How Public Schools Have Changed

by Phyllis Schlafly *August 17, 2005*

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 teaching of phonics or basic math didn't make the cut.

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 these infants, whom the NEA wants to provide with "diversity-based curricula" and "bias-free screening devices."

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." At the same time, the NEA demands that homeschooled students should be taught only by persons who are "licensed" by the state and use a curriculum approved by the state.

About a third ofNEA 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.

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.

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

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 me nbers 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.