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The Politics of the NEA Union

The National Education Association (NEA) held its annual convention July 3-8 in Washington, D.C. Its 8,500 delegates passed scores of policy resolutions which empower its staff to spend its \$164,347,425 budget in support of its left-liberal goals.

The NEA went firmly on record *against* choice in the matter of allowing parents to select their children's schools or curriculum, but just as firmly *in favor* of choice in the matter of abortion. Several resolutions reaffirmed and updated the NEA's contrary positions on "choice," showing that it is meaningless to talk about choice unless it is clearly stated what is being chosen.

The NEA resolutions blasted as "deleterious" and "detrimental" all plans involving tax credits or vouchers to pay tuition to private or parochial schools, and the NEA called on its affiliates "to work for the defeat of such legislation." The NEA resolutions confirm the union's aggressive leadership in the battle to oppose parental choice in education, both choice of schools and choice of curriculum.

The NEA demands a larger role for the public schools in determining the curriculum of sex education, and asserts the right of "every individual" to "live in an environment of freely available information" about sex, with "confidential access" to "health, social and psychological services." This means that the NEA is asserting the right of the schools to teach anything they want to minor children without parental knowledge or consent.

On the other "choice" issue, several resolutions reaffirmed the NEA's position proclaiming total support for abortion. In addition, New Business Item 22 orders the NEA to "take a proactive stance" in favor of abortion and to "provide assistance to the state affiliates to defeat pro-life legislation." New Business Item 29 orders the NEA to establish a \$50,000 annual fund to make grants to state affiliates working for abortion rights, and decrees that this NEA expenditure "shall continue until the Freedom of Choice Act is passed in Congress."

Fifty New York delegates offered New Business Item 46, which states "that the NEA will advocate no position on the abortion issue including: pro-life, pro-choice, or pro-abortion," arguing that "any position other than neutrality divides the NEA and diminishes its membership." Apparently, the NEA high command could not tolerate such reasonableness and prevented this resolution from coming to a convention vote by ruling Item 46 out of order.

In another contradictory position, the NEA came out strongly *against* any "censorship" of classroom materials by parents or the public, but just as strongly *in favor* of censoring teaching materials to "eliminate" all the societal patterns and words in the English language that the feminists call "sexist." The NEA demands "procedures and timetables for eliminating sexism in the curriculum."

Two new resolutions put the NEA on the warpath against anyone who runs against NEA-endorsed candidates for local school boards. New Business Item 5 complains that "conservatives" are trying to get elected to school boards, and therefore the NEA will provide "information and training" to NEA members to oppose candidates whom the NEA thinks "threaten intellectual and academic freedom."

Not many resolutions are ever defeated at NEA conventions, but the scrubbing of New Business Item 56 provided a little levity in an otherwise somber gathering. If passed, this Item would have directed "the National Education Association, also known as the NEA, to use its influence through whichever office is appropriate to persuade the National Endowment for the Arts, also recently known as the NEA, to change its name and/or initials so as to avoid confusion with us."

Some members of the nation's largest teachers union must have realized that the acronym "NEA" is now associated in the public mind with obscene and sacrilegious "art."

By a whopping majority of 88 percent, the NEA endorsed Bill Clinton for President.

The 1992 NEA Resolutions

School Choice

A-26. Deleterious Programs. The National Education Association believes that the following programs and practices are detrimental to public education and must be eliminated: tax credits for tuition to private and parochial schools, voucher plans (or funding formulas that have the same effect as vouchers), planned program budgeting systems (PPBS) and evaluations by private, profit-making groups.

A-27. Federally or State-Mandated Choice/ Parental Option Plans. The National Education Association opposes such federally or state-mandated choice or parental option plans.

A-28. Tuition Tax Credits. The National Education Association believes that all federal and state legislation designed to establish or implement plans for prekindergarten through grade 12 tuition tax credits is detrimental to the public interest and urges its affiliates to work for the defeat of such legislation.

A-29. Voucher Plans. The National Education Association believes that legislation designed to establish or implement prekindergarten through grade 12 voucher plans is detrimental to the public interest and calls upon its affiliates to work for the defeat of such legislation.

B-55. 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.

A-8. Public School Buildings. The National Education Association believes that closed public school buildings should be sold or leased only to those organizations that do not provide direct educational services to students and/or are not in direct competition with public schools.

Sex Education

B-32. Sex Education. The National Education Association believes that the public school must assume an increasingly important role in providing the instruction. Teachers 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 sexual orientation, parenting skills, prenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, the effects of substance abuse during pregnancy, and problems associated with and resulting from preteen and teenage pregnancies.

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.

C-20. Student Health and Personnel Services. The National Education Association believes that every student should have immediate, direct, and confidential access to health, social, and psychological services within both school

and community settings.

These services must include — Comprehensive school-based, community-funded student health care clinics that provide basic health care services (which may include diagnosis and treatment) to supplement, but not supplant, school nurses.

The Association urges that, if deemed appropriate by local choice, these health care services include family-planning counseling and access to birth control methods and instruction in their use.

C-21. School Counseling Services. The National Education Association believes that guidance and counseling services should be integrated into the entire education system, beginning at the prekindergarten level.

C-1. Health Care for All Children. The National Education Association believes that every child should have direct and confidential access to comprehensive health care. The Association urges its affiliates to support legislation to provide comprehensive health care to all children.

I-13. Family Planning. The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom. The Association urges the government to give high priority to making available all methods of family planning to women and men unable to take advantage of private facilities.

The Association further urges the implementation of community-operated, school-based family planning clinics that will provide intensive counseling by trained personnel.

B-33. 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. AIDS education must include education about all means of transmission, including sex and intravenous (IV) drug use.

Early Childhood

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 believes that such programs should be held in facilities that are appropriate to the developmental needs of these children. 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, appropriate developmental 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 and compulsory attendance.

C-5. Day Care. The Association encourages its affiliates to seek legislation governing day care center facilities, personnel, and programs.

Gay Rights

C-24. Student Sexual Orientation. The National Education Association believes that all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, should be afforded equal opportunity within the public education system. The Association further believes that

every school district should provide counseling by trained personnel for students who are struggling with their sexual/gender orientation.

New Business Item 106. The NEA, in coordination with the NEA Gay and Lesbian Caucus, will develop a training program for local elected leaders to improve their awareness and sensitivity to the issues and concerns of gay and lesbian education employees.

F-1. Nondiscriminatory Personnel Policies/Affirmative Action. The National Education Association believes that personnel policies and practices must guarantee that no person be employed, retained, paid, dismissed, suspended, demoted, transferred, or retired because of race, color, national origin, religious beliefs, residence, physical disability, political activities, professional association activity, age, size, marital status, family relationship, gender, or sexual orientation.

To address societal needs, however, the Association urges the development and implementation of affirmative action plans and procedures that will encourage active recruitment and employment of women, minorities, and men in underrepresented education categories.

It may be necessary, therefore, to give preference in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion policies to certain ethnic-minority groups or women or men to overcome past discrimination.

F-35. Employees with AIDS. The National Education Association believes that educational employees shall not be fired, nonrenewed, suspended (with or without pay), transferred, or subjected to any other adverse employment action solely because they have tested positive for the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome/human immunodeficiency virus (AIDS/HIV) antibody or have been diagnosed as having AIDS or AIDS-related complex (ARC).

Feminism

I-45. Equal Opportunity for Women. The Association supports the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which 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 believes that sexism and sex discrimination must be eliminated and endorses the use of nonsexist language.

New Business Item 22. NEA shall take a proactive stance to protect the rights of women to choice and access to reproductive health care options and will provide assistance to the state affiliates to protect these rights as well as defeat any attempt at legislative limits against said rights.

New Business Item 29. That the NEA Women and Girls Center for Change establish a \$50,000 annual fund for grants to state affiliates actively participating in grassroots efforts to safeguard reproductive freedom without governmental intervention. In keeping with the NEA Action Plan for Sex Equity, this effort shall continue until the Freedom of Choice Act is passed in Congress.

B-6. Sexism in Education. The National Education Association recognizes that many instructional materials portray females and males in sex-stereotyped roles. It urges educators to use instructional materials that portray various careers and personal roles as acceptable and attainable for all individuals.

The Association endorses the use of nonsexist language by all schools. It further believes that sexism and sex discrimination must be eliminated from the curriculum and effective training of education employees is necessary for this purpose. The Association endorses positive action plans that establish proce-

dures and timetables for eliminating sexism in the curriculum.

B-28. Career Education. The National Education Association believes that the career education concept must be interwoven into the total educational system and needs to include programs in gender-free career awareness and exploration to aid students in career course selection.

Diversity

B-25. Multicultural/Global Education. The National Education Association believes the goal of multicultural/global education is the recognition of individual and group differences and similarities in developing self-esteem as well as respect for others. The Association urges its affiliates to develop comprehensive educator training programs for multicultural/global education and to work to secure legislation that would provide adequate funding for effective implementation of such programs.

New Business Item 17. Move that NEA train a cadre of trainers on cultural diversity. The trainers would be available for national conferences, regional conferences, and for state and local associations.

New Business Item 94. NEA will disseminate and/or make available a How to Teach or Tips on Teaching Diversity Curriculum Guide for elementary and secondary schools. The guide would include specific information on a variety of disciplines especially math, social studies, and science. The guide would also include sample lesson plans and units, for example, thematic units, cooperative learning and other resources. In addition, the guide would include a multicultural calendar to give a suggested time line for teaching.

C-26. Suicide Prevention Programs. The National Education Association believes that suicide prevention programs including prevention, intervention, and postvention must be developed and implemented. The Association urges its affiliates to ensure that these programs are an integral part of the school program.

Censorship

E-5. Instructional Materials and Teaching Techniques Challenges. The Association deplors prepublishing censorship, book burning crusades, and attempts to ban books from the school library/media center and school curriculum.

E-3. Selection of Materials and Teaching Techniques. The National Education Association believes that teachers and librarians/media specialists must have the right to select instructional/library materials without censorship or legislative interference. The Association urges its affiliates to seek the removal of laws and regulations that restrict the selection of a diversity of instructional materials or that limit educators in the selection of such materials.

New Business Item 6. The NEA shall continue to encourage the membership to combat censorship by: (1) Providing local and state leaders and staff with materials for workshop presentations that allow them to alert and assist the membership in dealing with self-censoring and censorship attacks on public school employees and school district business. (2) Publicizing, in *NEA Today* on a regular basis, the availability of the support network for members who are facing a censorship attack or other censorship-related issues, such as self-censoring.

C-10. Extremist Groups. The National Education Association condemns the philosophy and practices of extremist groups and their efforts to recruit young people in our schools. It urges its affiliates and members to oppose actively all such movements whose objectives are inimical to the ideals of the Association.

E-10. Academic and Professional Freedom. The Association further believes that legislation and regulations that mandate or permit the teaching of religious doctrines and/or groups that promote anti-public-education agendas violate both student and teacher rights. The Association urges its affiliates to seek repeal of these mandates where they exist.

Anti-Parent

New Business Item 5. The NEA, through its Government Relations division, the political action arm, shall make available information and training to assist local and state leaders and staff in opposing local and state school board candidates whose statements and/or activities threaten intellectual and academic freedom.

Rationale: Conservative groups already have packaged programs to take over school boards. School employees need political information and assistance to help maintain and ensure boards that operate openly and democratically.

F-28. Recording Devices in Schools. The National Education Association insists that the recording or electronic surveillance of the work of any educator without that person's permission must be prohibited.

Non-School Issues

I-21. Freedom of Creative Expression. The National Education Association supports freedom of expression in the creative arts and therefore deplors 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.

A-35. National Health Insurance. The Association believes that the federal government should adopt a national health care policy that will mandate universal access to the highest quality health care at the lowest possible cost.

H-5. Statehood for the District of Columbia. The National Education Association urges its affiliates to support efforts to achieve statehood for the District of Columbia.

A-12. Public Education/National Defense. The Association supports a policy of economic conversion to facilitate the orderly redirection of resources from military purposes to alternative civilian uses, including education.

I-42. English as the Official Language. The National Education 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.

The NEA's Political Spending

The National Education Association is very heavily involved in lobbying for its legislative agenda in Congress and in the State Legislatures, and in spending large funds to achieve its goals. Materials distributed at the 1992 NEA Convention ascribed much of its legislative success to "the effectiveness of the Congressional Contact Team (CCT) network." The NEA brags that it has an average of nearly 5,000 members in each of the nation's 435 Congressional districts, and so is "in a unique position to use at-home lobbying efforts to advance" the NEA agenda.

In addition, the NEA reported that it sent some 200 NEA activists to Washington, D.C. to lobby for NEA goals for increased funding and to oppose school choice.

The NEA Convention materials explain that the Congressional Contact Teams "are trained, and briefed at the state, regional and national levels. Teams provide a well-informed and dedicated force of grassroots lobbyists who complement the efforts of the full-time Government Relations staff based in Washington and in the field. NEA's message is delivered to Congress through lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill and at-home contacts with Representatives and Senators."

NEA Convention materials also reported on the NEA Political Advocacy program, which "supports the election of pro-education candidates to federal office, and coordinates the NEA's Political Action Committee (NEA-PAC)." The NEA reported that NEA-PAC was involved in several special elections in 1991, and that the NEA candidate won.

The NEA reported that the NEA-PAC has already made 197 endorsements of candidates for the U.S. House and Senate. The organization is hoping to be as successful in the 1992 elections as it was in the 1990 elections when 247 Congressmen (a majority of the 435 Members) were elected with NEA endorsement.

The financial report of the NEA, which was provided to delegates attending the 1992 convention in Washington, D.C., proves that the NEA is a very political union.

- The NEA reported spending \$8,534,943 in its 1991 fiscal year on what it categorized as "Government Relations." That is a euphemism for lobbying for the legislative goals endorsed in the NEA resolutions and electing NEA candidates to local school boards.

- The NEA reported spending \$4,746,442 on "Human and Civil Rights" during its 1991 fiscal year. Of course, this means "rights" as the NEA defines it, and includes such "rights" as abortion, the gay and lesbian agenda, affirmative action quotas, the Equal Rights Amendment, and banning "sexist" words and concepts.

- The NEA reported spending \$7,022,328 on "Communications" during its 1991 fiscal year. This is a euphemism for what is often called "grassroots lobbying," which means propagandizing a message among the public and through the media.

Of course, the \$164,347,425 NEA budget also includes millions of dollars spent for office and personnel overhead to support this direct spending for legislative purposes. The direct political contributions to candidates are in another account altogether, called NEA-PAC, which is one of the country's largest Political Action Committees donating to candidates.

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