From Phyllis Schlafly

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How the Teachers Union Checkmates Parents

A recent bill considered by the Illinois State Legislature provides a textbook example of how a powerful lobby springs into action when it perceives a threat to its special interests and privileges. The Illinois Education Association (IEA), the Illinois branch of the powerful National Education Association, pulled out all the stops to defeat a parents rights bill a couple of weeks ago.

IEA lobbyists swarmed all over the Capitol, and school superintendents and teachers from all over the state phoned not only their own Senators, but many other Senators, to request a No vote. Many people were baffled at the extraordinary pressure and antagonism generated by a seemingly innocuous bill entitled the Parent and Student civil Rights Act, SB-520.

This bill would have allowed parents to withdraw their children from school activities that are contrary to the religious teachings of the family. Many states and school districts now have similar opt-out laws or regulations, and all states should have this right legally spelled out.

SB-520 would. have prohibited schools from showing movies rated R, X or NC-17 in the classroom. It comes as a shock to most parents when they discover that many public schools are asserting the authority to show children movies which they would not be permitted to see at their local theaters.

SB-520 would have required schools to make all instructional materials available for public inspection. Of course, parents should have the right to inspect any materials used by or for their children! Yet in case after case, parents have been stonewalled when they simply ask to see the teachers' guides.

SB-520 would have required that one-third of the members of a curriculum advisory committee be parents of children within the school district. The schools have been saying they want parental input, and this would be a great way to encourage it.

The Illinois Parent-Teacher Association joined forces with the IEA in defeating the bill, which really confirms the suspicion that the PTA is usually just a stooge for

the school establishment and would never side with the parents against the teachers.

The sponsor, State Senator Virginia Macdonald, modified SB-520 somewhat in committee, and the IEA was temporarily taken off guard when it was reported out favorably by a 10-to-5 vote. According to Senator Macdonald, opponents then "had to resort to distortions and lies in order to defeat it."

State legislators hadn't been the target of so much pressure in many years. Supporters of SB-520 were stunned at what they felt were hostile and "ridiculous" accusations hurled against parents.

IEA lobbyists argued that the schools are the "professionals" and that parents should have nothing to say about curriculum. Parents were accused of "trying to evangelize the schools" and of being consumed with "fear that their children would get a well-rounded education."

And so SB-520 was defeated 25-to-29.

The effort to pass SB-520 started because of controversies in various Chicago suburbs over the l5-book elementary reading curriculum for grades K-5 called Impressions, published by Holt Rinehart and Winston. Four school districts (Wheaton-Warrenville, Palatine, Arlington Heights, and Barrington) all had rejected parental complaints and decided to retain use of the books.

Many parents object to Impressions because the stories and poems display a morbid preoccupation with violence, the occult, witchcraft, spells, dismemberment, suicide, monsters, and other themes frightening to little children and contrary to family values and beliefs. Parents say that the pictures in the readers are even more offensive than the text.

The schools argue that impressions simply exposes children to different beliefs and cultures, as well as both positive and negative behavior. Presenting "negative behavior" in a favorable light, without moral judgment, is one of the main reasons parents object to these readers.

The schools say that many of the stories in Impressions were written by "award-winning authors." Actually, only 7 out of 267 stories in the readers for grades 1-3 were written by those so-called award-winning authors.

Parents also objected to the fact that, when the school board appointed a committee to look into parental complaints and report back to the board, eight of the ten members were on the payroll of the school district. When that's the way complaints are “investigated,” no wonder the teachers union fought tooth and nail to defeat a bill that would give one-third of the slots on a curriculum committee to parents.

The teachers union won this round. But their victory just adds more fuel to the fire of citizen alienation from the once highly-respected public school system.