from Phyllis Schlafly June 17, 1993

PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTACKS ON PARENTS

The public school establishment has launched an all-out attack on parents and taxpayers who presume to make any criticism of offensive curriculum content or poor academic results. Armed with an arsenal of epithets and hot-button smear words such as "religious right" and "censorship," the public school establishment is carrying out its campaign with articles in professional journals, handouts circulated by school organizations, and workshops to train school personnel how to outmaneuver parents.

Last month in Denver, a three-day conference entitled "Responding Democratically to Religious Agendas: Right-Wing Pressure Groups and School Reform" attracted more than 200 public school personnel, each paying a registration fee of $397. All the attendees are on the public payroll, so the taxpayers really subsidized the training session.

The keynote speakers included Michael Hudson, vice president of People for the American Way, who set the tone for the gathering. Hudson charged that groups that criticize the public schools "have a political agenda and they're using a religious rationale to press it." He assured the audience that People for the American Way does not have any agenda for public education.

"Look what Hitler and Goebbels did in Germany" was a typical smear tactic used against public school critics, who were often personally attacked by name. Other smears included calling them the "God squad" and "a significant threat to American democracy and to public education."

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has launched its own

full-scale attack against parents who want to be involved in the curricula taught to their children. This attack was spelled out in an article entitled "Targets of the Right" published in the April issue of the NSBA's publication, *The American School Board Journal.*

The article purports to describe what it calls the "arsenal of tactics and takeover strategies" allegedly used by the "far right.ri The article accuses the "far right" of opposing a variety of public school curricula, including "Impressions," "Positive Action," "Dungeons and Dragons," "Quest," "Here's Looking at You 2000," "Pumsy," "Outcome Based Education," and "Children of the Rainbow," as well as values clarification, situation ethics, and New Age practices.

In a call to liberal political action, the NSBA article complains that "over the last decade, the far right's strategies and tactics have become significantly more sophisticated and effective."

The article states that "one of the most effective tools in the religious right's tool box" is the use of the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, a 1978 federal law which requires schools to get prior written parental consent before subjecting children to psychological or psychiatric testing or treatment. The article urges schools to contact professionals for materials and sample letters that schools can use to avoid compliance with the law and to stonewall parents who raise this issue.

A typical example of how the NSBA article is being implemented at the local level is a five-page "alert" purporting to warn against "Religiously Based Far Right Groups," which is now being distributed to school superintendents by the American Association of School Administrators. This document accuses so-called "far right" groups of

such grave offenses as being "active in electoral politics and local curriculum issues," "backing Christian candidates in local and other political races," "reemphasizing family values," and "analyzing textbooks."

Then this AASA handout gives public school personnel 39 pointers on how schools should respond to criticism by parents. These pointers include the following:

"Provide media training for administrators who will fight the religious right. Have a plan for handling school board election campaigns.... Develop a cadre of organized key communicators within the community. . Keep open lines of communication with the press. Alert your school attorney immediately. Use national organizations as a resource... "

Those who want to know more about how the public school establishment carries on its war against parents and taxpayers should read the extraordinary article entitled "The National Extortion Association" in the June 7 issue of *Forbes* magazine. This piece of outstanding investigative journalism reveals what a powerful, wealthy, dictatorial, partisan, cutthroat union the National Education Association (NEA) is.

The *Forbes* article shows how the NEA spends its tremendous budget (extracted from teachers by compulsory dues that average $400 per teacher per year) on "left-wing looneyism" and on building its own political power at any cost. With the NEA in control of most public schools, it's no wonder that parents want the choice to send their children to non-NEA-controlled schools.