FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: DECEMBER 11, 1984

HOW SCHOOLS FILL CHILDREN WITH FEAR AND GUILT

All about us, we hear that children are depressed, afraid of the future, having nightmares, worrying about adult problems, and in fear that they won't grow up. Teenage suicide is at epidemic proportions.

Why are little children overwhelmed by such problems? For one answer, take a look at the classroom curricula which are burdening schoolchildren with guilt, fears, and depression. Here are actual activities prescribed for children of widowed and divorced parents attending Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The teacher divides kindergarten and first grade children into partners and gives each "a pretend crisis" to discuss, such as: "(1) Everyday after school, your older brother orders you to do all of the chores while he sits and watches TV. (2) Whenever you visit your Dad's house, he says nasty things about your Mom.

"(3) Your Mom stays out very late whenever she has a date. (4) You must share your bedroom with a step-sister who always takes your things without asking. (5) You haven't heard from your Dad in almost a year; Christmas is coming. Do you get him a card or gift?

"(6) Every time you go to the cemetery to visit your Mom's grave, your Dad gets depressed and cranky. (7) You never get to see your Dad's side of the family since he died. (8) You feel that you have too many chores and responsibilities.

"(9) How have you felt when you walked into a gathering and you seemed to be the only child with one parent? (10) How do you feel about a Mom going out every night of the week or a Dad who dates all weekend and there is no time with you? (11) How would you feel about a Mom who threatens every time you misbehave that you are going to have to live with your Dad?"

Second and third grade children in the same Catholic schools are required to spend class time discussing their "guilt feelings" and "what bugs you." Here are some of the questions these kids are asked.

"(1) Have you ever thought that, if Mom and Dad stopped loving each other, they might stop loving you? (2) Have various members of your family told you lies or conflicting

sides to the same story? (3) Has anyone ever felt that the divorce/death was your fault and now you don't even trust yourself?

"(4) Were you ever angry at yourself because you felt that you were responsible for the divorce/death? (5) Were you ever angry at God because you felt He allowed the divorce/death? (6) Were you angry at people who didn't seem to care how you felt inside about the death/divorce?

"(7) Were you ever angry at the parent who died? (8) Were you ever angry at one parent but took your anger out on the other parent? (9) Have you ever had a parent break so many promises that you have decided never to believe them again?

"(10) What do you do when a parent or grandparent lies to you about the divorce/death? (11) Were you ever relieved after the divorce/death? (12) Have you ever wanted the good old days to re-appear and forget about all the bad times that were part of your past? (12) Do you ever find yourself blaming the divorce/death for everything that goes wrong?

"(13) Are you ever jealous of everyone who lives in a two-parent family? (14) Does one parent feel like a stranger to you? (15) Do you ever feel like you don't belong anywhere because 1/2 of your things are in one place and 1/2 are someplace else?

"(16) Have you ever felt like extra baggage when your parent's date is around? (17) Are you afraid a parent's new spouse will try to take your other parent's place? (18) Have you ever felt like you lost two parents -- one moved away/died and the other is too busy for you? (19) Do you feel unloved by God or anyone? (20) Do you feel that God let the family down?

"(21) Discuss areas of guilt feelings for a single-parent child: a) happy because fighting stopped/parent isn't suffering, b) angry at God, parent who died, parents for divorce, c) being alive after parent died, d) poor behavior, sullen, withdrawn, e) split-loyalties within family."

The instructions that accompany these activities tell the teacher how to direct the children in role-playing, to use construction paper and paper-dolls to elicit more information, and to take children on blindfolded trips through the school corridors.

The questions assume that anger and guilt are the normal emotions of little children. Is it any surprise that they are depressed and confused?