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HOW PACIFIST PROPAGANDA IS PUT OVER ON PUPILS

Although most parents send their children to school to learn knowledge and skills, some courses are taught for very different purposes. The curricula currently mushrooming in junior and senior high schools to teach about nuclear war are designed to change attitudes and behaviour rather than to impart knowledge and skills.

The goals of the nuclear war curricula are (a) to promote U.S. nuclear disarmament, (b) to belittle the Soviet threat, and (c) to propagandize for federal spending for social goals at the expense of national defense. To achieve these goals, the student is required to spend long hours hearing dramatic and dreary descriptions of the horrors of nuclear war, nuclear explosions and radiation.

Since the curricula are also designed to change attitudes and behavior, they make use of a variety of unusual teaching techniques which force the student to expose his private thoughts and lay them on table so the teacher and the class can change them by discussion, intimidation, and peer pressure.

The nuclear war courses require each student to keep a "journal" in which he records his thoughts and attitudes about the course, plus conversations with his parents, friends and neighbors about controversial issues. Keeping a journal is a key element because it enables the teacher to track the student's change in attitudes.

Another technique used in the nuclear war curricula is the "whip." This is the device of asking the student to complete a phrase by speaking the first words that come to mind. For example, when the phrase is spoken, "When I think of nuclear war....", the expected reply is, "Death!"

"Simulation games" are widely used in the nuclear war curricula to teach pacifist and anti-defense propaganda to the students. The Token Game is one of several games featured in the NEA-sponsored nuclear war curriculum called "Choices."

The class is divided into groups, and each group of students is given 20 tokens which represent all the money in the federal budget. The class is given a list of categories on

which federal money is spent, and then told to divide up the tokens in the way the students think the money should be spent.

After the students have made their choices, the teacher reveals the way the federal budget is really allocated so that the students can compare this with their own preferences. It isn't hard to figure out that the student will be led into making a "choice" to reduce current military spending and increase spending on NEA-favored projects.

But that isn't all. The teacher's "answer sheet" says that 9 out of 20 tokens are are now spent for national defense in the federal budget. That is false; the military budget is only one-fourth of the federal budget (and so, if you know your old math, should have only 5 tokens out of 20).

Another game featured in the NEA textbook called "Choices" is the Dollar Game. The teacher divides the class into two groups, holds up a $1 bill, and announces that the dollar will be given to the side that makes the highest bid, but that both sides must surrender their "bid" money regardless of whether they make the high bid. The students are supposed to figure out that, as soon as the bids go over 50¢, the teacher will gain and both sides will lose.

The textbook explains that "this game demonstrates that bargaining, compromise, and negotiation with 'the other side' help everyone in the end." (Now, if Ronald Reagan would just try that game on Andropov, we could solve the whole problem of nuclear war!)

Another game used in the nuclear war curricula is to instruct the students to write a "Dear Abby" letter about "the five things that worry me most in the world today." The letters go to the teacher, not to Abby; so this is just another way of a teacher's probing into the private thoughts of the student on matters that are none of the school's business. Some of the textbooks instruct the teacher to "collect the letters, redistribute them for students to answer. Then read the letters and responses aloud." This obviously elicits group criticism of the students' secret worries.

Other techniques used in the nuclear curriculum are "role-playing" (students are assigned roles to act out in a variety of conflict situations; it is suggested that "occasional bursts of real anger may in the long run be more helpful to reaching a meaningful understanding than burying a resentment and letting it smolder unattended"), and "brainstorming (for which the teacher should "appoint a recorder to take very accurate notes of the student comments").