



The Power of Teachers' Unions

The recent events in Wisconsin, in which unionized teachers behaved like third-world mobs, is a stark reminder of what a grave mistake it was to permit government employees to unionize. Since government employees have always had job security and benefits that many workers in the private sector couldn't dream of getting, there was no need for them to unionize unless they wanted to use union power to intimidate legislators and extort more money from the taxpayers.



In fact, the sole purpose of unionization is political power, even among teachers. Indeed, it was Sam Lambert, Secretary of the National Education Association, who told the teachers in 1967 that "The NEA will become a stronger and more influential advocate of social changes long overdue.... The NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group.... And, finally, NEA will organize this profession from top to bottom into logical operating units that can move easily and effectively and with power unmatched by any other organized group."

Although the NEA had been established in 1857 as a professional organization, it wasn't until 1962 that it became a labor union, after which it drafted model collective bargaining statutes covering teachers, which by 1980 were enacted into law in 31 states. Unionization also led to unified membership — meaning that a member of a local affiliate was forced to join the national organization and pay its dues.

Forced membership increased the number of NEA members from 713,994 in 1959-60 to 1.7 million in 1983, to 3.2 million in 2011. The NEA's budget increased from \$5 million in 1957 to \$67 million in 1979-80, to \$307 million in 2006-07. The NEA was also able to get school boards to automatically deduct from teachers' salaries their union dues, which were automatically deposited in the union's bank account, all at taxpayer expense.

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Before the 1960s, only a small portion of public school teachers were unionized. But, ironically, that began to change in 1959 when Wisconsin became the first state to pass a collective-bargaining law for public employees. In those days, Wisconsin basked in the warm sunlight of progressivism. Little did they know that they were creating a potential Frankenstein.

While the Wisconsin teachers have been part of the mobs demonstrating in favor of their collective bargaining rights, their curriculum is no bargain for the children they teach. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress test given in 2009, only 32 percent of Wisconsin public-school eighth graders earned a "proficient" rating in reading, while another 2 percent earned an "advanced" rating. The other 68 percent of Wisconsin public-school eighth graders earned ratings below "proficient," including 44 percent who earned a rating of "basic" and 22 percent who earned a rating of "below basic."

In other words, Wisconsin public schools are turning out functional illiterates by the thousands. Indeed,



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the test showed that the reading abilities of Wisconsin public-school eighth graders had not improved at all between 1998 and 2009 despite the increase in the amount of money spent per pupil each year.

In 1998 the cost of educating a public school pupil in Wisconsin was \$4,956. In 2008 it was up to \$10,791. So money is not the problem. It's teacher incompetence. Obviously the taxpayer is being cheated by teachers unable to do their jobs but using collective bargaining to make it difficult to fire them.

Too bad Wisconsin's public school children can't organize a protest against being taught to read by methods that produce dyslexia and reading disability. Unfortunately, they aren't unionized.

For unions, power is the name of the game. Ninety-five percent of the NEA's political contributions go to Democratic candidates and the few liberal Republican RINOs who support NEA interests. Teachers, who pay hundreds of dollars in annual dues to national, state, and local affiliates, have no control over the NEA's endorsement of candidates or advocacy of socialist policies. In 28 states teachers risk losing their jobs if they refuse to join a union.

The NEA has long advocated leftist policies leading to a world socialist government. The NEA was responsible for creating UNESCO as a future world board of education. As early as December 1942, the NEA was advocating world government. In an editorial entitled "The United Peoples of the World," the editor of the *NEA Journal* wrote:

"In addition to a framework of government, the world needs...a world system of money and credit; a uniform system of weights and measures; a revised calendar; a basic language; a police force; a board of education; a planning board." And much more.

The latest resolutions adopted by the NEA at its July 2010 convention tell the story. They favor initiatives leading to the end of American sovereignty: global education, education on peace and international understanding, peace and international relations, an International Criminal Court, an International Court of Justice, [regulations related to] global climate change, linguistic diversity, environmental education, and multicultural education.

They oppose home schooling, education vouchers, tuition tax credits, right-to-work Laws..

They favor same-sex marriage, free education for children of illegal immigrants, early childhood education in public schools for children from birth to age eight, abortion rights, and sex education that includes birth control, family planning, diversity of sexual orientation, homophobia, etc. They favor celebrating Earth Day.

They oppose: prepublication critiques of textbooks, privatization of Social Security, the use of ID cards for voting at elections, and designating English as the official language of the United States.

There is only one truly effective way to reduce the power of the NEA, and that is for parents to remove their children from the public schools and place them in good private schools or home school them. By now about two million families have done just that. But it is unlikely that the vast majority of parents will follow suit. And so we shall have to accept the increase in functional illiteracy and learning disabilities among our children.

In November 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts released its report on the decline in American literacy, *Reading at Risk*. According to the report, the number of 17-year-olds who never read for pleasure increased from 9 percent in 1984 to 19 percent in 2004. About half of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 never read books for pleasure.



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Endowment Chairman Dana Gioia stated: “This is a massive social problem. We are losing the majority of the new generation. They will not achieve anything close to their potential because of poor reading.” The survey found that only a third of high school seniors read at a proficient level. “And proficiency is not a high standard,” said Gioia. “We’re not asking them to be able to read Proust in the original. We’re talking about reading the daily newspaper.”

Chairman Gioia declined to say what was causing the problem, although the cause has been known since 1955 when Rudolf Flesch wrote [Why Johnny Can't Read](#). The educators threw out the alphabetic-phonics method of teaching reading and replaced it with a method that teaches children to read English as if it were Chinese — a look-say, sight method. That method causes dyslexia and reading disability.

But the NEA couldn't care less.



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