

Battle lines drawn in fight over education

by Suzanne Rose

The Spannaus for Governor gubernatorial campaign has become a lightning rod for popular opposition to New Age education reforms. Feeling the heat, and to diffuse the issue's potential impact on the election, Democratic Gov. Douglas Wilder in September suspended the proposed "Common Core of Learning," the Virginia version of "outcome-based education," or OBE. Spannaus opponent Mary Sue Terry hoped to be able to campaign without being saddled with the controversy, while keeping her views hidden. However, Spannaus supporters have managed to bring the issue to the fore, because the state is undergoing radical educational restructuring—with or without the support of the legislature, the Democratic Party establishment, or the state Department of Education. Many of these programs are already in place, and will remain there until they are shut down by popular protest.

Virginia has been host to numerous conferences promoting the schemes of New Age school reformers, who sell school restructuring as the answer to the state's budgetary woes and the failure of the system to educate. The Bush "America 2,000" Education Summit was held in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1989, and top OBE reformer William Spady says that Virginia is one of the most advanced states in implementing his reforms. Shortly after the Education Summit, Virginia adopted the World Class Education Initiative, which included a commitment to the now-suspended Common Core of Learning. However, after Governor Wilder cut the school budget in the name of "equalizing" funding disparities within the state in 1989, reforms, in the guise of "pilot projects," took off. Department of Education grants were given to elementary schools for pilot projects in early childhood education and other areas.

Heavy corporate involvement

Corporations such as Xerox, Mobil Oil, and RJR Nabisco have set up "business-education partnerships" throughout the state, in which cash-strapped districts receive funds in return for giving these firms a franchise to run the schools according to their needs. Sold to the public as a way to make education accountable and oriented toward "the real world," OBE reforms actually lower academic content, providing a docile labor force at low wage levels.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry has tried to keep a low profile on the issue, but she is the beneficiary of funding and political support from the most radical corporate

"reformers" such as RJR Nabisco, which runs the Next Century Schools program; Seagrams Foundation, which funds design teams for the New American Schools Development Corp. (NASDC); and the AT&T Foundation, which funds the controversial Atlas programs.

In June, as *EIR* reported (see July 23, 1993 issue), RJR Nabisco brought together the top circle of the corporate and academic education reformers to Virginia for a "break the mold" attack on public education. The reformers included the top echelon of NASDC, a private corporation whose headquarters are in Arlington, Virginia.

At the Atlas "Learning Communities" schools in Norfolk, Virginia, a NASDC project, the children enter an environment controlled by the Atlas brainwashers from kindergarten through high school. Parents and teachers are recruited onto a "team" which is supposed to oversee the school and its "innovative" approaches to learning, without the interference of the state or local government, or unions, for that matter. In reality, this means that parents and teachers alike are manipulated by social engineers and group dynamics experts from Yale and Harvard, into carrying out the brainwashers' agenda.

Spannaus forces intervene

In the Spannaus campaign, parents have a vehicle for challenging an educational apparatus which will turn their children into zombies. Her supporters have thrown up picket lines and conducted community meetings outside the schools in Norfolk, where the Cozi and Atlas programs are being implemented. Spannaus has demanded an end to "spiritual child molestation," in public appearances and radio commercials throughout the state. In Loudoun County, outside Washington, supporters have picketed schools against the ubiquitous and perverted "Family Life Education" (FLE) sex education program, as well as the New Age relaxation therapies known as "Pumsy" and "Duso."

In response, Terry has reiterated her support for FLE, which she abetted as Attorney General by offering an interpretation of the enabling legislation which permitted instruction in condom use to be included in the curriculum. Terry has also let it be known carefully in her campaign literature that she supports "community-based school management," a code phrase for taking the control of the school away from the public education system, and turning it over to the corporate sponsors and their political surrogates. Terry has called for bringing private businesses into the management of Virginia public schools, and has supported apprenticeship training programs to allow high school students to combine classroom instruction and on-the-job training with local employers.

Spannaus has vowed to stop these programs and fight for an economic recovery, which will require real education for the nation's future scientists, engineers, and skilled workers, the very jobs the architects of the "Brave New World" are throwing on the scrap heap.