

'Teachers Should Be Treated as Professionals'

Champions of Educators' Right to Work Gather in U.S. Capital

Over the past month, two nationwide education groups held their annual meetings in Washington, D.C.

The top bosses of one of these groups, the mammoth National Education Association (NEA) teacher union, admitted in advance they would "focus their attention" this year largely on telling teachers which U.S. presidential candidate they should vote for.

The headline of the NEA union hierarchy's press release trumpeted: "Political Activism Takes Center Stage at 2004 NEA Annual Meeting."

Blunt as it was, however, the press release didn't make it clear that NEA bosses' partisan politicking is heavily funded by union dues and "fees" that teachers are forced under the labor laws of 20 states to pay in order to keep serving children, parents, and the public.

Independent Teacher Groups Promote Genuine School Reform

The other education group, which convened its meeting just three weeks earlier, could hardly have presented a starker contrast with the NEA brass.

Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism (CEAFU), the sponsor that brought together representatives of 17 different independent educators' groups, believes the individual teacher is capable of thinking for him or her self.

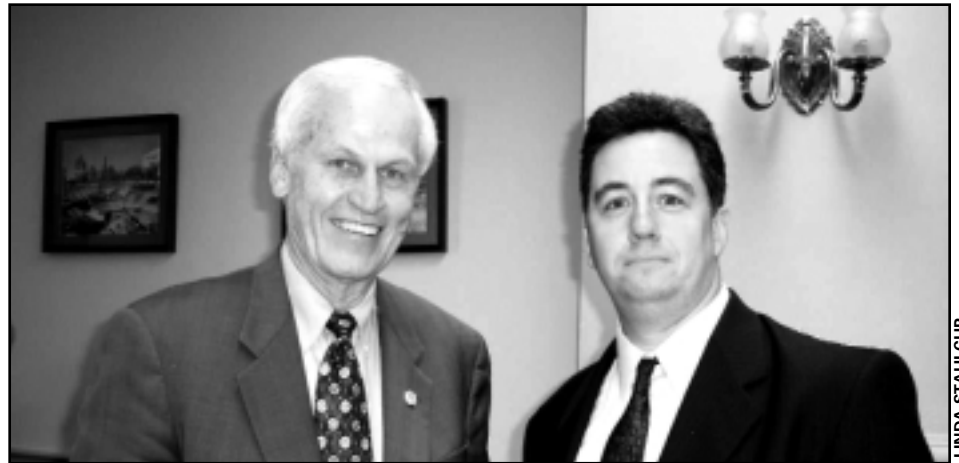
CEAFU, which is housed in National Right to Work's Springfield, Va., headquarters, is dedicated to exposing and remedying the harm done to public schools by forced unionism.

CEAFU applies the principles of the National Right to Work organizations specifically to education.

One of CEAFU's core functions is to assist leaders of independent educator groups who do not wish to force any teacher or other school employee to join, pay dues, or accept unwanted "representation" in his or her dealings with school boards.

Such independent groups, which now represent a combined membership of roughly 200,000, are increasingly recognized as a key part of the national school-reform movement.

As Eugene Hickok, the third-ranking official of the U.S. Department of Education, pointed out in his address to this year's CEAFU conference, educators



LINDA STAULCUP

Last month, congressmen like Charlie Stenholm (D-Texas, left, pictured with Committee Vice President Doug Stafford)

attended a reception to signal their support for the right of teachers to reject teacher union affiliation.

"engage in essential work of democracy."

However, Mr. Hickok continued, monopoly bargaining undermines "the true professionalism of educators."

"Professionals like doctors and attorneys expect to be paid on the basis of their personal skills and achievements, not a formula dictated by Big Labor," CEAFU Director Cathy Jones later agreed.

"Teachers should be treated as professionals. That's why empowering teachers to resist teacher union monopoly successfully is a necessary precondition for education reform."

Congressmen, Congressional Aides Recognize Value of Independent Teacher Groups

NEA and other teacher union officials wield their forced dues-generated political clout to block or undermine a wide array of education reforms, including raising academic standards, pay-for-performance, charter schools and vouchers.

Yet many teachers believe some or all of these changes would help them succeed in the classroom.

Disgruntled teachers are quitting the NEA. Mike Antonucci, director of the California-based Education Intelligence Agency, told CEAFU conferees that the rank-and-file rebellion has now reached even the NEA's Michigan stronghold, where NEA membership is declining for the first time ever.

"Unfortunately, in Michigan and 19 other states, employing well over half the teachers in America, even teachers who

quit the union are forced to continue paying union 'agency fees' if they wish to keep their jobs," noted Ms. Jones.

"CEAFU gives a national voice to the independent-minded teachers whose rights are being violated."

Ms. Jones commended Mr. Hickok for recognizing the importance of professional educator groups. She also applauded the congressmen and congressional aides who attended a Capitol Hill reception for CEAFU.

"Too many politicians in Washington, D.C., falsely equate militant NEA bosses with 'teachers.' But House members like Charlie Stenholm [D-Texas], Howard Coble [R-N.C.], and Ron Paul [R-Texas] are refusing to go along," she said.

More and more members of the national media are also rejecting the NEA party line.

Syndicated writer Derooy Murdock, whose columns are frequently seen in the *Washington Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Orange County Register*, *National Review*, and many other publications, spoke out at the CEAFU conference.

He encouraged attendees to "show how much difference there is between professional educators and teacher unions."

The NEA brass's message to teachers is "No, we don't want you to have that freedom — to say where your money goes," said Mr. Murdock. People ought to be regularly reminded about the "manifest unfairness" of forced unionism, he concluded.