FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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HATCH AMENDMENT COALITION

Thirty liberal educator organizations which are determined to exclude parents from having any say-so about the public schools have banded together in a new group called the "Hatch Amendment Coalition" (HAC). Their stated purpose is to oppose the 1984 Regulations to implement the 1978 Pupil Protection Amendment (sometimes called the Hatch Amendment, which is somewhat misleading because there are several other Hatch Acts).

The Pupil Protection Amendment requires schools to obtain prior written parental consent before requiring a minor to submit to psychiatric or psychological examination, testing or treatment. It covers nonacademic subjects such as political affiliations, potentially embarrassing psychological problems, sexual behavior and attitudes, income, or critical appraisals of family members.

HAC has just distributed a 90-page "Guidelines Document" to advise their friends in the public school system how to get rid of parents who try to assert parental rights in education. The 30 organizations include the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans for Religious Liberty, and Norman Lear's People for the American Way.

HAC is particularly upset about a "Sample Parents' Letter" written by the Maryland Coalition of Concerned Parents on Privacy Rights in Public Schools. That Letter was designed for parents to send to their children's schools in order to assert the rights of parents and pupils to be free from privacy-invading questionnaires and harassment or manipulation of their values.

This Letter has probably reached several million parents because it has been widely reprinted by both conservative and liberal publications. HAC members are obviously worried because it is such a big shock to most parents to find out that the 35 nonacademic subjects listed in the Sample Parents' Letter are widely taught in public schools.

The Sample Parents' Letter distributed by the Maryland Coalition is not a legal "complaint" to be filed under the Pupil Protection Amendment; it is a letter to advise the schools that parents intend to assert their constitutional and civil rights under U.S.

law, of which the Pupil Protection Amendment is only a limited part.

The Parents' Letter lists many controversial nonacademic subjects taught in public schools today, including death, suicide, alcohol, drugs, abortion, contraceptives, extra-marital sex, incest, nuclear war, globalism, population control, guided fantasy, hypnotism, witchcraft, the occult, horoscopes, self-disclosure, sensitivity training, open-ended discussions about morals, life-or-death decision games, and attitudes toward parents

The HAC Guidelines provide a "Sample Response Letter to Parents." It purports to help schools to reply to the "Sample Parents' Letter" or any letter from a parent who requests that a student <u>not</u> be involved in controversial classroom curricula without prior written parental consent.

The HAC Sample Response Letter does not deny that the controversial 35 subjects are taught. Instead it dishes out a placebo which says: "Be assured that all activities which occur in our school system are directly related to the goals and objectives of the curriculum and have a distinct academic program."

One can reasonably infer that the HAC believes that those controversial subjects <u>are</u> the goals and objectives of the curriculum, and that the school intends to go right on teaching them without the knowledge or consent of the parents unless the parent initiates an ugly confrontation with the school.

The HAC Sample Response Letter to Parents is misleading to parents, mistaken in its references to the Sample Parents' Letter, and misguided in advising schools to stonewall the parents. It is nonresponsive and patronizing toward parents.

The Sample Response Letter attempts to lead parents around in a circular discussion that goes nowhere, and to discourage the parents from pursuing any complaint by frustrating them with a battery of non-answers. It is really a bunch of words designed to tell the parents to get lost, that it's none of their business, and that the schools intend to do what they want with the children.

The Hatch Amendment Coalition is making a terrible public relations mistake. Parents who receive the Sample Response Letter will only become even more alienated from the public schools. The HAC has forgotten that parents have primary rights over the education of their children, and that taxpayers have primary rights over the schools.