the state's anti-racketeering laws, bringing the total restitution to \$1.4 million. (*Education Week*, 10/24/90)

Teacher Sues School Board For Right to Teach Obscenity

Jim Wooton, a teacher at Central High School in Evansville, IN, filed suit against the Evansville-Vanderburgh County School Board on Sept. 4, contending that the board violated the state's "open door" law when it banned a well-known obscenity during a public hearing on Aug. 20. Mr. Wooton was told that he could no longer teach a semantics lesson on the four-letter word.

A parent filed a complaint at the end of last school year about the use of the word in Mr. Wooton's class.

In the suit, Mr. Wooton, with the support of the Evansville Teacher's Association and the Indiana Teacher's Association, alleges that the matter was decided in a secret closed session on Aug. 6 before the board voted in public to ban the word, said Jack VanStone, a lawyer for the Evansville Teacher's Association. Indiana law requires government bodies to conduct their business in public meetings, Mr. VanStone said.

Issues of academic freedom and freedom of speech raised during the public meeting are not raised by the suit, Mr. VanStone said. The case hinges entirely on the open-meetings law, he said. (*Education Week*, 9/19/90)

Comment: If Mr. Wooton cannot teach semantics without the famous four-letter word, he ought to be fired not only for incompetence but for being morally unsuited for the job.