PS for 12/13/90

Look For the Union Label

The 1990 Alabama gubernatorial election may have done to the National Education Association (NEA) what the Bush-Dukakis 1988 election did to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). It has become a political detriment to be a member.

When the NEA held its annual convention in Kansas City in the summer of 1990, the word was passed that the number-one NEA candidate this year was Paul Hubbert, Democratic nominee for Governor of Alabama. He was seeking to unseat Guy Hunt, the first Republican Governor in a century, who was elected four years ago under special circumstances when the Democrats were consumed in an intra-party fight.

As executive secretary of the Alabama Education Association, Paul Hubbert has run the state branch of the NEA for two decades and was well known as the most powerful lobbyist at the State Capitol in Montgomery. Some say he wields more influence than the Governor because of the votes in the State Legislature he can command.

Money has no problem for Hubbert's candidacy. The NEA national Political Action Committee gave him $100,000. The political action committee of the Alabama teacher union, called AVOTE, gave him $1,115,000, and political action committee of the other state NEA affiliates joined in with lesser amounts.

Another state employees union political action committee called SEAPAC gave Hubbert $155,000. A political action committee called JOBPAC, funded primarily by gambling interests and trial lawyers, have him $560,000. The Alabama AFL-CIO gave him $49,000, and individual trial lawyers gave him at least $341,000.

Hubbert knows Alabama, and so he ran as a "conservative." He touched every hot button designed to reassure conservatives.

To his own constituency, however, Hubbert made a strong pro-union pitch. In a letter to union members across the state, he told them that they had a "rare opportunity to send a loud, clear message across Alabama. Never before in our state's history has a labor leader been elected governor. I believe the time has come. When I am elected I will be attentive to the needs of organized labor."

In the stretch, Hubbert was predicted to win. But two weeks before the election, the grassroots went into action to tell the Alabama voters what a radical organization the NEA is.

With a modest expenditure of $500, a flier appeared all over the state entitled, "when the NEA talks, politicians listen, and Paul Hubbert received $100,000 from their political fund. Let's ask Hubbert: does he support the NEA agenda, or does he just take their money and their orders?"

Then the flier spelled out the NEA's leftwing agenda: affirmative action, the right of homosexuals to teach in the classroom, tax funding of abortions, gun control, drafting women, socialized medicine, and decriminalizing marijuana. The flier stated that the NEA opposes competency tests for teachers, tuition tax credits, and voluntary prayer in the schools.

Taking his cue from the grassroots in the final weeks of the campaign, Guy Hunt charged that Hubbert even opposes testing school bus drivers for alcohol and drugs. Hubbert credited Hunt's victory to "very devastating ads"; one linked Hubbert to radical NEA policies, and the other linked him to Jesse Jackson, with a voice-over saying that Hubbert would be "a great governor for Massachusetts."

A letter to the editor of an Alabama newspaper summed up how convincingly the "ultra-liberal" label was hung on Hubbert. It said, "Hubbert speaks of a New South, but he really means the Old North. We've already voted against the dead ideas of McGovern, Mondale, and Dukakis, and now one of their clones is here among us running for governor."

Until the grassroots-initiated flier made the rounds, most of Alabamians didn't know how leftwing the NEA is, or even that it is a union at all. Printed copies of the resolutions passed at the national conventions are not easily available.

The NEA's resolutions are not designed to inform its membership or the public. They are designed to empower NEA directors to spend the $3.8 million in NEA-PAC funds to elect candidates who will vote for the NEA agenda, and to empower the NEA's professional lobbyists to spend the NEA's $8.6 million lobbying fund to tell legislators how to vote.

Nationally, teachers' unions spend nearly $5.2 million to elect their candidates in the 1989-1990 election cycle. The second largest recipient of teachers unions' PAC

funds was Harvey Gantt, the Democratic challenger to Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Gantt received a $10,000 direct contribution and $100,000 in independent expenditures from NEA-PAC, plus donations from other teachers union-oriented PACs.