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MONDALE'S MOST POWERFUL ALLY: THE NEA

Walter Mondale felt right at home that day in July when he addressed the National Education Association and received its enthusiastic applause and reendorsement. He is counting on the NEA to serve as the shock troops of his attempt to defeat Ronald Reagan.

The NEA could be considered a third political party. It has its platform, its organized political units in every state and district, its paid professional operatives, its campaign training schools, more than 1,000 highly trained field organizers, and an annual budget of about a half billion dollars (as a result of some $300 per year in dues, etc., paid by teachers to the NEA and its affiliates).

It is widely accepted political knowledge that the NEA provided the margin of victory for Jimmy Carter in 1976. Carter's creation of the Department of Education was considered to be a payoff to the NEA for its crucial campaign support.

It would be a mistake to believe that the NEA is concerned merely with education. Its legislative agenda reads like a file of Walter Mondale's campaign issue papers. Its political goals include the entire spectrum of leftwing policies from a nuclear freeze to abortion-on-demand to foreign policy in Central America.

When teachers go to training sessions and workshops, they are much more apt to get a workshop on "combatting the New Right" than they are on how to teach children to read and write. NEA materials state openly that dealing with the "right wing" requires a "coordinated organizational effort involving all program areas of the [NEA] association: political action, governmental relations, communications, instruction and professional development, teacher rights, human and civil rights, and court action."

The NEA is fast fulfilling the prophecy of Sam Lambert, the NEA executive secretary who predicted in 1967 that the "NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group." In November 1969, the NEA monthly magazine, Today's Education, boasted that "The NEA is not content to wait for something to happen; it is making things happen."

The NEA is one of the most active and powerful lobbies at the state capitols. In Massachusetts this year, the NEA pushed for compulsory school attendance for five-year-olds and a minimum teacher salary of $18,000.

In Illinois, the NEA passed two collective bargaining bills permitting teacher strikes for the first time. In most states, so much school-related legislation is under consideration that it takes a large staff just to keep up with it!

Nebraska was the state where the NEA most dramatically demonstrated its political and legislative clout. In Nebraska, the education establishment became so paranoid about the threat of competition from a poor, little Christian school that the state sent the pastor and seven fathers to jail, dragged worshippers from their pews during a religious service, and padlocked the church.

Walter Mondale appears to be trying to make education one of his campaign issues, asserting that the sorry state of the public schools today is the result of Reagan Administration cuts in education. That's even more ridiculous than claiming that the reason why Ronald Reagan won the famous Reagan-Carter 1980 TV debate was because Reagan had a peek at Jimmy Carter's briefing papers.

Since 1980, 52 reports have catalogued the major problems in the schools, including lack of knowledge, skills and discipline, plus an appalling level of violence inside the schools. Not only have these problems NOT been caused by federal budget cuts, but one could easily argue that the increase in federal spending is a main cause of the problems!

According to a 1983 Department of Education study, the spending on education by the Department of Education is only one-third the total federal education expenditure; the rest is spent by other departments. The $45 billion current annual federal spending on education is as much as the <u>combined</u> 1984 budgets of the Departments of Justice, State, Interior, Commerce, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, and the federal court system.

Walter Mondale's NEA friends are more interested in implementing their radical leftwing agenda through more federal spending dollars than in solving the problems of lack of basic skills and discipline in the schools. The solution to the problems in education today is certainly NOT more federal spending and NOT more political power in the hands of those who have presided over the growth of these problems.