Medicalization of the Public Schools

by Phyllis Schlafly January 1, 1997

Indonesians aren't the only billionaires covertly spending big bucks to influence public policy. There is just as big a scandal brewing about private foundations.

Unbeknownst to the American public, several billionaire foundations whose "charity" purports to be "children" and "health care" are using their lavish resources to lobby state legislatures and school districts to persuade them to adopt policies and appropriate taxpayers' money that promote the foundations' social agenda.

The foundations' game plan is to turn the public schools into delivery centers for all kinds of health services, including physical examinations, treatment and medication of children, with or without their parents' knowledge or consent. This changeover of the schools' mission from academic learning to social services dispenser also includes compiling all sorts of private information on schoolchildren and their families.

The role of certain elite foundations in influencing U.S. health care policy first came to light when the lawsuit by the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS) against Hillary Rodham Clinton forced her to admit that her Health Care Task Force included people who were not government employees. Many turned out to be persons who had a financial interest in promoting managed care or were part of a previously unreported network of foundations that had been using their vast wealth to promote managed care.

If the Clinton health care bill had passed, these managed care special interests would have been in the drivers' seat to control one-seventh of our economy. They failed to achieve that goal, but they are on the way toward achieving the same goal incrementally.

Their game plan is to persuade state legislatures and school districts to accept "grants" with strings attached that bind the governmental recipients to pass laws, or adopt policies, or reveal information, or carry out procedures that implement the foundations' agenda. If an Indonesian or U.S. corporation were doing this, such transactions would be called bribes and the guilty would be headed for jail, but foundations are hiding behind the label "tax-exempt."

The engine driving the movement to use the public schools as a launching pad for a government-controlled health care system is the $5.5 billion Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Following close behind are the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trust.

The principal expertise of these foundations is developing creative ways to locate and lock in taxpayer funding for foundation projects. The foundations have successfully captured federal grants from the Medicaid benefit called Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment Services (EPSDT), Medicaid waivers, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Goals 2000, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Goals 2000, whose number-one-proclaimed goal is "every child should start school ready to learn," provides the fig leaf of legal authority for this array of federal intervention in public schools. The foundations are making the states and school districts believe that federal mandates in Goals 2000 and IDEA require the schools to test children for emotional, social, mental and physical disorders.

The foundations are persuading the schools that "readiness" requires the schools to provide health services clinics, which then must be staffed by nurse practitioners emboldened with new authority to prescribe medications. The foundations then demand a perpetual, exclusive license to use, and to allow others to use, all data generated by the services. So much for medical privacy!

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation started funding school-based health clinics 20 years ago and now boasts that there are more than 600. Foundation documents state the expectation that "every grant dollar is expected to leverage five dollars in public monies."

These covert foundation activities operate in a murky area without legislative authority or accountability. They cry out for a thorough Congressional investigation of possible violations of the laws against tax-exempt lobbying, against bribery of public officials, against fraud in Medicaid (which is supposed to be only for children in poverty), and against violations of the privacy laws that forbid releasing personal data or transferring it from one agency to another.

The investigation should also explore the battery committed against 59 sixth-grade girls at the J.T. Lambert Middle School in East Stroudsburg, PA, who were taken out of math class and given pelvic exams without their parents' consent. The investigators should expose how profit-making businesses

connected with tax-exempt foundations are using school clinics as captive markets for the sale of their commercial products.

Foundations dole out about $100 million each year to state and local governments and school districts. Since this is all tax-exempt money, and since the recipients are taxpayer-paid bureaucrats, and since the targets of all this money flow is our children, the American people have the right to know what is going on.