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The NEA Is About Politics, Not Education

It's hard to see how the Democratic National Convention in August could be any more exciting for Bill Clinton than the annual convention of the National Education Association (NEA) held over the Fourth of July weekend. The NEA Convention had three times as many delegates as the Democratic National Convention, and 91% of the NEA delegates voted to endorse Clinton for reelection as President. That's a higher approval rating than he enjoys in the Democratic Party.

The NEA convention had all the accouterments of a rip-roaring political convention, including Clinton-Gore buttons, signs and T-shirts and strobe lights crisscrossing the hall. When Clinton entered to make his speech, the crowd cheered and carried on like a political rally, the band blared out rock and roll, and the Arkansas delegates pretended to play huge make-believe saxophones.

The NEA announced its thousand-dollar subsidies given to each NEA member who is elected a delegate to the Democratic National Convention: a grant of \$400 in cash, \$400 in merchandise, plus air travel expense. The NEA will have more delegates at the Democratic National Convention than any state.

The National Education Association maintains one of the five largest federal Political Action Committees, called NEA-PAC, and it is the third largest donor to Democrats. The NEA gave Democrats 99% of its PAC money in the 1994 elections and can be expected to do likewise in 1996. Cash donations from the federal NEA-PAC are supplemented by cash donations from state and local NEA PACs, and also by the so-called "volunteers" whom the NEA assigns to work for Democratic candidates. The NEA spends \$39 million a year on 1,500 field organizers to promote its goals.

"Education's most powerful voice in Washington" is the way the NEA boasts about its political clout. The NEA brags that it is responsible, among other things, for creating the U.S. Department of Education, passing Goals 2000, and stopping the Senate from approving vouchers.

The NEA's current lobbying instructions, which were passed out to the convention delegates, include the following:

- ★ Oppose any legislation that would allow tuition vouchers at private or parochial schools.
- ★ Oppose Medical Savings Accounts.
- ★ Oppose any provision that would permit the states to withhold taxpayer benefits from illegal aliens.
- ★ Oppose making English our official language.
- ★ Oppose the Parental Rights Act sponsored by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), S. 984 and Rep. Steve Largent (R-OK), H.R. 1946.
- ★ Oppose elimination or consolidation of the Department of Education.

By an accident of history, the NEA enjoys a special property-tax exemption for its headquarters building in Washington, D.C. This exemption, worth \$1.6 million a year, is a financial privilege not enjoyed by any other union. Last October, Congress tried to remove this quirk in the law, but failed by a vote of 213-210. Of the House members who had received political contributions from the NEA in the 1994 elections, 173 out of 176 voted to keep the tax break.

Remember, the NEA is a union, and the prime goal of the union is not education but more jobs and more schools that require more tax funding. The NEA Convention passed its usual series of pro-big-spending, anti-parent, pro-feminist, and pro-gay-rights resolutions. Of course, the NEA wants federal funding to be "substantially increased."

The NEA is adamantly opposed to home schooling unless the parents are licensed and use a curriculum approved by the state department of education. The NEA wants a say in how private schools are run as well. The NEA position is that individuals should be free to choose private education only so long as the

school is "accredited under uniform standards established by the appropriate agency in collaboration with the National Education Association and its affiliates."

Naturally, the NEA is eager to prevent any competition that might threaten its public school monopoly. When the NEA resolves against abolishing "deleterious programs," that doesn't mean eliminating explicit sex education curricula or R-rated videos. It means eliminating such "detrimental" programs as "privatization, performance contracting, tax credits for tuition to private and parochial schools, voucher plans, and evaluations by private groups."

To create more jobs, the NEA not only supports "mandatory kindergarten with compulsory attendance," but also "early childhood education programs in the public schools for children from birth through age eight." This would not be simple baby-sitting; it would feature "diversity-based curricula and appropriate bias-free screening devices."

Of course, the NEA doesn't want any accountability. The NEA "opposes standardized testing" and "the use of these tests to compare one student, staff member, school, or district with another." The NEA opposes "competency testing" as a condition of employment, evaluation, placement, ranking or promotion.

Trendy liberal curriculum fads are enthusiastically endorsed by the NEA, including multicultural ed, global ed, AIDS ed, environmental ed, bilingual ed, self-esteem ed, and suicide ed. NEA resolutions do not mention phonics education or teaching children to read. In recognition of the fact that semi-literate public school graduates must take high school courses all over again in college, the NEA went on record against denying taxpayer funds to college students enrolled in "remedial" courses.

The NEA is all for sex education so long as it includes "diversity of sexual orientation, incest, and sexual harassment." The NEA resolution follows the SIECUS-Planned Parenthood dogma that "it is the right of every individual [*i.e.*, every child, without parental consent] to live in an environment [*i.e.*, the school] of freely available information, knowledge, and wisdom [*i.e.*, as defined by the school] about sexuality."

The NEA wants every child to have "direct and confidential [*i.e.*, without parental knowledge or consent] access to comprehensive [*i.e.*, K-12] health, social, and psychological programs and services [*i.e.*, contraceptives]." The NEA wants guidance and counseling programs to be "integrated into the entire education system [*i.e.*, so parents can't opt out their children] beginning at the prekindergarten level."

The NEA's answer to the problem of teen pregnancy is not to teach abstinence or self-discipline, but to teach self-esteem, making sure that it is "anti-biased, culturally sensitive." The NEA also demands that schools set up school-based health clinics (to distribute contraceptives) and "on-site child care services."

The NEA's non-academic resolutions include supporting the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was laid to rest in 1982, and tax-funded abortion. An attempt to make the organization abortion-neutral, was defeated. The NEA supports statehood for the District of Columbia, socialized medicine, and tax-funded "creative [*i.e.*, obscene] expression" by the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA opposes making English our official U.S. language or a moment of silence in schools (*i.e.*, because students might pray). The NEA supports continuing to admit illegal aliens into tax-supported public schools, and threatens to boycott Shell Oil Company for alleged environmental pollution in Nigeria.

The NEA-GLC (Gay-Lesbian Caucus) has dramatically increased its visibility and influence at the annual NEA conventions. Six years ago, at the 1990 convention in Kansas City, the gay-lesbian group met without publicity and circulated its demands on one mimeographed sheet. In 1996, about a third of the delegates sported NEA-GLC (Gay Lesbian Caucus) buttons, and an eight-page professionally produced newsletter announced eleven caucuses during the convention plus an AIDS quilt display and a cocktail reception and social.

The NEA swallowed a lot of bad PR and some loss of membership because of last year's resolution endorsing a Lesbian and Gay History Month, known as Resolution B-9. This year's convention omitted that one line, but continued to endorse all other gay-lesbian demands, including rewriting curriculum, textbooks, and activities.

In addition to the passage of more than a dozen resolutions embracing the gay-lesbian agenda, an official NEA Human and Civil Rights Action Sheet distributed at the 1996 convention listed six "Recommendations" for action by the NEA's State Associations:

- ◆ **Work** with the school district, the parent-teacher organization, and community groups to provide information to other members, parents, and counselors about the developmental and health needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.
- ◆ **Provide** training to enable selected staff to become resources to members on gay, lesbian, and bisexual student issues.
- ◆ **Recommend** to the school district that inservice programs address gay, lesbian, and bisexual concerns; and that the library include positive learning materials about gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.
- ◆ **Encourage** the establishment and maintenance of peer support and community self-help programs for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.
- ◆ **Work** with the school district to develop or expand school policy to ensure respect for diversity, including gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.
- ◆ **Participate** in coalitions to improve support and services for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.

Some 1996 NEA Resolutions

A-18. **Undocumented Immigrants.** The National Education Association believes that, regardless of the immigration status of students or their parents, every student has the right to a free public education in an environment free from harassment.

A-28. **Federally or State-Mandated Choice/Parental Option Plans.** The Association opposes federally or state-mandated choice or parental option plans.

A-29. **Voucher Plans and Tuition Tax Credits.** The National Education Association believes that voucher plans and tuition tax credits or funding formulas that have the same effect — under which pre-K through 12 nonpublic school education is subsidized by tax monies — undermine public education, reduce the support needed to adequately fund public education, and have the potential for racial, economic, and social segregation of children. The Association opposes all attempts to establish and/or implement such plans.

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 supports a high-quality program of transition from home and/or preschool to the public kindergarten or first grade. The Association further believes that early childhood education programs should include a full continuum of services for parents and children, including child care, child development, developmentally appropriate and diversity-based curricula, special education, and appropriate bias-free screening devices. The Association believes that federal legislation should be enacted to assist in organizing the implementation of fully funded early childhood education programs offered through the public schools. These programs should be available to all children on an equal basis and should include mandatory kindergarten with compulsory attendance.

B-6. **Diversity.** The National Education Association believes that our diverse society enriches all individuals. Similarities and differences among races, ethnicity, color, national origin, language, geographic location, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, size, and marital, parental, or economic status form the fabric of our society. The Association also believes that education should increase tolerance and foster an appreciation of the various qualities that pertain to people as individuals or members of a group. The Association further believes in the importance of programs and observances that accurately portray and recognize the roles, contributions, cultures, and history of these diverse groups and individuals.

B-7. **Racism, Sexism, and Sexual Orientation Discrimination.** The National Education Association believes in the equality of all individuals. Discrimination and stereotyping based on such factors as race, gender, physical disabilities, ethnicity, and sexual orientation must be eliminated. The Association believes that plans, activities, and programs for education employees, students, parents, and the community should be developed to identify and eliminate discrimination and stereotyping in all educational settings. Such plans, activities, and programs must —

a. Increase acceptance of and sensitivity to individuals and

groups in a diverse society composed of such groups as American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, women, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities.

- b. Eliminate discrimination and stereotyping in the curriculum, textbooks, resource and instructional materials, activities, etc.
- c. Foster the use of nondiscriminatory, nonracist, nonsexist and nonstereotypical language, resources, practices, and activities.
- d. Eliminate institutional discrimination.
- e. Integrate an accurate portrayal of the roles and contributions of all groups throughout history across the curriculum.
- f. Identify how prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination have limited the roles and contributions of individuals and groups.
- g. Eliminate subtle practices that favor the education of one student over another on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, physical disabilities, or sexual orientation.

The Association encourages its affiliates to develop and implement training programs on these matters.

B-23. **Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting.** The Association recommends that special programs for adolescents be implemented to include —

- Development of positive self-esteem and self concept.
- Establishment of on-site child care services.

B-28. **Multicultural Education.** The Association believes that multicultural education is a way of helping students perceive the cultural diversity of U.S. citizenry so that they may develop pride in their own cultural legacy.

B-29. **Global Education.** The National Education Association believes that global education increases respect for and awareness of the earth and its people. Global education imparts information about cultures and an appreciation of our interdependency in sharing the world's resources to meet mutual human needs.

B-36. **Family Life Education.** The Association believes that programs should be established for both students and parents and supported at all educational levels to promote —

- ◆ The development of self-esteem.
- ◆ Education in human growth and development.

The Association believes that education in these areas must be presented as part of an anti biased, culturally sensitive program.

B-37. **Sex Education.** The Association recognizes that the public school must assume an increasingly important role in providing the instruction. Teachers and health professionals must be qualified to teach in this area and must be legally protected from censorship and lawsuits. The Association urges its affiliates and members to support appropriately established sex education programs, including information on sexual abstinence, birth control and family planning, diversity of culture, diversity of sexual orientation, parenting skills, prenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment. To facilitate the realization of human potential, it is the right of every individual to live in an

environment of freely available information, knowledge, and wisdom about sexuality.

B-38. AIDS Education. The National Education Association recommends that educational institutions establish comprehensive acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) education programs as an integral part of the school curriculum.

B-40. Environmental Education. The Association further urges the development and improvement of educational programs that will —

- a. Promote the concept of the interdependence of humanity and nature.
- b. Develop an awareness of the effects of past, present, and future population growth patterns on world civilization, human survival, and the environment.
- c. Promote an understanding of the necessity to protect endangered, threatened, and rare species.
- d. Promote an understanding of the necessity to protect the earth's finite resources.

The Association urges its affiliates to support environmental programs in school systems.

B-67. Home Schooling. The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. The Association believes that if parental preference home schooling study 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 further believes that such home schooling programs should be limited to the children of the immediate family, with all expenses being borne by the parents.

C-7. Child Care. The National Education Association believes that all child care centers should be examined and monitored on a continuous basis, and additional legislation should be sought as necessary to maintain the highest quality child care. The Association encourages school districts and educational institutions to establish on-site child care for preschoolers, students, the children of students, and the children of staff members.

C-23. Comprehensive School Health Programs and Services. The National Education Association believes that every child should have direct and confidential access to comprehensive health, social, and psychological programs and services. The Association also believes that programs in the schools should provide —

- A planned sequential, K-12 health education curriculum that integrates various health topics (such a drug abuse, violence, universal precautions, and HIV education).

The Association also believes that services in the schools should include —

- Counseling programs that provide developmental guidance and broad-based interventions and referrals,
- Comprehensive school-based, community-funded student health care clinics,
- If deemed appropriate by local choice, family-planning counseling and access to birth control methods with instruction in their use.

C-24. School Counseling Programs. The National Education Association believes that guidance and counseling

programs should be integrated into the entire education system, beginning at the prekindergarten level.

C-29. Student Sexual Orientation. The Association believes that every school district and educational institution should provide counseling and suicide prevention programs by trained personnel for students who are struggling with their sexual/gender orientation.

H-6. National Health Care Policy. The Association supports the adoption of a single-payer health care plan for all residents of the United States, its territories, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

I-13. Family Planning. The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom. The Association further urges the implementation of community-operated, school-based family planning clinics that will provide intensive counseling by trained personnel.

I-18. Immigration. The Association opposes any immigration policy that denies human and/or civil rights or educational opportunities to immigrants and their children regardless of their immigration status.

I-22. Freedom of Creative Expression. The National Education Association supports freedom of expression in the creative arts and therefore deplores any efforts by government to suppress, directly or indirectly, such expression. The Association further supports the freedom of publicly funded agencies to exercise judgment in the awarding of grants to individuals and organizations.

I-27. Freedom of Religion. The Association opposes any federal legislation or mandate that would require school districts to schedule a moment of silence. The Association particularly opposes a moment of silence as a condition for receiving federal funds.

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

I-50. Equal Opportunity for Women. The Association supports the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Association urges its affiliates to support ratification of such an amendment.

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