

WHAT DO THE TEACHERS WANT?

The NEA's Agenda for America's Future

by

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I'm delighted to have this opportunity to address the American Legislative Exchange Council on a subject near and dear to your hearts: the National Education Association and its plans for your future and mine. As you know, the NEA has become the most politically powerful labor organization in the United States. Its state affiliates are probably the most active and intimidating lobbies breathing down the necks of American lawmakers in our history. They have become the nation's most prolific producers of legislative proposals, all of which are designed to create a power monopoly in education that will make the late, lamented Ma Bell look like an amateur. So we'd better take a very close, hard look at what the teachers are up to.

For example, the Massachusetts legislature is currently grappling with an omnibus education bill with all sorts of Frankenstein monsters among the provisions of which the public is not even aware, including compulsory school attendance for five-year-olds, a minimum teacher

salary of \$18,000, all sorts of new administrative gimmicks to give the appearance of improving the quality of education, binding arbitration, and other lollypops for the unions. That's just Massachusetts.

In Illinois last year, the legislature passed 165 laws related to education, including two collective bargaining bills permitting teacher strikes for the first time. And in the other states, so much school legislation is being enacted that no one can keep up with it. It would take a staff of several hundred analysts to evaluate all of these new laws and calculate their costs in terms of taxes and lost educational freedom. And if the American people expect all of these new laws to improve education, they're in for a great disappointment, for the teachers are not interested in education. They're interested in power.

I have spent the last eight months writing a book about the NEA, and one thing I can report to you with utter certainty is that the teachers are on the march toward total political power. This is no joke. In 1967, NEA executive secretary Sam Lambert proclaimed:

"NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group. . . . NEA will organize this profession from top to bottom into logical operational units that can move swiftly and effectively and with power unmatched by any other organized group in the nation."

In November 1969, the NEA's monthly magazine, Today's Education, boldly stated: "The NEA is not content to wait for something to happen; it is making things happen. . . . The profession now has massive resources at its command. The job ahead is one of mobilizing and directing these resources with precision and purpose."

And in 1974, NEA president Helen Wise said: "Teachers individually and collectively can change the direction of government."

In what direction does the NEA want to change it? Leftward, of course. In fact, the NEA makes no secret of what it wants. You can read their entire blueprint for social and political change given in great detail each year in the form of resolutions adopted at their annual convention. In many respects it resembles the platform of a political party, for these resolutions become legislative proposals to be pushed by the NEA's national and state lobbies. But since the enactment of legislation depends on getting legislators to vote the way you want them to vote, the NEA now concentrates its efforts on getting their puppets elected.

The NEA now boasts that young politicians come to them asking what they have to do to get NEA backing. They are told to vote the way the NEA wants them to vote -- and not just on education issues but on every other issue the NEA has taken a stand on. You probably know the story about Chris Smith, the New Jersey Congressman, who was put on the NEA's hit list, despite all of his pro-education votes, because he voted the wrong way on the Democratic budget and Social Security! The NEA wants total obedience and devotion. Anything less gets the axe.

For all practical purposes, the NEA might as well be considered America's third political party -- far more efficient, better organized and financed than either of the two major parties -- and far more radical. The NEA has its platform. It has its organized political units in every school district in the nation and in every state capital. It has its paid professional operatives. Many teachers have undergone such intensive political training that they now know more about party

politics than academics. They know a lot more than the old cigar-chomping machine politicians of yore who made their decisions in those legendary smoke-filled rooms. Today the decisions are made by the board of directors of the NEA.

The NEA now employs 1,172 full-time, highly trained field organizers which the Reader's Digest of May 1984 called "the largest grassroots political army ever deployed in the United States." There are now more teachers in the Michigan legislature than lawyers. Teachers in unprecedented numbers are running for state office and school boards. The largest single profession represented among delegates to the Democratic National Convention is that of the teachers. Most state legislatures in America are either controlled by the NEA's state affiliates or are in danger of falling under such control.

I believe we are witnessing the closest thing to a coup d'etat this nation has ever seen. A coup d'etat, by definition, is a seizure of government power by a small group determined to impose its will on the majority, an overthrow of constitutional authority. It should be pointed out that the NEA is a private organization, financed by the membership dues and agency shop fees of 1.7 million teachers. Each member pays about \$300 a year to the NEA and its affiliates, producing an annual cash flow of about a half billion dollars! No political party in America gets a a half billion dollars a year to replenish its treasury simply through the collection of dues.

Such an unprecedented concentration of power makes the NEA the most politically dangerous organization in America. Its legislative agenda for 1983-84 covers every aspect of American life -- from the Equal Rights Amendment to foreign policy in Central America; from abortion on demand to a nuclear freeze. Its stand on most issues is

virtually identical with that of the radical left. In fact, the NEA seems to have become the main channel through which the radical left is now exercising its political influence.

In July 1981, Robert Moir, a reporter for the Daily World, the official newspaper of the Communist Party, USA, made the following observations after attending the NEA convention: "Nowhere in the basic documents of NEA, in their resolutions or new business items, are there any anti-Soviet or anti-socialist positions. . . . It seems unlikely that the path NEA is now taking will be reversed."

Apparently the Communists are very pleased with what the NEA is doing. But those of us who still believe in freedom ought to be very worried, for the NEA controls every public school in America through its member teachers, and they who control the schools control the future.

To understand why the NEA is doing what it's doing, you have to know a little of its history. The NEA was founded in 1857 mainly by state education officers for the purpose of promoting public education and the teaching profession. While the public schools were governed by the communities in their respective states, the educators thought of the system in national terms. Their ideal model was the highly centralized, government-controlled Prussian school system with its ministry of education reflecting the strongly statist philosophy of Hegelianism. Therefore, it ought not to surprise anyone that the call for a Department of Education with Cabinet status was made at the association's very first organizational meeting.

From 1857 to 1892 the NEA was little more than a glorified speech-making club for the educational elite. However, in 1892 the NEA began to assume the role of a U.S. ministry of education by creating

committees and commissions to determine national education policy. Its most illustrious commission was that devoted to the Reorganization of Secondary Education which issued its famous Cardinal Principles in 1918. That report, which revolutionized the American high school, was the first major work of the progressives who had taken over the NEA a few years before it established its permanent headquarters in Washington, D.C., in 1917.

Who were the progressives? They were a new breed of highly sophisticated educator, epitomized by John Dewey, trained in the new evolution-oriented humanist psychology developed in Germany by Wilhelm Wundt. These educator-psychologists believed that socialism was the wave of the future and that the purpose of public education was to change America from a capitalist-individualist society to a socialist-collectivist one. The NEA became the principle instrument whereby the progressives could organize and lead the teachers of America in the planned socialist direction.

As early as 1932, in a book entitled Dare the School Build a New Social Order?, Professor George S. Counts of Teachers College, Columbia, urged "that the teachers should deliberately reach for power and then make the most of their conquest." But the progressives had to wait thirty years before American teachers in large numbers could be turned into political activists.

In 1960 the AFL-CIO began its drive to organize white collar public employees to make up for the decline in union membership in industry. The union leaders decided to start with teachers because they reasoned that success with teachers would convince other white collar workers to organize. It was this challenge from organized labor which transformed

the NEA from a professional organization into a union. Unionization loosened the restraints that professionalism had placed on political activism. By the mid 1970s, the NEA had become the most militant, politically partisan labor organization in America. Jimmy Carter credits the NEA with getting him elected in 1976, and as you will recall that election was extremely close.

The NEA is currently using several interlocking strategies to achieve its political ends. For example, in its training manual entitled Combatting the New Right, developed by the Western States Regional Staff of the NEA, it is written:

Dealing with Right Wing influence requires coordinated organizational effort involving all program areas of the association: political action, government relations, communications, instruction and professional development, teacher rights, human and civil rights, and court action.

Some centralization of function is required for monitoring, providing liaison with other association levels, maintaining a clearinghouse, disseminating information to appropriate program areas, but establishment of central function is only the beginning of an effective program to counter the aggressions of the New Right.

Note the wording: "the aggressions of the New Right." Incidentally, ALEC is on the NEA's list of "New Right" organizations printed in the training manual. ALEC is described (page 12) as an organization that "drafts, promotes, and publishes 'source book' on proposals for state legislation aimed at reducing taxes and governmental services, prohibiting

agency shop provisions in teacher-school district master contracts, controlling textbook and teaching materials content, and prohibiting contractual agreements between all governmental subdivisions of the state and any public employee union or association." So in the eyes of the NEA, ALEC is a very dangerous enemy guilty of all sorts of aggressions.

Combatting the New Right further states:

It is essential that NEA -- in states and communities -- at the national level -- identify friends, make friends with friends, identify common interests, form coalitions, work together -- politically, organizationally, and in aggressive public relations programs - to promote common goals.

Certainly a first step is for teachers to fully inform themselves about the nature, scope, and purposes of right wing activity in the country. . . . But it is also terribly important not to stop here . . . not to become so involved in analyzing the motives and goals and methods and names and modus operandi of Right Wing groups that an aggressive agenda is not developed . . . not only as a means of countering the influence of the Right, but rather as a means of replacing it with progressive goals and objectives that are essential to the advancement of education and to the organized advancement of the education profession. The organized teaching profession, now that it is organized, now that it does comprise a formidable political force, is a central target of the Right Wing in America today.

In other words, the NEA rightly recognizes that the only organized resistance to an NEA political takeover in the United States is the so-called New Right. That puts everyone in ALEC, everyone in this room, on the frontline of the battle, and it is the goal of the NEA to put all of us out of commission. And they mean business.

The recent unbelievable events in Nebraska are just a foretaste of things to come. Who would have believed that a state government would close a church school and imprison its pastor for the crime of exercising his Constitutionally protected freedom of religion? Several months ago, while visiting Idaho, I had the occasion to chat with that state's commissioner of education. I mentioned the Nebraska laws requiring church schools to be approved and to hire only state-certified teachers, and I was told that similar laws are also on the books in Idaho but that the department of education has chosen not to enforce them. Obviously the officials in Idaho and other states where such laws are on the books are waiting to see how the Nebraska situation turns out.

If the secular humanists win in crushing religious freedom in Nebraska, then they will move against religious freedom everywhere else. And you can be sure that the NEA, which inspired the Nebraska laws, will get plenty of help from the media, the abortionists, and all those civil libertarians who really want freedom from religion, not freedom of religion.

The Nebraska situation is crucial because what is at stake there is a fundamental principle of government: whether the right to the free exercise of religion is an inherent, unalienable right or a privilege granted by the state. The Declaration of Independence is very clear on the source of our unalienable rights. It says: "We hold these truths

to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

What I just read is not a church sermon but the document on which the existence of this nation is based, a document that required six years of war and suffering to fulfill. And to make sure that what was "self-evident" in 1776 would be "self-evident" in 1984, the founding fathers spelled out these unalienable rights in the first amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

I can't imagine anything more clearly spelled out than that. Note that a nation that believes in unalienable rights endowed by God protects the rights of atheists, agnostics, and humanists to live in freedom and prosperity in this country. Yet the humanists are so clever at using the Constitution to destroy the Constitution, that they have transformed laws protecting religious freedom into laws that will eventually destroy it.

Incidentally, I'd like to see those words from the Declaration and the Constitution posted in bronze in every public school and government building in America. It may be unlawful to post the Ten Commandments in public schools, but I'd like to see the ACLU and the Supreme Court forbid the posting of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

If we wish to assert and proclaim the sovereignty of God in our public schools, that's the simplest way to do it. And let's see who will vote against it! Everything this nation stands for is summed up in those words. They are diametrically opposed to the humanist, materialist, and Marxist philosophies that now dominate our culture. They embody the ideas that made this nation the greatest, the most humane, the freest and wealthiest in all human history.

Yet the question is why are the humanists, many of whom hold Ph.D's, D.Ed's, Th.D's and other exalted proofs of intelligence, so willing to dispense with the idea of unalienable rights, so willing to undermine the foundations of our free society? I found the answer the other day in Francis Schaeffer's A Christian Manifesto. In that book, Schaeffer makes the very profound observation that the Judeo-Christian worldview and the humanist worldview are not only different in how they understand the nature of reality and existence, but that they inevitably bring forth different results.

For example, the idea of inherent God-given rights is a natural outgrowth of the Judeo-Christian worldview in which God is the source of all life and all rights. But in the humanist worldview, in which man is the soulless evolutionary product of primordial ooze, there can be no inherent, unalienable rights, for no god exists to grant them. In a humanist world only men can grant rights, and man's agency for granting rights is the state.

Ayn Rand is the only atheist I know of who believed in inherent rights based solely on man's nature as a rational being in a benevolent universe. She secularized unalienable rights into natural rights. But her system is seriously flawed. She believed in the sovereignty

of the independent individual who had the strength to maintain his independence in a sea of collectivism, but she never extended that sovereignty to the dependent unborn who are deprived of their natural rights and the benefits of that benevolent universe merely because they are helpless.

In any case, what Schaeffer points out is that the loss of freedom is inevitable under secular humanism for it cannot accept the notion of God-given inherent rights, and freedom is impossible without it. That is why the struggle between the evolutionists and creationists is viewed by the humanists as more than a dispute over equal time to be given to equally valid doctrines. To the secular humanist, evolution is truth, not theory, and creationism is simply mythology.

Thus, the lesson is stark but simple. If we want to protect our inherent, unalienable rights, we shall have to defeat humanism. Christians and Jews who try to compromise via the go-along to get-along philosophy are only kidding themselves. They will eventually wind up in the same gulags with those who have not compromised. For the humanists do not really accept compromise anymore than the NEA accepts partial obedience from its puppets. They only accept surrender.

What can we do to save freedom? Have we reached the point of no return? We are dangerously close when it's conceded that the humanists control all of public education, when crucial issues of national defense are decided by one vote in Congress, when church schools are closed and pastors put in jail for exercising their Constitutional freedoms and the majority of Americans don't seem to know or care what's going on.

But the world is not changed by the majority. It is changed by the active, dedicated, knowledgeable minority. Indeed, the New Right

is truly the only viable force in America determined to protect and preserve the form of government our founding fathers bequeathed us. But we must develop a strategy that will win. We have no choice. We must win or we perish. I don't think we can depend on humanist mercy for survival.

First we must defend what we have left of educational freedom and expand it. We must pass laws that protect private schools, church schools, and home schoolers from persecution by the state. It may mean repealing the compulsory school attendance laws which the left is using to destroy educational and religious freedom. We need one organization on our side to do nothing but monitor the NEA and its activities. Remember, the NEA is active in every school district, in every state and requires close continuous scrutiny. Laws like the ones in Nebraska should have never been allowed to pass. But we were asleep on the job. We were attacked by surprise in an educational Pearl Harbor, outflanked and outmaneuvered because we believed that the NEA believes in freedom and inherent rights. But now we know better. In fact, one positive result of the Nebraska experience is that now it is quite easy to tell a friend from an enemy. Our friends believe in inherent, unalienable rights. Our enemies do not. And in this there can be no ifs, ands, or buts. Either you're for unalienable rights or agin 'em. It's the easiest litmus test in the world.

In closing, let us remember that the defeat at Pearl Harbor was the beginning of a long struggle that eventually led to victory. But it required total mobilization and much sacrifice to reach it. We know we can win because our founding fathers won -- against much greater odds. They set the example. Let's follow it.