



The

Phyllis Schlafly Report



VOL. 39, NO. 1

P.O. BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

AUGUST 2005

Follies and Failures of the National Education Assn.

Parents are on the warpath about the way 63,000 public schools are now starting their fall term in August, some even in hot July. Thousands of parents have organized Save Our Summers campaigns, and protests in Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and Florida have hit the national media.

I wish them well with their demands for schools to return to their traditional post-Labor Day opening. But I also wish those parents would show as much concern about what is being taught in the classroom.

The largest teachers union, the National Education Association (NEA), held its annual convention this summer in Los Angeles displaying its usual favoritism toward the gays and the feminists, hostility to parents, and support of liberal causes.

The badges worn by the delegates included messages bashing President Bush and supporting gays and lesbians. There is a Conservative Educators Caucus within the NEA membership, but all its proposals were buried in committee except one on academic freedom, which the delegates voted to send back to committee without allowing any floor debate.

The NEA convention handed a big victory to its large Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus by easily passing its proposal calling on the NEA to "develop a comprehensive strategy" to deal with the attacks on gay curricula, policies and practices by what the NEA calls "extremist groups" (that's the NEA's term for parents). A delegate who asked for respect for ex-gays was loudly booed, while the delegates cheered the speaker who pronounced that there is no such person as an ex-gay.

Resolutions passed by the NEA convention that have nothing to do with education included a call to boycott Wal-Mart, statehood for the District of Columbia, affirmative action, opposition to private accounts in Social Security, opposition to capital punishment, gun control, "single-payer health care" (i.e., government medicine), and endorsement of the International Criminal Court and the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

NEA resolutions pertaining to education called for the teaching of global, multicultural, suicide, environmental, and bilingual education. Somehow, resolutions about the need for improvement in the reading, math or history didn't make the

cut. Of course, the NEA is adamantly opposed to vouchers and tuition tax credits.

NEA resolutions endorsed all feminist goals, including abortion, Comparable Worth, the Equal Rights Amendment, and taking over the baby-sitting of children "from birth through age eight." The gay lobby's influence extends even over infants, whom the NEA wants to provide with "diversity-based curricula" and "bias-free screening devices." The NEA continues to call for mandatory kindergarten with compulsory attendance.

The NEA resolutions demand that the public schools assume a bigger role in providing sex instruction, with teachers protected from any interference by parents. The NEA asserts that it is the right of every child to have freely available information about sex, birth control, diversity of sexual orientation, sexually transmitted diseases, incest, and homophobia.

About a third of NEA members are estimated to vote Republican, and there is a Republican Caucus within the NEA. However, the powers-that-be running the NEA launched a coup this year and took it over (so that "Republican" NEAers will be able to bash Bush), after which three-fourths of the real Republicans quit and joined the Conservative Educators Caucus.

In one comical action by the 2005 NEA convention, the delegates defeated New Business Item #1 calling for conducting a "survey of members and potential members to determine the extent which NEA resolutions affect membership."

Apparently, NEA members don't want to know how hurtful these radical resolutions are to their own membership. It's no wonder that NEA membership is not increasing.

NEA Hostility to Homeschoolers

The NEA delegates made their animosity against homeschoolers loud and clear. They passed a resolution demanding that children be permitted to be homeschooled only if their parents are licensed as teachers by the state education licensure agency. The NEA also demanded that the homeschool curriculum be approved by the state department of education. Of course, the reason why parents go to the extreme trouble and time commitment of homeschooling is that

they don't want their children to be taught what is being taught in the public schools.

In another manifestation of hypocrisy about educational diversity, the NEA resolved that "homeschooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools" (even though their parents pay the same school taxes that public school students' parents pay). Obviously, homeschooling is something that the powerful and wealthy NEA union fears.

Homeschoolers, who are one of the fastest growing movements in America today, are more and more demanding their right to compete in high school sports along with public school students. After all, homeschooling families pay taxes to finance the public schools, and they should not be excluded from the benefits.

This issue has made its way into the courts and they have come down with different decisions. The Michigan court sided with the public schools and upheld the exclusion of homeschoolers from public school sports. West Virginia reached the opposite conclusion and ordered the schools to rewrite their policies to allow homeschoolers' participation in sports. Pennsylvania has taken a middle ground, permitting local school districts to make their own decisions about admitting or excluding homeschoolers from sports teams, and now more than half of Pennsylvania schools allow home-educated students to compete in public school sports.

Homeschoolers have come a long way. It's becoming conventional wisdom that homeschoolers usually do better academically than public school students.

How the NEA Has Changed

One of my readers recently sent me a book published by the NEA in 1951. It provides a look down memory lane of what public schools used to be a half century ago.

Called *The American Citizens Handbook*, this nearly-600-page book was intended to promote good citizenship among public school students. It includes essays on citizenship, brief biographies of "heroes and heroines of American democracy," and reprints of historical documents that are the "great charters of American democracy."

The book unabashedly celebrates old-fashioned virtue and patriotism. One section entitled "A Golden Treasury for the Citizen" offers passages suitable for memorization by children.

This NEA civics handbook embraces "the creation of national unity" and "Americanization" as explicit tasks for the public schools. The book states, "It is important that people who are to live and work together shall have a common mind — a like heritage of purpose, religious ideals, love of country, beauty, and wisdom to guide and inspire them."

Numerous Old and New Testament selections are included, including the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The Golden Rule, the Boy Scout oath, national songs

and uplifting poems appear along with geography facts and a household budget.

I don't approve of everything in the book. It contains a large chapter to promoting the United Nations and a rather embarrassing endorsement of eugenics as a goal of education, so that "highly gifted young people" are encouraged to bear children to "greatly improve our national stock."

Nevertheless, *The American Citizens Handbook* is a stunning contrast to the radical resolutions adopted by the NEA at its convention this year.

Losing Knowledge of American History

When I went to college, a student couldn't graduate without taking a course in both American and European history. This requirement was not open to discussion; it was a given. Learning the basic facts of history was considered necessary to become an educated citizen, to appreciate our heritage, and to avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

The public schools used to teach American patriotism. The *McGuffey Readers*, which sold more than 120 million copies, introduced youngsters to our common culture of literature, history, and patriotic speeches.

Today, at least 55 colleges and universities, including the most prestigious, have no American history requirement. Only a fifth of colleges require any course in history at all. On the other hand, some colleges do require courses in "non-Eurocentric culture or society," and that requirement can be met by courses in human development, sociology, theater, dance, film, or video courses. Social science requirements can be met by courses in women's studies, which are just feminist propaganda.

Young people cannot understand the blessings of liberty, cannot appreciate their American inheritance, and cannot hope to maintain our Constitution and our republic without a firm understanding of the fundamentals of American history and American government. Thomas Jefferson said: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be."

Without memory, you've lost your link to both the past and the future and really can't say who you are. Our knowledge of history is to civilized society what memory is to individual identity. A culture without historical memory will be cut loose from its roots.

That's why the dismal report on history published in 2000 by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni was called *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 31st Century*. All test scores show that our students are grossly deficient in their knowledge of American history. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation's Report Card, reported that less than half of high school seniors demonstrated even a basic grasp of history. Surveys even show an astonishing level of historical ignorance among

college graduates.

There is a great tendency today in colleges and high schools to make the teaching of history conform to Political Correctness. Many professors want to teach history the way they wish it had happened instead of the way it did happen. Or, they are filled with hatred and contempt for our system and don't want to teach how great and unique America is. Or, they overlay modern ideas on the behavior of people of long ago and try to judge them by current standards. This goes along with the fad called "teaching the conflicts," which means teaching what is bad about America instead of what is good.

Pulitzer-prize winning historian David McCullough believes that the ignorance of American history among U.S. high school students and teachers is a threat to national security. Referring to high school textbooks, he told a Senate hearing that the typeface is growing larger and the illustrations more lavish, but the content is shrinking. He told a Senate committee that "we are raising a generation of people who are historically illiterate."

Students should be taught about the accomplishments of America, its ingenuity, its freedom and abundance. We want our young people to become informed and optimistic, realistic and idealistic, and patriotic. We should encourage students to be grateful to our ancestors, respectful of our values and institutions, proud of our heroes, and patriotic so they can pass this knowledge along to the next generation.

Checking Out Textbook Bias

The easiest way to check out the bias of a history textbook is to look at its treatment of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Almost everything people think they "know" about McCarthy is false. For example, he had nothing to do with the House Committee on Un-American Activities or with investigations of Hollywood; he limited himself solely to attacking the coverup of security risks in government.

Students and adults who want to learn the history that has been censored out of their textbooks should read Ann Coulter's best-seller *Treason*. Her book does an awesome job of describing the widespread infiltration of the Franklin D. Roosevelt and Truman Administrations by a vast network of Soviet spies and agents. Ann Coulter's history is supported by 47 pages of fine-print documentation. The official release in 1995 of the Venona Papers proves there is no longer any doubt about the massive penetration of our government by men who served the interests of the Soviet Union.

Ann Coulter shows there is no longer any doubt about the willful, partisan coverup of treason by the Administrations whose strategy was to target "McCarthyism" as the enemy and thereby deflect blame from Roosevelt who called Stalin "Uncle Joe," and from Harry Truman who said "I like old Joe; Joe's a decent fellow." Her book is a tremendous piece of scholarship about American history during the 1940s and

1950s when the Soviet Union was able to place so many of its agents in high places in government, academia and Hollywood. Her book called *Treason* is a necessary antidote to historic illiteracy and a must-read if you want to know the facts about American history since the end of World War II.

The second way to check out the bias of social studies textbooks is to look at their treatment of Ronald Reagan, especially their refusal to give him credit for winning the Cold War.

For example, a widely used high school textbook, *The American Pageant* published by Houghton Mifflin Company, never mentions President Reagan's achievement of ending the Cold War, instead giving credit to Soviet boss Mikhail Gorbachev. Here is how this textbook describes the Reagan economic boom: "The poor got poorer and the very rich grew fabulously richer, while middle-class incomes largely stagnated." The fact is that the average income of all segments of U.S. society increased.

Commentator Robert Holland points out that another widely used textbook, *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn, is a false book that "depicts America as a continuing centuries-old conspiracy of rich white men to exploit minorities."

Young people cannot understand the blessings of liberty, and cannot hope to maintain our Constitution and our republic, without a firm understanding of the fundamentals of American history and government.

We need to restore the teaching of American history and civics to its rightful place in the public schools. Maybe if our judges had taken more classes in American history and civics and learned more about our heritage and our values, we might have fewer shocking court decisions like the one that declared the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag unconstitutional.

Don't Count on the Government

Don't count on the government to teach students American history. When the Federal Government financed a 271-page book in 1994 called *National Standards for United States History*, it was a public relations disaster. American Federation of Teachers spokesman Al Shanker said it was the first time a government tried to teach children to "feel negative about their own country." He later added, "If a youngster has to take a wild guess that Stalin is either an Olympic athlete or a Renaissance painter, he can't have much of a grasp of the terrors of a totalitarian society as a basis for comparison to his own life."

Standards mentioned the Gettysburg Address only once; it didn't rank as high as the 1848 feminist Declaration at Seneca Falls which was mentioned six times. Omitted from Standards were Paul Revere, Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers, and Albert Einstein. On the other hand, students were told to study the influence of MTV, Madonna, Murphy Brown, and Roseanne.

Standards had a 14-page section on the Civil War and Reconstruction, but it is mostly revisionist history. It's hard to see how an historian could write 14 pages about the Civil War and never mention General Robert E. Lee or General Ulysses S. Grant, but *Standards* accomplished that feat. On the other hand, *Standards* mentions Harriet Tubman six times, the Ku Klux Klan 17 times, and Senator Joseph McCarthy 19 times.

After the U.S. Senate repudiated *Standards* by a vote of 99 to 1, the authors made some cosmetic changes. But copies of the original book had already flooded schools and publishers, and were easily available when the Goals 2000 law mandated the adoption of so-called standards. No one knows which version is in more common use today.

For example, when the U.S. Department of Education published a booklet last year called "Helping Your Child Learn History" to give advice to parents of pre-school through fifth-grade children, the booklet gratuitously included several favorable references to the infamous *National Standards for United States History*, even slyly suggesting that President Bush supports them. When this became public, the Department withdrew the booklet in embarrassment.

One parent recently wrote me that when she complained to her child's principal about the failure to teach American history, he replied: "We teach history from today back, instead of from earlier times to today. That way, the kids get the important things instead of a lot of old dead stuff like Jefferson, Washington, Madison and all those other guys."

If school principals think that history is not worth learning because it's just a lot of "old dead stuff," the younger generation will never learn how Americans won our independence and freedom and why we must teach history in order keep America the land of the free.

Other principals have defended their policies by saying that schoolchildren don't want to read big books any more. The incredible sale of the Harry Potter books gives the lie to that argument. There is no reason why American history can't be made exciting to read.

Students Illiterate in Math, Too

The man who some believe is the most powerful man in America, U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, told the Senate Banking Committee last year that the biggest threat to the U.S. standard of living is from declining U.S. educational standards. He contrasted the math proficiency of U.S. students with that of our Asian rivals.

American students ranked 19th in a 1999 study of mathematical ability among 8th graders in 38 countries. Students from Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan made the top 5. Among U.S. college freshmen who plan to major in science or engineering, one in five requires remedial math courses, according to the National Science Foundation.

Alan Greenspan said, "What will ultimately determine the

standard of living of this country is the skill of the people. We do something wrong, which obviously people in Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan do far better."

America started losing its grip on math in 1989 when the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics published a set of provocative recommendations. Starting in 1992, these recommendations transformed American math education. Schools began to teach whole math, fuzzy math, and new-new math. The role of the teacher was minimized, computation was left to calculators, and students were encouraged to think there are no right or wrong answers to math problems.

Education gurus came up with the notion that students should discover mathematics themselves through trial and error, instead of being taught addition, subtraction and multiplication skills that have already been discovered. The gurus developed a mantra that we must eliminate "rote memorization." The result was that the various curricula forced on our children downplayed math facts and abandoned standard methods. Almost all public schools today use one of the modern math curricula.

Successful math education requires that students learn the technologies that true geniuses have developed over the last 3,000 years. You may think the standard technique we use to add numbers (such as carrying from one column to the next) is obvious, but it was not known to the ancient Greeks. Multiplication, long division and fractions are even more complex. If Socrates and Aristotle couldn't invent our modern arithmetic system, why do we think the typical third grader can?

How to teach math is one of the hottest issues debated in education circles today. Over the last 15 years, public school districts have embraced "constructivist math," which is known in the classroom under various names such as "whole math," "new math," or "fuzzy math." The constructivist approach has been endorsed by both the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Science Foundation. However, it has been harshly criticized by college professors of math and science, some 200 of whom signed a letter of protest to the U.S. Department of Education.

Unfortunately, many public schools all over the country teach fuzzy math instead of the basic skills demanded by parents. When will American schools wake up? If America is to maintain our technological superiority, we desperately need more students who are skilled in math!

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.

<http://www.eagleforum.org>

eagle@eagleforum.org