

National's Education Policy

The National Party revealed its Education Policy on Wednesday 13 April in a speech by Party Leader Dr Brash. The overall idea is to stop the trend toward centralisation and give more authority to local trust boards and parents. The present Labour Government is aggressively pursuing a strategy of centralisation of state schooling, when ironically it was a former Labour Government under David Lange which brought in the Tomorrow's Schools reforms in order to overcome the problems of a centralised school bureaucracy! According to the Maxim Institute's *Real Issues* newsletter of 14 April 2005, "The cornerstone of [National's education] policies is that parents should be trusted with the education of their children.... Children are the responsibility of parents before they are the responsibility of the state, and parents' voices should be listened to." Amen to that.

Stuff.co.nz reported Dr Brash to say, "Schools which have established a reputation for excellence should be given total independence of governance by allowing them to have the ownership of the property they use vested in their trustees on behalf of the community."¹ (See entire speech at: <http://www.national.org.nz/Article.aspx?ArticleID=4067>.) There was talk of overhauling the NCEA qualifications, reintroducing the concept of "failure" and of throwing more money after those students who were alienated from the school system.

The really interesting proposal he mentioned to get voter attention was a voucher plan to pay for students to

get extra tuition in the basic areas of reading and maths outside of school hours. This really is an admission that the schools simply cannot do what they were supposedly started up to do: teach children to read and do numbers. If the schools are not doing that, shut them down. Why scalp the taxpayer again to pay for tuition the taxpayer has already paid for. In the case of us home educators, we will be paying *three times* for tuition in the basics: twice via taxes, one part to schools and one

part to these out-of-school tutors, and a third time for our own children we teach ourselves at home. We actually do the job the government schools say they do: teach our children to read and count; and we do it at a fraction of the cost the government schools soak up.

Because these vouchers are worth \$600 or so and mean one-to-one tuition from the time all 7-year-olds in the system are assessed,² one can see real problems. First off is the fact that, as home educators know, there are plenty of 7-year-olds who are still not at all ready to learn to read. No amount of \$600 vouchers will speed up their brain development and cognitive abilities. The approved and certified tutors that Dr Brash said

Continued Persecution of HEs in Germany

The German government has been stepping up its persecution of families who refuse to send their children to schools. It has already imprisoned half a dozen fathers in the town of Paderborn which is in the state of Nordrhein Westfalen. There seems to have been a wee breakthrough in this state recently as its minister of education, Ms. Ute Schaefer, announced that she would allow parents to withhold their children from participating in class excursions and school theater. According to Richard Guenther, who heads a legal defense organization for home educators in Germany, it is a bit of a laugh that while it is clear that she is bending to international pressure from home educators all over the world and the bad publicity about the German authorities' heavy-handed tactics and the ugliness of what goes on during these class excursions and other school

activities, the rationale she gives is that she is giving in to parents' boycotts!

The national education union is livid with this decision and declares that she (Ute Schaefer) is pandering to a very small minority. They say that this gravely undermines the mandatory school attendance law, and that they cannot cope with a reduced number of children on their field trips! Guenther points out that regardless of how often he reminds the officials that there is no mandatory school attendance law while there are constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and parental rights, the authorities continue to hammer the (erroneous) dictum of mandatory school attendance! He also invites readers to listen to his descriptions about what goes on at

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would be used, however, may not always turn down those vouchers, even should they admit the tutoring would be wasted. Since the one-on-one tutoring will (hopefully) bring immediate and grand results, there will soon be competition among some parents to get their children assessed as below par in order to get this superior tutoring.

So when the state offers money or other incentives for falling below a certain level, it creates an incentive for some people to do just that: fall below the level. Thus when the state starts interfering where it should not, it creates the very problem it set out to fix. This seems to be a fixed rule of how central governments work.

Those with cynical minds may be tempted to think that once the Government has come up with a profile of what a tutor needs to do to be on the certified list of those with whom parents can exchange their vouchers, it might also decide that parents applying for exemptions and the home education allowance should meet the same criteria, since, after all, they too are going to be tutors accepting taxpayers' money. Keep an eye on that one.

The bottom line is this: no amount of tinkering with a fatally flawed system is going to rectify it. Compulsory, tax-payer funded, state, secular schooling is hopelessly compromised because it is politically driven; it usurps both parental authority and responsibility causing parents to atrophy in both these areas toward their own children; and it is always more interested in maintaining its own existence than advancing the academic careers of its inmates. This is true in spite of, not because of, the heroic efforts of many of the gifted teachers who do exist in the system. And do not be attracted to vouchers. Vouchers are a scam: all they mean is state control via another method. According to the *Dominion Post*, Dr Brash said that tutors would have accreditation checks and ongoing testing to ensure they were delivering robust programmes.²

This Editor says: dismantle the MoE. Privatise the lot. Give the power, authority and responsibility back to the parents. We home educators who have taken the government back away from the state in this area have rarely felt so empowered by anything else!

These figures were arrived at by the ERO interviewing and observing a total of 198 teachers¹ who were assessed over four areas: subject knowledge, teaching methods, ability to engage students, and how well they met the needs of all students.²

While this is not a large sample of teachers who were examined, and one could wonder if the figures arrived at could truly be applied all over the country, Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) president Phil Smith said it does, in fact, take five years to become a fully competent teacher. "You are looking at a five-year process. Teachers have certain skills when they come into the job, but the complexities of teaching mean there is a lot of on-the-job training. I don't care how good you are coming in, you have to get up to speed with subject content, build relationships with students and feel confident."¹

This highlights another logistical problem of schools which we home educators do not have to cope with: breaking in new teachers. We go through a steep learning curve ourselves, it is true, yet we have the same tiny number of students, not a group or several groups of 20 or more, and we have them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The complexities with which classroom teachers have to struggle do not affect us: the large number of students to get to know, the politically mandated curriculum, the strict timetable, the pace needed to cover the material for the year, the politics of relationships with other teaching staff and parents, the record keeping, etc., etc. Phil Smith also pointed out another problem: some schools were employing beginning teachers on a temporary basis and not providing appropriate support networks to see them develop competencies quickly.¹ This means a school could hire a string of beginning teachers year after year, which both short-changes the teachers in their professional development, meaning they remain less efficient for longer, and the students at schools which follow this practice have mostly below par teachers.

It is not just a financial problem of schools not able to afford substan-

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

Notes:

1. "Nats vow takeover of failing schools", 14 April 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/93yh2>
2. *Dominion Post*, "Nats plan after-hours tuition for illiteracy", 13 April 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/dqyqu>

Classroom Competency

An ERO study, "Quality of Year 2 Beginning Teachers", done late last year, found that only 52% of secondary school teachers in their second year of teaching were competent in all areas. It was a bit better with primary school teachers in their second year: 65% were fully effec-

Trading Post



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tial induction programmes for two or more years for beginning teachers. The raw recruits are themselves tending to start off at a lower level. Two reports out of Canterbury University showed how bad the situation is. One report, tabled in Parliament at the beginning of December 2004, claimed a large number of teacher-training entrants had limited general knowledge, limited vocabulary and some could not write a sen-

tence. The second report, on the academic writing assessment and teaching programme, was presented to the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisers of Aotearoa New Zealand conference by Canterbury University's Academic Skills Centre. This report showed that less than a quarter of physics, computer science and engineering students could pass a basic literacy test carried out during lectures at the start of the 2004 academic year.³ "Why are students who have apparently worked their way through the entire New Zealand school system entering university with inadequate skills in communication and thinking?" the report asked.

Literacy levels among international students have caused concern in the past, but tests carried out at Canterbury University over the past five years show New Zealand students are also struggling. Academic Skills Centre coordinator Carole Acheson said the problem had been well-documented for some time. She also said Canterbury was the first university in the country to test the extent of the literacy problem and that other institutions were following the results closely.³

As a result of the studies, NZQA chief executive Karen van Rooyen declared that in the 2005 university year, a certain standard of literacy would be an explicit requirement to gain entrance.⁴ The Government is doing more than that, however, in the case of Colleges of Education. The Research into Initial Teacher Education inquiry by the Ministry of Education and Teachers Council kicked off in the middle of 2004. It is the first big audit of whether education institutes are producing quality teachers or not. It comes in the wake of several concerns. Some principals are hiring UK teachers, saying they are higher quality. A string of teachers have been ousted for misconduct and incompetence: 18 in 2003, 17 in 2002, 25 in 2001 and 16 in 2000.⁵ David Arthur was convicted of supplying methamphetamine to teenagers while he was a teacher, and several teachers have been struck off

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these school trips, theater activities and "the aggressive emancipatory sexual education without norms" which is "against human dignity" at www.kgov.com. (scroll down to #47 on 3-8-05, "German Schools Sexually Abusing Kids".) It is encouraging to hear that some German teachers are beginning to admit that they have experienced feelings of guilt for participating in the sexual education of children in their classes.

On Wednesday 20 April the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen struck again. This time two mothers were taken to jail. Richard Guenther continues: "They were not homeschoolers but were charged with keeping their children from fulfilling the mandatory school attendance laws of their state. Their crime? They refused to allow their children to participate in a very, very ungodly school theater piece. First they received fines. When they refused to pay the fines they were handcuffed and taken to jail. One mother's husband is in the hospital for a very serious lung operation. He like the other father will face jail when his wife finishes her punishment in prison. When she was brought to the police station, the officer in charge told her to go home and not tell anybody. Why? Because she was brought to prison with her baby. She still nurses her baby. The other mother remains in jail. She has 12 children. The next step is to take the children away!"

Unbelievable comments were made by various politicians. Sven Adenauer, county administrator of Guetersloh / Paderborn and grandson of Germany's most respected Chancellor of all time, Konrad Adenauer¹, was quoted in a news article to say that "fundamentalist Christians (referring to the Russian-German Baptist home educators of Paderborn) should leave the country." Christoph Gusy, a professor of Bielefeld University, was quoted in a news article to say "private schools have to prove that they are able to provide the state educational goals. All forms of education that do not enforce these goals are inherently unlawful." The Paderborn Regional governor, Andreas Wiebe,

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said that the home educating parents of Paderborn are abusing their children as hostages, forcing the parents' ideology onto the children. "They come from thousands of kilometers away (Russia) and want to force their will on us. They must adjust themselves to Germany and the mandatory school attendance laws here. If they don't want to comply then they should go back to their homeland. Fundamentalists don't have any business being here." This is not just blatant religious discrimination...the Paderborn group are ethnic Germans whose ancestors moved to Russian prior to the Communist revolution. They endured persecution there for years under the Communists because they were Germans and Christians and came "home" to Germany when the USSR fell apart to what they thought would be a freedom-loving country!

A judge in Hamburg ruled on Tuesday 20 April that the Muslim parents of a nine-year-old girl were out of order objecting to their daughter wearing a swimsuit in a co-ed class since the state school is entitled to "follow its own educational goals independent from the beliefs and wishes of the parents." The week before, a lawyer from Guenter's organization was with a Paderborn family when two social workers and a judge came to force the child back to school. When the lawyer quoted the law that would allow the family to home educate, the judge retorted that he didn't want to hear about the law!!

The home education organisation in Germany is "Schulunterricht zu Hause" at www.schuzh.de. If you would like to politely and respectfully ask various German authorities to stop oppressing home educators in Germany, here are some useful addresses:

German Ambassador in NZ:

Erich Riedler
90-92 Hobson St.
Thorndon
Wellington
Tel.: (04) 473-6063
Fax: (04) 473-6069
German.Embassy@iconz.co.nz



Mr Peer Steinbrück, President of Nordrhein Westfalen:

Fax: +49(0)
211 837-1150
poststelle@stk.nrw.de



Ms Ute Schafer, Minister for Schools of Nordrhein Westfalen:

Fax: +49(0)
211 896-4555
poststelle@msjk.nrw.de



Mr Andreas Wiebe, Paderborn Regional Governor

andreas.wiebe@brdt.nrw.de



Sven Adenauer, County Administrator of Guetersloh/Paderborn,

can be emailed from his website at:
<http://www.sven-adenauer.de>



Weekly German magazines,

similar to *Newsweek*:

leserbriefe@spiegel.de
DieZeit@zeit.de

Note:

1. Remarkably, Konrad Adenauer is not only recognised as one who was home educated (see <http://www.rainbowresource.com/famous.php>) but also as a man of faith. Ravi Zacharias (<http://www.rzim.org/publications/slicetran.php?slicid=110>) writes of a meeting between evangelist Billy Graham and Adenauer. *On this occasion, he looked the evangelist in the eye and said, "Mr. Graham, do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?" Graham, somewhat surprised by his question answered, "Of course I do." Replied Chancellor Adenauer, "Mr. Graham, outside of the resurrection of Jesus, I do not know of any other hope for this world."*

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for having inappropriate relationships with students, including Gemma Aspden who not only had an affair with a student, but was never registered as a teacher. The boy's mother says Aspden pursued her son and the affair went on for months, hurting not just her son but many other students who were drawn into covering up the relationship.⁶ Minister of Education Trevor Mallard warned of "administrative job losses" as consultations began toward the possible mergers of the colleges of education with the local universities in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin.⁵

Notes:

1. "Teachers 'could do better'", 26 September 2004, www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3048771a11,00.html
2. NZPA, "Teacher quality study finds many lacking in competence", 29 September 2004.
3. "Uni students strike literacy low", 3 December 2004, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3116865a7694,00.html>
4. "New literacy standards required for university entry", 9 December 2004, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3122858a11,00.html>
5. *Sunday Star Times*, "Report card to grade teacher training", 1 August 2004, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2988809a7694,00.html>
6. "Teacher-student sex called criminal", 22 November 2001, http://onenews.nzzoom.com/onenews_detail/0,1227,67977-1-7,00.html

Home Education Legislation Overseas

It is good to look at the Education Acts of other countries. First of all we are most likely to see how fortunate we are in NZ. Just as dramatically, though, we will also see how enlightened our own legislators could still yet become!

The UK

Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any

functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

It is clear that Germany is presently ignoring this provision with its heavy-handed and oppressive approach to home educators. It would be nice to see some kind of statement like this one enshrined in NZ law, a statement recognizing parental rights and responsibilities in this area and the State's responsibility to protect the rights and to allow the free exercise of these responsibilities. New Zealand has no such guarantees in the NZ Education Act.

Section 7 of the UK's Education Act 1996 provides that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

We see the concerns in (a) expressed in the wording of the new NZ Exemption Application forms and the concerns of (b) expressed in Section 21(1)(b)(ii) of our own Education Act. Note that in the UK, it is "education" which is required by law. In New Zealand, while an education is referred to as a right of all NZ children in Section 3 of the Act, an education is not required by law. The law requires all children to be 1) enrolled at and 2) attend a registered school. That is, in New Zealand it is schooling, and not education, which is required by law. This is why we prefer to call ourselves "Home Educators" rather than "Home Schoolers": we recognize that education is far more than just schooling, and we want to know even in our name that we are pursuing an education in that wider sense.

Note also that the UK Act says education may be gained by school attendance "or otherwise". The largest home education organization in the UK, Education Otherwise

(www.education-otherwise.org), takes its name from this part of the Act.

And Section 9 of the UK's Education Act 1996 provides that:

In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts the Secretary of State local education authorities and the funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

In this section of UK's Act the controversial "LEA"s (local education authorities) are mentioned. Like the individual MoE and ERO bureaucrats in NZ, the LEAs are prone to interpreting their powers a bit more broadly than home educators would! This is partly because their powers are often only vaguely enumerated. New Zealand has its key words "taught at least as regularly and well as in a registered school." The UK ACT, we see above, has a similarly vague "efficient full-time education suitable to..etc." None of the words "efficient", "full-time" or "suitable" are legally defined, just as the key words from the NZ Education Act are not defined. However, in both the UK and NZ, there are very adequate and friendly working definitions of these words which allow both state officials and home educators to work toward the goal of educating the children.

This last section of the UK Education Act 1996 is particularly agreeable in that it requires state authorities to "have regard to the general principles that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents." Something like this, written directly into law, would be good to see here in kiwiland.

In Utah

On the 18th of March this year the State of Utah in the Western USA made a radical shift in its laws governing the relationship be-

tween the state government and parents wishing to home educate. No longer does the state reserve to itself the power to "approve" of any home education endeavour. The family simply needs to file an affidavit stating that the child will be home educated. The new legislation states that the parent is solely responsible for the time, place and method of instruction, though a child must be taught "for the same length of time as minors are required to receive instruction in public schools." We hope NZ law will one day state that parents need simply notify the MoE that they are home educating and that the state then leaves you to it. Sounds like Utah is pretty much already there.

(From <http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/LEA%20GUIDELINES%207BDraft%7D%20140205-1.pdf> and <http://www.hslda.org/hs/state/ut/200503240.asp>)

Trauma Industry

For the longest time, and right up through the 1960s, the most severe problems encountered in state pris..., I mean, in state schools were students running in the halls, making excessive noise, cutting into a queue, talking out-of-turn, chewing gum or violating a dress code.

Today, government schools in the USA are faced with an increase in violence including assaults and gang activity, substance abuse, self-mutilation, suicide, abandonment of newborn babies (born in the toilets during the school ball and left there), terrorist attacks, hostage-taking, snipers, murders, "hit lists," threatening graffiti, bomb scares and real bombs and rumours of an "epidemic of oral sex" on the school buses, on the school grounds and everywhere in between....said by some to be the legacy of President Clinton.

The shooting tragedies at Red Lake High School in Minnesota, Columbine in Colorado and the mindless brutality of students plus the horrifying cover-up by school administrators at Mifflin High School in Columbus, Ohio, is a painful reminder of what can happen in a government school. In the USA this kind of thing has now spawned not just a flow of literature describing

Coming Events

Sat, 4 June 2005

Nelson Workshop

Contact: Philippa (03) 522-4213
zarephath@paradise.net.nz

Venue: Stoke Methodist Church Hall

Cost: \$15 for an individual, couple or family for the day or \$5 per person per session.

Programme

10:00 Registration, View Resources and Morning Tea

11:00 Keynote Message - Getting things in Perspective - Craig

12:30 - Lunch (BYO)

1:30-3:00 3 Electives

1. Getting Started - Craig
2. Training Our Children to Be Pure - Barbara
3. Making Our Parents Successful - Genevieve

3:00 - Afternoon Tea

3:15 - 3 Electives

1. A Vision for The Future - Craig
2. Avoiding Burnout - Barbara
3. A Testimony From a Daughter Seeking to Live Under Her Father's Authority and Protection - Genevieve

5:00 - Finish

Mon, 6 June 2005

Westport Evening Meeting

Contact: Christine (03) 789-6156
spencez@xtra.co.nz

the horrors, but a new industry to help schools and parents and students cope with it when it happens to them!

Mark D. Lerner, President of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (AAETS, www.aaets.org) is into the fifth edition of his best-seller, *A Practical Guide for Crisis Response in Our Schools* (complete with cover photo of a school bus engulfed in flames.) In a recent e-newsletter he said, "We no longer question *if* a school will be faced with a tragedy, but *when*." Why do parents buy into this stuff? Why don't they wise-up and bail out?

Yet even home educators can heed some of what Lerner says: "Today, our children leave or avoid the dinner table or family room, opting for

Tues, 7 June 2005

Hokitika Evening Meeting

Contact: Sonya (03) 755-5300
mcgarveys@xtra.co.nz

Venue: Hokitika Christian Fellowship, Kaniere Road, Hokitika

Cost: \$15 for an individual, couple or family for the day or \$5 per person per session

Breastfeeding Babies welcome but there will not be a children's Programme

Programme

2:00-3:00 Creative Writing

Course - Dot Brown

3:00-3.30 Afternoon Tea

3:30-5:00 3 Electives:

1. Training our Children and Youth to Be Pure - Craig Smith
2. Training Our Children's Minds- Barbara Smith
3. Proverbs 31 - Genevieve Smith

5:00-6:00 Tea

6:00-7:00 Keynote: Homeschooling, Getting Things into Perspective - Craig

7:00-7.30 Break/supper

7.30-8.30 2 Electives:

1. Dad's Essential Role in HomeEd - Craig
2. Books, Great Books and More Books - Barbara

Fri-Sat, 10-11 June 2005

Dunedin Home Educators Workshop

Contact: Yolanda (03) 477-3039
roland.storm@clear.net.nz

Cost: \$5 per person

Friday: 7:00 - 9:30pm - Fathers: Disciple your sons for Jesus Christ and win them to yourself. How a Mother Prepares her Daughter for Life.

Saturday: 1:00 - 3:00pm Un-schooling method.

the new era in violent television, video and computer games, and Internet chat rooms. We used to know where our children went when they left our homes. Today, we don't know where they are when they are in their bedrooms."

Mon, 13 June 2005

Oamaru

Evening Meeting

Contact: Barbara (06) 357-4399

Wed, 15 June 2005

Timaru

Evening Meeting

Contact: Barbara (06) 357-4399

Sat, 18 June 2005

Christchurch Workshop

Contact: Monique (03) 366-3525
monique@drbugs.co.nz

Sat, 2 July 2005

Wanganui

Home Educators Workshop

Contact: Marice (06) 345-3660
jmhill@xtra.co.nz

Wed, 6 July 2005

4th Annual

Home Educators History Fair

Venue: Morrinsville Presbyterian Church Hall, corner Anderson Street and Canada Street, Morrinsville,

Contact: Robyn, (07) 889-1189
robyn_smith@maxnet.co.nz

Fri-Sun, 29-31 July 2005

H.E.A.R.T.

Retreat

Sat 6 August 2005

Whangarei

Home Educators Workshop

Contact: Sharyne (09) 437-2725
sjfamily@maxnet.co.nz

For more information on Coming Events throughout the month, see www.hef.org.nz and click on Coming Events