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The

Phyllis Schlafly Report

VOL. 37, NO. 1

P.O. BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

AUGUST 2003

Who Controls Education Policies?

Caving in on Title IX

The Bush Administration has just re-affirmed the Clintonian feminists' Title IX outrages, which impose a gender quota-like system on college sports. The feminists are squealing with joy and the National Women's Law Center calls it a "huge win" — for the feminists, of course. Bush is dreaming if he thinks they will ever reward him with their votes.

At least 56% of college students are women, yet only a fraction seek to compete in intercollegiate sports. The Clintonian feminists' "proportionality" fest lays down the absurd rule that the numbers on men's and women's athletic teams must be in the same proportion as the enrollment of men and women in each college. Thus, if a typical college has fewer than 56% of women on athletic teams, that college can be judged guilty of unlawful sex discrimination.

To protect against lawsuits, colleges have been disbanding men's teams, a practice that doesn't benefit women in the slightest. Wrestling, one of the least expensive sports, is a major casualty of this mindless demand for quota equality; 171 wrestling teams have been abolished. Other fatalities include men's track and field, tennis, swimming and gymnastics. Howard University even abandoned its baseball team. You don't have to be a math major to compare the total number of male and female athletes at a college and then dismantle men's teams until the proportion reflects enrollment. The correct name for this is quota.

A July 11 "guidance" letter sent by the Bush Administration to all colleges tosses some soft-soap language at the men such as "the elimination of teams is a disfavored practice." But the guidance preserves the "proportionality" methodology that invites an army of attorneys to sue any deep-pocket college with a gender-quota discrepancy.

The new guidance promises that the Department of Education will "aggressively enforce" Title IX and continue to use the Clinton Administration's three-prong test which the guidance claims "has worked well." (It

hasn't "worked well" at all; it's been grievously discriminatory against men.)

More important, the guidance keeps the door open for feminist lawyers to continue to take the "proportionality" prong all the way to the bank and hope to collect over \$1 million in attorneys' fees from each college. That was the fee the lawyers raked in for suing Brown University.

The guidance proves that President Bush's statements against quotas are just empty rhetoric. Even if the heavy hand of the bureaucracy doesn't *require* quotas, the new guidance *allows* the colleges to continue using quotas (under the code word proportionality). The colleges and universities are controlled by liberals and feminists, and they are eager to use quotas to punish men. The new guidance gives them the authority to do exactly that. The guidance disingenuously says that proportionality does not need to be the only rule used to judge sex discrimination, but it *allows* the feminists in control of colleges to use proportionality as the only rule.

Men's sports teams can't be saved by private funding since this battle is not about money. Even if a wrestling team is privately funded, if it competes in the NCAA it has to be counted in the quota. The quota system also ignores the fact that many male teams such as football are excellent fundraisers because alumni (like most sports fans) are bigger fans of men's sports than women's.

Walk-on athletes (those who are *not* recruited or financed by college scholarships) should be removed from gender comparisons, since they reflect the fact that men are far more interested in sports. There are pitifully few female walk-ons, since many women apparently don't want to compete in intercollegiate sports unless they are subsidized by scholarships. Men compete because they love the sport and love the competition. Older women, who increasingly attend college in significant numbers, but are beyond their athletically competitive years, should also be excluded from any "proportionality" count.

At the very least, the Bush Administration should

have called for comparing the gender ratio of those who make the teams against those who tried out. If a higher percentage of women make the teams than men do, which is usually the case, then the college probably has provided adequate opportunity, which is all the Title IX statute requires.

Last year Secretary of Education Rod Paige appointed a panel to study the effect of Title IX on college sports. But the feminists went on a media attack against any reform, and the Bush Administration retreated in fem-fear. Paige quelled the commotion by announcing he would consider only proposals that received unanimous commission support (which was impossible with feminists on the commission). That guaranteed perpetuation of the status quo, which the new guidance reaffirmed.

Men on sports teams act like men, and the feminists are hostile to the male culture. College football produces social conservatives such as Jack Kemp, Steve Largent, J.C. Watts and the late Supreme Court Justice Byron White. College wrestling programs brought us conservative stalwarts Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Speaker Dennis Hastert. Track and field yielded Jim Ryun, one of the greatest milers of all time and now a Congressman.

While football players are known to date cheerleaders, women collegiate athletes are not known to chase quarterbacks. The radical feminists' hostility toward men is manifested in the abolition of sports in which men excel, such as wrestling.

Young women are ultimately hurt by this irrational feminist agenda. Girls are unwittingly pushed into higher risks of injury and hormonal-changing drugs. Studies show that female competitors have a higher incidence of knee and head injuries compared to men. Torn anterior cruciate ligaments (ACLs) are crippling women athletes at an alarming rate, and last year decimated even the well-trained women's professional soccer league.

A 1999 study found that girls softball had double the rate of serious head injuries as boys baseball, despite a baseball's greater hardness and speed. Last fall, the only girl in a junior football league in Chicago suddenly collapsed and died from a blood clot in the brain, apparently caused by a routine tackle days earlier.

It is unjust to limit the number of men in intercollegiate sports by the relative number of women athletes. Discrimination should be judged by opportunity (the word in the regulation) rather than on equal results. Just imagine what would happen if our military refused to enlist men unless an equal number of women signed up!

The original intent and language of Title IX are not the problem. But we are disappointed that the men in the Bush Administration aren't man enough to stand up to the feminists' tantrums. The Bush Administration is allowing the Clintonian feminists to continue their mischief through bureaucratic "guidance" that is not justified by the law, and should be changed by the President with a stroke of his pen.

Who Failed: Students or the System?

All over the country, students, their parents and teachers are in an uproar about the tens of thousands who flunked the test designated as the requirement for high school graduation. Threats of withholding diplomas have brought out accusations, recriminations, and even angry mobs.

States have devised various ways to deal with this crisis. Award the diplomas anyway, stonewall the complainers, keep the students in school an extra year, postpone the deadline to 2004 or even 2006, lower the standards, lower the cutoff score, or reduce the number of questions a student must answer correctly.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001 doesn't mandate a test for graduation, but it does require all schools to implement standards and annual tests in reading and math for the third through eighth grades, and show "adequate yearly progress" not only for the school but for minority subgroups. The buzz word is accountability and noncompliance brings costly sanctions.

The Act was passed with bipartisan support. But the Democrats' biggest constituency, the teachers unions, opposed the tests initially and are now inciting the clamor against them, along with the usual whine that the solution is more money.

I sympathize with the students who flunked. After the school failed to teach them to read, gave them good grades and promoted them year after year, it's no wonder they feel cheated when they are denied diplomas.

How did anybody expect the students to pass their 4th grade, 8th grade and 12th grade tests if they didn't learn phonics in the first grade? Don't lay the guilt on the students; lay it on the system that failed the students.

On June 19 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card, reported that 36% of 4th graders **cannot** read at a "basic" level. The figure for whites is 25%, for Latinos 56%, and for blacks 60%. The NAEP report also revealed the consistent and dramatic decline of all reading skills in the upper grades. One in four 12th graders **cannot** read at a "basic" level, down from one in five in 1992.

The explanation for this depressing report is obvious. Elementary school children can memorize a few hundred words so they are recorded as reading at grade level, but when they get to high school they can't read the bigger words because they were never taught phonics (the system of sounding out the syllables and putting them together like building blocks).

The public school establishment adamantly refuses to teach first graders to read by phonics even though study after study, including one released in June by the National Institute for Early Education Research, shows that phonics is essential to becoming a good reader. Some teachers colleges even peddle the paranoid theory that phonics is a "Far Right" conspiracy.

To conceal the public school's abysmal failure to

teach reading, education theorists who call themselves "social constructionists" are "departing from traditional notions of reading and writing" and trying to "redefine what it means to be literate." They are spreading the ridiculous notion that literacy does not mean reading the printed text, but is "inherently social" and flows from students developing "ways of thinking from such socially based experiences."

According to these academics quoted on the Electronic Classroom website, "meaning from text is not 'out there' to be acquired but is something that is constructed by individuals through their interactions with each other and the world." So, students can "construct" their own understanding of the text by interacting with their (probably semi-literate) peers.

The role of reading teachers is supposedly "not to impart universal truths about text but to foster an environment where learners come to construct understanding through interaction." It's more important to engage in "student talk as opposed to teacher talk."

Teaching reading is not rocket science. Parents who care about their children's education should teach their own children to read using a good phonics system, which is what I did with my six children.

NEA Gears Up to Elect Democrats

Tropical Storm Bill roared into New Orleans this summer carrying in its tailwind 10,000 convention delegates who purport to represent 2.7 million members of the National Education Association. They call themselves "the world's largest democratic, deliberative body," but the NEA's version of democracy is: majority rules, and the minority have no rights. The NEA accords no rights to the 30% of NEA members who are Republicans. Since 1976 when the NEA became a big player in national politics by supporting Jimmy Carter, the NEA has endorsed a Democrat for President in every election.

This year, NEA federal policy manager Randall J. Moody announced plans to target 16 states he thinks the NEA can carry for a "pro-education" Democratic President against George W. Bush in 2004, and 40 to 45 House races where they can recruit "moderate" candidates. The NEA plans to raise funds for candidates, provide direct-mail services, and "turn out the vote."

Another significant minority was rebuffed when it urged NEA delegates to "stick to education issues and not promote abortion." The majority remained adamant in retaining the NEA's pro-abortion position, rejecting all pleas to be consistent with other NEA resolutions calling for tolerance, diversity, and respect for religious views of all peoples.

For many years, NEA resolutions have endorsed "early childhood education programs in the public schools for children from birth through age eight," specifically including "diversity-based curricula," and "bias-free screening devices." The NEA has repeatedly resolved that

"kindergarten attendance should be mandatory" and "full-day," and the NEA now plans to provide model legislation and "legal, technical, and other support services" to help state legislatures enact such legislation.

What's new this year is that the NEA delegates resolved to make an all-out push for the establishment "in every state" of two years of "universal," taxpayer-funded, "full-day — as opposed to half-day" pre-kindergarten "for all three- and four-year-old children." The NEA claims this is the fulfillment of the national education goal that "all children in America will start school ready to learn."

The pre-kindergarten demand is based on the NEA's false assumption that "there is no longer any serious doubt about the value of pre-kindergarten." In fact, what there is no longer any serious doubt about (as shown by the authoritative study just released by the National Institutes of Health) is that the more hours children spend in daycare, a.k.a. pre-kindergarten, the higher the incidence and severity of problem behaviors, such as disobedience, over-aggressiveness, and stress.

The NEA's pettiness and vindictiveness against homeschoolers was manifested by the contentious debate on Resolution B-69 which originally read: "The Association also believes that unfunded home-schooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools." The word "unfunded" got into the proposed resolution because a handful of public schools provide funding for homeschoolers to participate in after-school activities. NEA delegates voted to delete the word "unfunded" because they oppose allowing homeschoolers, funded or unfunded, to associate with public school students who are "with us all day."

Two years ago, the NEA received damaging national publicity when word leaked out that the convention was going to adopt an in-your-face resolution demanding that the gay rights agenda be incorporated into everything from school curricula to teacher hiring. Revolt in the ranks caused it to be withdrawn. But that was all smoke and mirrors; that convention quietly adopted at least ten separate resolutions that added up to the same objectives, and this year's convention re-adopted the same resolutions.

The NEA's Standing Committee on Women's Issues demanded continuing NEA support for Title IX quota policies, the University of Michigan's position on affirmative action, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the United Nations treaties on Discrimination against Women and the Rights of the Child. The NEA Standing committee on Sexual Orientation/Gender Identification reported enthusiastic NEA support for "comprehensive sexual health education in schools," which of course means the positive presentation of homosexuality.

The 2003 convention proves again that the NEA is always about coopting more taxpayers' money, creating more jobs for NEA members, getting tighter control over children from the earliest possible age, and preserving the teachers union monopoly in the public schools.

Excerpts from NEA Resolutions Passed at the 2003 Convention in New Orleans

A-24. Voucher Plans and Tuition Tax Credits. The National Education Association believes that voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements that use tax monies to subsidize pre-K through 12 private school education can undermine public education; reduce the support needed to fund public education adequately; cause racial, economic, and social segregation of students; and threaten the constitutional separation of church and state.

B-1. Early Childhood Education. The National Education Association supports early childhood education programs in the public schools for children from birth through age eight. The Association also believes that early childhood education programs should include a full continuum of services for parents/guardians, and children, including child care, child development, developmentally appropriate and diversity-based curricula, special education, and appropriate bias-free screening devices.

B-9. Racism, Sexism, and Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identification Discrimination. Discrimination and stereotyping based on such factors as race, gender, immigration status, disability, ethnicity, occupation, and sexual orientation must be eliminated.

B-31. Multicultural Education. Multicultural education should promote the recognition of individual and group differences and similarities in order to reduce racism, homophobia, ethnic and all other forms of prejudice, and discrimination.

B-40. Sex Education. The Association also believes that to facilitate the realization of human potential, it is the right of every individual to live in an environment of freely available information and knowledge about sexuality and encourages affiliates and members to support appropriately established sex education programs. Such programs should include information on sexual abstinence, birth control and family planning, diversity of culture, diversity of sexual orientation and/or gender identification, parenting skills, prenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, homophobia.

B-69. Home Schooling. When home schooling occurs, students enrolled must meet all state requirements. Instruction should be by persons who are licensed by the appropriate state education licensure agency, and a curriculum approved by the state department of education should be used. The Association also believes that home-schooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools.

H-7. National Health Care Policy. The National

Education Association believes that affordable, comprehensive health care, including prescription drug coverage, is the right of every resident. The Association supports the adoption of a single-payer health care plan for all residents of the United States.

H-11. Statehood for the District of Columbia. The National Education Association supports efforts to achieve statehood for the District of Columbia.

I-2. International Court of Justice. The Association urges participation by the United States in deliberations before the court.

I-12. Family Planning. The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom. The Association also urges the implementation of community-operated, school-based family planning clinics that will provide intensive counseling by trained personnel.

I-26. Freedom of Religion. The Association also opposes any federal legislation or mandate that would require school districts to schedule a moment of silence.

I-39. Elimination of Discrimination. The Association is committed to the elimination of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identification.

I-47. English as the Official Language. The Association believes that efforts to legislate English as the official language disregard cultural pluralism; deprive those in need of education, social services, and employment; and must be challenged.

I-50. Equal Opportunity for Women. The National Education Association believes that all persons, regardless of gender, must have equal opportunity for employment, promotion, compensation (including equal pay for comparable worth). The Association supports an amendment to the U.S. Constitution (such as the Equal Rights Amendment) that guarantees that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state because of gender. The Association endorses the use of nonsexist language.

The Phyllis Schlafly Report PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002 ISSN0556-0152

Published monthly by the Eagle Trust Fund, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois. Postmaster: Address Corrections should be sent to the Phyllis Schlafly Report, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Phone: (618) 462-5415.

Subscription Price: \$20 per year. Extra copies available: 50¢ each; 3 copies \$1; 30 copies \$5; 100 copies \$10.

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