

# PATRE Review

The Newsletter of Parents And Teachers for Real Education



## Telling the Truth

WHY OUR CULTURE AND OUR COUNTRY HAVE STOPPED MAKING SENSE AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

By Lynne V. Cheney

**REVIEWED BY JOHN WATERS**

Columnist with the Irish Times

*Lynne V. Cheney is married to one of the most powerful men in the world. Her husband, Richard ("Dick") Cheney is the Vice President of the United States. It is therefore surprising that her ideas have not gained more notice outside her own country. For here is a woman who is perhaps at the cutting edge of thought at the start of the new millennium.*



Ms Cheney is a former head of the US National Endowment for the Humanities. She has taught at various colleges and universities, has published several books and was formerly a senior editor at the Washingtonian magazine. She is arguably one of America's most successful women.

Telling the Truth is a book about the dishonesty that has crept into American culture as a consequence of ideology. Ms Cheney depicts a battle between those who would define reality according to their own political agendas and those for whom there are objective standards against which things must be measured. Across a range of disciplines, from History to Philosophy, to Law, to English Literature, the new objective is not the dissemination of truth but the furtherance of politically convenient viewpoints. Ms Cheney charts the progress of this thinking through the American education system, media, politics, government and society generally. In this "postmodern" world, everything has become relative in the interests of cutting "minorities" a little slack. The issue for the majority who remain outside

the new beneficial loop is: can we any longer say that there is a thing called "truth" beyond the self-serving proclamations of the new ascendancies. These are mainly the self-appointed spokespersons and representatives of the various "minority" groups, including feminist women, discontented blacks, gays, and others defined by latter-day dictat as "oppressed" or "disadvantaged", and at whose insistence only their own reading of the state of all women, blacks, Latinos and other minorities is allowed into public debate.

Ms Cheney argues most coherently that these ideas now threaten to undermine everything previously established which the newly dominant ideologies find inconvenient. She believes most people are unaware of these developments and would be horrified if they knew about them.

### FEMINISM BASED ON THE NOTION OF MALE DOMINANCE

The malaise she describes takes many forms. One is modern feminism, which, being based on the notion of male dominance, seeks to present women as victims and men as oppressors. This theory holds that, since men dominate the world, they create reality; and there can therefore be no useful discussion of the differences between men and women until reality has been redefined, This provided the starting point of the feminist onslaught not just on



men and masculinity but on the very fabric of established reality. For example, the feminist explanation for differing male/female roles in the workplace is that these derive not from choices arising out of biological difference but are the result of forms of male dominance that make female "choices" unavoidable. This logic has created a massive paradox whereby feminists argue for equal treatment with men and in the same breath present women as victims whose cause must be prioritized over the causes of other groups. This in turn results in the negation of the very concepts of equality and justice which feminism claims to hold dear.

Cheney takes us on a tour of American universities, media and households. She shows that genuine problems, but everywhere far from universal, such as sexual harassment, date rape, domestic violence and unjust employment practices, have been massively exaggerated and mobilized as propaganda icons in the power struggles of modern feminism. Pursuing the Holy Grail of removing such ills entirely, feminists may actually increase their incidence by multiplying grounds of alienation between men and women. Thus they reveal the inconsistency and abuse of power at the core of their objectives, especially when they

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# Children: Springtime of the Family and Society

Last October, the Holy Father and the Pontifical Council for the Family hosted a five-day, World Meeting of the Holy Father with Families, and a preparatory Congress, with the same theme. The theme of both was "Children: Springtime of the Family and Society." The family as the sanctuary of life, the heritage of humanity and as the domestic Church, was strongly reaffirmed. Amongst 5,000 delegates from 100 countries, the Irish delegate was the Chairperson of the Roscommon Branch of PATRE, Mary Lou Doherty, teacher and mother, accompanied by husband and family members. She sent us this report.

Scientists, professionals, politicians and professors spoke, as did representatives of pro-life and pro-family movements. The President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, Cardinal Trujillo, joined them to place the family, the source of life and holiness, at the centre of the renewal of mankind and of nations, and of all religious ministry.

Two specific aspects of this Congress, the atmosphere and the proclamation of the Truth, overwhelmingly impressed us. The atmosphere of love and warmth, one of belonging to one very large family was so tangible, because real families with children were present. Their cardinal, bishop, or priest, when present, was each like a grandfather. This was so refreshing, as was the unashamed, unambiguous, uncompromising proclamation of the Truth!

Cardinal Alonso Lopez Trujillo realistically assessed the challenges facing families. He said that families are facing a "cultural winter" in an era of abortifacient pills, same-sex unions, child pornography and foetal body-parts trafficking. The mentality that separates family and life has led to the advent of "new family models" and to artificial birth control, which is also promoted by supranational organizations and economic powers. Thus children become "a weight and an obstacle to self-fulfilment". "The Church forcefully proclaims the sacred dignity of each child and the rights and duties of the family". He added, " 'winter' can give way to a 'new spring' when peoples, governors and legislators decide to believe in the Truth of man, and to defend and respect him... so that the most precious good, the child himself, is loved, defended and respected as a treasure". "We must appeal for children to be protected, children in whose face we find the reflection of God!! Children suffer from the wounds and the collapse of the family. Is this their right? -NO - Children have just one right, -Children have the right

to a Family, the right to be loved, nurtured and educated within that family by a mother and father married to one another. The Holy Father denounces the horrific tragedy, of those children whose parents are still living, but who live as orphans! - the orphans of the living, - the victims of divorce. Children are the Family, and the Family is the basis of humanity, of Truth.

His Eminence **Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State**, said that "the Church must keep reaffirming that the Family is the heart and basis of society. The essential task of the Church is to be of service to the family - The family needs help to recover the primacy of moral values." **Professor Pedro Morande**, Catholic University of Chile, stated, "Children are not objects born to meet the emotional needs of their parents," (a statement which the Holy Father also used on 14th October).

**Professor Francesco D'Agostino**, of the Italian National Committee for Bioethics spoke of the trend to the exploitation of children through consumerism. The Family as such is not seen to have legal rights. The legal world only deals with family relationships, not with the family as a legal entity. We must demand that jurists deal with this! **Most Rev. Carlo Caffarra**, Archbishop of Ferrara-Comacchio, stated that we are living in an educational desert today, where there are no maps, no streets. Parents have too willingly handed over their educational authority, to others. It must be restored to parents, and they must demand this. The Church and the pastors should uphold this as there can be no education where there is no educational authority. Churchmen must publicly support this freedom of the family and defend this basic right.

His Eminence **Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini**, Archbishop of Milan spoke of the contribution of parents in child formation. He stated that children give a total trust, a total abandonment to those who care for them,

thus establishing a bond, a reliance of trust. Parents must communicate this trust. God entrusted children to their parents. But, parents are insecure in this entrustment, in this duty through lack of education. The Church must be supportive of parents at this time. Religion must play a very significant role in the formation of the young person.

**Rev. Tony Anatrella**, psychoanalyst, Consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Family, linked these themes to one that triggered the birth of PATRE. In *Sex Education: Truth and Meaning*, he stated that Sex Education was so important for the formation of the young person, that he must warn against methods currently employed even in Catholic Schools; methods that do not form but destroy. He claimed, contemporary Sex Ed. is damaging, by confusing sexual identity (God-given) with sexual tendency (which is experienced, and can be corrupted). . By using moral relativism, psychotherapy and other anti-Christian methodologies, this corruption can be spread. "Homosexuality", he stated, "is a psychic aberration" This received a standing ovation from all delegates. He added "no school, no educator should interfere with the role of parents in Sex Ed." given in accord "with their religious beliefs." Tenderness is needed for this subject - not vagueness, elusiveness, or intrusiveness. Many schools in this are dispossessing parents. There must be respect for the child as a person, a respect for his intimacy, and the parent/child trust is central to this. Sex Ed. showing bodies of adults etc. is unnecessary and inadequate, as the body sub-divided into parts is connected with pleasure, in itself very provocative, depersonalised and opposed to Catholic teachings. Sex Ed. should inspire education in chastity, the meaning of love, mutual self-giving, learning self-control and moral virtue. Modesty expressed by adolescents should be cherished.

Many speakers overlapped, as the whole debate on the family is so vast. We were told that the marriage contract is unlike any other, and cannot be treated as any other, and of the many ways that the institution of the family is being weakened. We were given basic guidelines for the evangelism of children and the responsibility of parents in this role. The definition of the child should be very carefully reconsidered, and he/she be protected from conception. The right of the mother to her natural role and contribution must be recognised. Motherhood has been demeaned within society. This role of motherhood must be part of free choice. After all maternity is life itself. Grandparents too

were essential within the family.

We now live with a new tragedy – the orphans of the living – whose parents are still living, – the victims of divorce. These new victims require our compassion and love. Adoption is a wonderful sign and expression of such love. Adoptive parents are the real Christians as opposed to those who, in a world full of children needing love, opt for I.V.F. As with Christ at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, each person has a family tree, and this genealogy of the person is vital for the uniqueness of each human being; reproductive technologies interfere with this basic need. The Family must be recognised as the place where rights are protected. Too often the Family is insulted by practices against nature, including those concerning tax policies, housing etc. It is in the family that man receives his first notions of Truth, of

good and evil. Through pastoral care, we must learn to rediscover that every child is a blessing from God. There must be prayer and conversion. If there is no conversion of heart and mind, the difficulties within families will increase and children are always the first to suffer in any crisis of marital love. Conversion can only take place with a life of prayer. The family is the domestic church, the first church, so in learning to pray together within the family we overcome the trials and difficulties, by getting to know Jesus Christ.

None of this can be detached from political and educational initiatives. The interest of the state must be in tandem with the interest of the family. Lack of spiritual guidance plus economic poverty can lead to ills such as abortion, prostitution etc. A Catholic education is an integral education for Catholic children. It involves the

continuous education of parents. Economics cannot substitute for poor parenting and defects of economic policy should not interfere with good parenting.

The Congress ended with a wonderful assertion of Hope. Although the family is in a defensive position, yet it is into the family that the baby is born, and it is only within it that the newborn thrives. Children represent the *springtime*, the promise to renew the world. The birth of the child appears as a sign of hope for the world and for the Church.

For one delegate from PATRE this reaffirmation of faith, the family and education, as the three concentric circles upholding the wonder, good and sanctity of the child, expressed all she has felt and served over the years as teacher and mother.

## ***UCD – No more the university of its founder, the Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman?***

Two articles on gay and lesbian culture appear in the current *History Review: Journal of the UCD History Society*, volume XII. 2001, a journal otherwise an admirable sign of the maturity and solidity of student research and writing. Well, students have always done their own thing, and must have a certain latitude in showing their youthful open-mindedness before they figure out the real score in life.

Of more importance is the following evidence of official support, inspiration and even instigation, a note describing one of the contributors, given exactly as published therein, p. 205.

**Hayley Fox Roberts, NCP, NRHP** ([shapeshifter@eircom.net](mailto:shapeshifter@eircom.net)) is a qualified hypnotherapist, a poet, activist and journalist. She is currently taking a Certificate in Lesbian Studies and Queer Culture at University College, Dublin, and will be lecturing a course on lesbian activities as part of the certificate. Her work has appeared in *Gay community news*, *Ms.Chief*, the *Journal of hypnotherapists in Ireland* and the *Journal of the national women's council*. Her poetry has been published in magazines and anthologies, including *fm* and *Women's work*, and two collections, *Songs of lust* (Liverpool, 1984) and *Nine muses on a night out* (forthcoming). She has been involved in Rock Against Racism, the Hunt Saboteurs, the Animal Liberation Movement, Lesbian Avengers, the Dyke March, Dublin LGBT Pride, and the Lesbian Health Project.

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*No doubt some parents might like to drop a concerned letter to the President of UCD, Dr. Art Cosgrove, and also to their TDs, since many aspects of the university, including student fees, are publicly funded. If most areas of human life can be subject to rational discussion in university, even those of which we may not approve, it is perhaps another matter when someone trained in hypnotherapy and plainly more 'committed' than dispassionate is given access to lecturing the young. Of course our young are far from green, and this may be their way of warning each other!*

## **MASCULINITY AND GROWING BOYS.**

It used to be simple. Masculinity was something growing boys grew towards, in family, classroom, gang and sports grounds. The trick was to channel it into goodness, and curb some of its natural rambunctiousness. Not any more. Now it is a BIG problem, up for debate. And maybe re-shaping. I have just come from my 9-year old's school play. It was innocent enough: Willie Wonka's Chocolate Factory.

Only a little dicey was what followed, with the 10 yr. olds. A panto mix of various

fairy tales. Jack in the Beanstalk arrived with his grandmother in drag... a spell had been put on 'the old cow'. Innocent enough. Still... would it have happened even a few years ago? Exploring Masculinities programmes have been launched by the Dept. of Education and targeted at several schools, especially notably Catholic ones (e.g. Christian Brother schools). We will do a major survey of these programmes in the next issue.

An official Executive Summary introduces its teacher text. It does not beat around the bush. In its first sentence it proclaims: 'It is a

fundamental premise of the 'Exploring Masculinities' initiative that masculinity is a social construct.' It continues that a culture such as ours 'which lumps all men and boys together within one paradigm of masculinity provides a less than ideal context for the initiative.' Well, there you have it. Because so many here take for granted what we said in our opening sentences on growing boys, those who wish to re-shape gender itself will have their work cut out for them. Let us hope so!

# Children in danger?

With Commentary on “Sex Lines: Open Communications on Relationships, Sexuality and Social Issues” by Aidan Herron (Poolbeg, 1995)

*Every day brings fresh news of some abuse of children in some part of the world. Worse than specific instances is the general tide of neglect now sweeping so many “orphans of the living”. Studies (since John Bowles and Robert Coles) show such neglect deprives children of the rooted personalities which come with home nurture, and instead leaves them more dependent on their friends. They are thus more open to manipulation by peer pressures, group think and personality “re-formatting” in their schools than are children more closely mothered and fathered.*

Christ taught mankind to regard all children, not merely those of their own immediate parenting or kin, as His own: Suffer little children to come unto me... Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven... What you do to the least of these little ones, you do to me.

One of first acts of the emperor Constantine as he moved to harmonize Roman law and Christianity, was to prohibit the killing, sale or prostitution of children, and to establish food allowances for poorer parents tempted to regard them as unwanted.

On Thursday 22 Feb., RTE news ran a long propaganda spot. The images were crude and over-the-top, the message was the same: permissiveness is rampant, virtual children are involved, sex ed. is the only answer.

But whose sex ed.? Emer Egan, a top official of the Dept. of Education, was plainly touting the department's RSE programme. She was interviewed holding its official promotional brochure, now familiar to so many parents. But, at bottom, whose programme is that? The one spread through many education centres and presented in school meetings is not the programme of any religiously active parents known to PATRE, and undercuts common Christian understanding. (see in the previous two articles in this issue, Mary Lou Doherty's report from Rome, and the report from Offaly).

On Thurs. 15-17 Feb., the Irish Primary Principals Network, an initiative of the same department, held their annual conference at the Corrib Hotel in Galway. Amongst the approved workshops was one on stress and problems of communication, given by Mr Aidan Herron, described as “Tutor, Designer and Facilitator of the RSE Programme.”

Presumably because principals are stressed out trying to communicate the wisdom of RSE to suspicious parents!

He is the author of Sex Lines (Poolbeg, 1995) subtitled Open Communication on Relationships, Sexuality and Social Issues. Doubtless he sees himself as a new Constantinian, using public and state resources, to ensure the protection of children in a corrupt age. He has some good sense: the young ‘must be told that it's just not on for children to have children.’ But the

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religious, the parental, even the age-sensitive dimensions of it all fall down before his hasty conviction that straight unvarnished info basically solves all. His approach to the facts of life is largely biological, with no real sense of marriage or the family (e.g., pp. 192-99). The virulence of his attack on the role of ‘traditional values’ is extraordinary: “The Golden Age of Traditional Values meant nothing but misery and heartbreak...” Its results? “the list of shame is far from complete” including “wives seen as possessions of their husbands”; “the harsh and brutal treatment of children”; “schools ruled by the stick and the strap”; the separation of children and parents and the abuse of the former. Why not also bare feet, crowded thatched cottages, made matches



and dowries, mass emigration, diphtheria, colonial rule, the Blue Shirts, and the old factory system?

Herron believes that children should know about sex before learning about the values which sustain it in integrity (pp. 170-72), since ‘a child might be too young to appreciate the morality attached to sexual behaviour... information first, then decide if a moral message applies.’ Moreover, Herron is quite unequivocal in his acceptance of homosexuality as a fit topic for classrooms, and links this to his plan for re-education in gender roles.

## **EXPRESS SUBVERSION OF THE VALUES OF SO MANY OF ITS PEOPLE**

One wonders by what warrant the State hired, and sustains, such express subversion of the values of so many of its people. Last November John Bruton courageously called for debate in the legislative forum on any attempts to change the values of the country, as did President MacAleese by implication the previous March.

Are they to be given only their two cents mention whilst Egan, Herron and their faceless backers press on with their plans? As the emperor Constantine realised (he was no dope, and even a bit of a cynic), there is more to sex and children than pleasure, reproduction and the costs to society and the exchequer. There is the justice and civility of a whole culture; there is the shadow of organised barbarism and legal slavery where innocence is made the plaything of power.

For Christians, Jews and Muslims of “traditional values”, there is also the

nurturant and protective will of the Father, the author of life. Their confidence that they have received children as a gift from Him, and that He sustains them in their care of their

children in turn, underpins much of their affection, constancy and cheerfulness in their parenting, and lends it a tangible authority of love and service. Herron's aggressive

disregard of the values which thus motivate so much parental love does not speak well for those who would try to re-format our children.

## *Catechetics and Religious Formation*

PATRE is interdenominational. It upholds the constitutional right of parents to the classroom formation of their children in the religious convictions of their families.

It assumes that schools of the relevant denominations routinely and generously provide this. All too many parents know this is not the case. Some go so far as to suspect church-state collusion in the dilution and suppression of religious truth. Others think that an extraordinary naiveté has coloured the writing of catechetical texts and the formation of religious teachers for over a generation. Others know that the avoidance of open scandal coupled with the wink-and-nod syndrome has led many churchmen to prefer to correct abuse by specific incidents of it rather than admit to a pattern of general deficiency, much less move to correct it.

Others again realize that the very tendency to trust lay skills (in pedagogy, illustration, text-writing, etc.) meant that unrepresentative teams of lay employees were able to distort the transmission of the essentials of the faith in the interests of making the storyline understandable by children and acceptable to teenagers, and even some of their teachers. Bishops let it pass as long as they knocked out any obvious heresy, since the distortion was mostly of imbalance, suppression of difficult things, and too much child-centredness.

There was a wider climate. Many churchmen did not want to be seen as contributing further to the sharp religious divisions in the North. While they realized that, fully understood, Christian truth cannot be sectarian, they were worried some of those they instructed in the past got the message wrong! They sought to soften it.

Some key denominational figures by the 1970s were men saturated in an optimistic Christian humanism with shaky roots, some of them perhaps part believers in the poetic and unscientific notions of Teilhard de Chardin, (which with the findings of the human genome project now look more like the pre-World War One mindset they derive from, with competitive human process, not God's purposes and Incarnation, as the operative goal of all knowledge). Original sin, as one of these churchmen told me, was thus but the residua of earlier fleshly evolution. Why then a need for grace? Why indeed not a purely biological sexual ethics?

There have been other problems. Cardinal Winning of Glasgow recently attributed much religious decline and disorder in Scots Catholicism to a quarter century of defective catechesis. He did not add that Scotland has used Irish religious text programmes (Children of God and Alive-O) in these years. Over the years parents who raised problems were treated as pariahs and sidelined (as was the Pro Fide group, granted its mechanical attachment to pre-Vatican II formulae); others with valid documented portfolios of problems, such as Mr Tom Ryan and his friends, were simply hectorated or ignored by some bishops, though courteously treated by others.

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To be sure, good bishops were haunted by the difficulty of communicating doctrine in a t.v.-distracted, shallow age: many of the bishops were promoted from teaching in the country's class-rooms and lecture theatres, and knew such problems too well. They may have overestimated the continuance of the 1960s rebellious syndrome, however, and even the numbers then involved. Whatever, the coming of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1994 has made the case against extant Irish programmes visible to all parents who can read and think.

### **FR DAVID BOYLAN**

The Catholic Church itself has now moved to redress the matter: further books of the Alive-O series were put on hold last year. Fr David Boylan of Skerries was trained in Rome in the new catechetics, and groomed to take over as education head in the Dublin Archdiocese, key centre both for catechetical publication, and for liaison with the Dept. of Education generally. Tragically he died in a car accident on the M50 on Sunday 11 March, prior to his appointment. His buoyant and informed spirit was nurtured in a family and community in Fingal. That area was both ancient and resilient in the faith, continuously to its present reality as a growth-

suburb of outer Dublin. His hopes will be best served by clear-headed and prompt moves to further the full revival of Christian formation in the classroom, and to ring-fence the vulnerable against the experiments of salvific secularism.

### **PRIVATISATION WORKS VERY POORLY**

There are new indications... currently with the bishops... that otherwise numbers of parents will simply walk away, NOT to indifference, but to the domestic formation of their children's faith. But despite the legend of our Penal Times, or the facts of small Catholic communities in England, 1560s-1680s, in Japan and Korea between c.1690s and 1840s, or larger ones in Lithuania and Ukraine more recently, the historical evidence is overwhelming that such privatisation works very poorly: believers numbers shrink relentlessly, vocations contract or collapse, and there is decline too in the quality of the practice of many of those remaining faithful. Unsurprisingly, 'home schooling' in America and elsewhere (ostensibly to save religion) thus can have very strange allies indeed, some of them supporters of the 'neutral' (or neo-pagan) public space.

In education as in church life generally, institutional, guided, corporate religious faith, and strong family commitment are mutually reinforcing. The just issued document on denominational education in Northern Ireland by its Catholic bishops puts the case well. Historically they must regret that for fifty years political questions left them unable to aid those Protestants trying in the late 1920s and after to defend the Christian content of the majority's schools there.

I have a now chilling memory of a senior teacher there, an unbeliever, bragging to me (about 1960) how easy it was to use the vague 'religion' spot in state curricula to undermine the faith of his charges, who happened to be ESNs (slow-learners) in special need of God's protection. PATRE believes that joint parental-church action in education should be the context in which religious belief will continue to flourish, and that it will best nourish civic discipline and virtue.

# Relationships and Sexuality Education... Again!

Readers of our special report from Rome can be in no doubt of the central concern of informed Catholics from many lands for all their children; nor doubt their knowledge of the orchestrated schemes aimed now against the sound personal, familial and moral formation of such children, rather than in their favour.

But we Irish are apt to say, 'It cannot happen here...and hasn't our local Church approved it?'

The reply to that has come now from the one bishop charged to oversee the matter in his diocese, but also on the relevant nation-wide Episcopal Commission. It is quite clear, strong and unequivocal. The Bishop is Thomas Finnegan, of Killala, who is just up for retirement. May he flourish many years! He is a classmate and personal friend of Cardinal Connell. He would not act alone in such a matter. On 25 February last, 2000, he faxed a strongly unequivocal message to John White, one of the Catholic delegates to the National Parents Council. PATRE welcomes his statement; the highlighting and glosses are the Editor's:

"In answer to your urgent queries... what I have approved of is:

(1) What has been approved by the Episcopal Conference, or the Episcopal Commission for Catechetics, or the Episcopal Commission for Education; in the context of your first question [on RSE], these are the Veritas publication *Relationships and Sexuality Education in*

*Catholic Schools*, and the Veritas publication *Children of God Religious Education Series* which includes material appropriate for each age group in what is now commonly called RSE;

(2) **I have approved nothing else as Bishop of Killala or in any other capacity**

*[i.e., on the aforesaid commission, which takes joint decisions];*

**to answer your second question specifically, I have not approved—nor was I ever asked to approve—the Department of Education and Science's guidelines or any of its resource material for RSE at primary or post-primary level.**

*[This would include all Departmental material on RSE sent out to schools, distributed to parents, or to management boards, or presentations to either, or materials used in the regional Educational Centres in RSE training sessions.]*

*[This section points out that the first Veritas publication mentioned above was written to*

**"present the principles and guidelines which should govern relationship and sexuality education in all Catholic schools, whether primary or secondary."**

*In order words, it cannot be used as an endorsement of Department programmes, training sessions, or fragments thereof; nor can it be said that the bishops' caution applies only to primary pupils, and not to teenage education. The same principles apply].*

## PRINCIPLES ARE SHOT FULL OF HOLES

Well, we all know these principles are shot full of holes by scores of schools calling themselves Catholic. Just one example is enough to show this. Shinrone (Co. Offaly) National School's *Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy*, adopted 11 April 2000, was developed, as it states, "in accordance

with the Department of Education's guidelines by an elected committee..." It defines RSE as "an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education...[which] will be taught in this context.

"It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant personal and social skills and aspects of parenting."

The context is to be one of promoting a good self-image (i.e. self-esteem). And it notes "previously this work had been done on an ad hoc basis through such subjects as civics, religious education and physical education and through the 'hidden' curriculum.

Henceforth a more comprehensive and structured approach through S.P.H.E. will be taken."

It will be taught to all classes from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class.

Is all this consistent with Catholic positions? Hardly. Who cares?

As a contributor and Athlone teacher noted in INTO's *Education Today* (summer 1995), of self-esteem:

"Pride long ago was a sin! Humility was the thing! (perhaps it best suited the Church to have us all submissive and unquestioning)."

No. The Church explains itself quite well. It is perhaps the Department of Education that now wants us all to be submissive and unquestioning

## WHERE IS IT ALL COMING FROM?

The closest the UN has ever come to defining gender is in the Beijing Platform for Action in which gender "was intended to be interpreted and understood as it was in ordinary, generally accepted usage." "Generally accepted usage" implies that most people would understand gender as "male and female." UN agencies, however, have an entirely different view.

The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women defines gender as "the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female... as well as the relations between women and those between

men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.

They are... changeable." It has long been the project of the radical feminist and homosexual movement to change the understanding society has toward men and women. This was the reason the word "sex" to define men and women was changed to the more malleable "gender." If gender is a social construct and has no basis in nature then there is no basis for sex roles. It means that any girl can be trained to want to be a fighter pilot and any boy can be raised happily as a girl.

In the UN system, the idea of "gender as a social construct" comes in the guise of "gender mainstreaming." This defined as "a

globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality," which is to be made "central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects."

No wonder Cardinal Trujillo of the family commission in Rome warned in October of "the advent of "new family models" and artificial birth control, which is also promoted by supranational organizations" as our delegate to Rome noted (see page 2) Just last year, the government of Australia withdrew from the UN treaty monitoring system because it saw such programmes as a distortion of what they had signed up to at Beijing in 1995.

We all know the Aussies know their onions in such matters. Do the Irish? In the mean-time "gender as a social construct" and "gender mainstreaming" continue apace within the UN system. It seemingly influences our well travelled and well funded Dept. of Education officials and advisors.

Or perhaps Ireland is out on its own, and 'Exploring Masculinities' is a special present from Jack-in-the-Beanstalk's grandmother in drag? Sure, and the storks really do fly in our

babies! Why, they even have landing ramps for them in Holles Street.

Last autumn, every fully appointed or acting professor of education in the country, apparently without exception, signed a letter to the *Irish Times* defending such programmes on the ground that they alone had the professional competence to judge their relevance, purpose and educational value. But John Bruton is hardly alone in believing that where fundamental values are involved,

more is at stake, more one might add, than professional competence.

No one questions the narrowly professional competence of doctors who preside at the now-legal killing of the aged in Holland. No one doubts that professional competence may well be used even to try to validate the killing of a culture by the confusion and demoralisation of its young people.

## MARY ROBINSON

Our former president is on record as not especially pro-life. She did nothing to countermand a strong tilt by some UN agencies to re-define the killing of unborn babies as a woman's right. The new US administration takes a very different view. It has moved to sever official American support to pro-abortion activities in UN population programmes. It is replacing key representatives to UN committees and bureaucracies. It may not be coincidence that Mary Robinson has been hesitant to go for a second term as Human Rights Commissioner.

Ireland is now a member of the UN Security Council. Its prestige has been

considerable. Especially in ex-colonial Islamic and Catholic countries, and in Latin America, its pro-life integrities were always taken for granted. The confusion sent out by our government's craven support for EU agendas in such matters has caused distaste and confusion amongst our friends in the US, in the other Americas and in much of the developing world. Should Mary Robinson resign, it will begin to clear up much of this confusion. Hopefully, she will not re-import such confusions to Ireland. Public figures, by their very position, are key



educators. An activist Mary Robinson is an educator PATRE believes Ireland could currently do without.

# Teachers on Strike?

The teachers' disputes with the government, especially those by secondary teachers in ASTI, but also impending ones by others in TUI and by primary teachers in INTO, cut to the very heart of what unites Parents and Teachers for Real Education.

The future of religious faith and of the family itself goes through the family. But the future of the culture that sustains these, and of our wider civilisation, goes through the classroom. Where teachers lack a balanced sense of these things, where indeed teachers are unhappy, stressed and ill-regarded, more is endangered than exams or the learning process. Salaries and budgets are better than in the recent past. Numbers of pupils have fallen somewhat.

But there is a demoralising sense that relativities have changed. Teachers, like guards and nurses, were people of real status in rural and provincial society, if less so in 'the big smoke'... even there, however, they could bank on being, by their mid-thirties, well-housed and socially well-regarded. Rightly or wrongly, many lack confidence that such patterns now prevail. Many more do work in cities. With prosperity, we do not wish a situation, such as times past in the United States, where society relegated school-

teaching to the initial stage of life for bright young things bound elsewhere, or even left it to also-rans, has-beens and never-wills. It is unhelpful when those on near £100,000 of income and expenses fail to realise that even 30% of say £21,000, after tax, is not extortionist, but a valid ground for reasoned negotiation, particularly if relativities, responsibilities, phasing and allowances are considered.

Teachers today find classes difficult, department upgrades and directives endless, parents sometimes demanding, housing a real problem, babysitting both costly and a worry. Legal equality and fiscal individualisation make it difficult to disaggregate such things for special awards or entitlements. Which suggests that Dr Woods and Mr McCreevy and their civil servants may have to get together to find creative resolution in some areas.

There is a minor point. For several years, the State has run teacher training centres in which teachers are given guidance in rational self-assertion, anti-bullying techniques, the de-mystifying of social processes, the clarification of issues, the bottom line in classroom conflicts and debates, the unvarnished basics of the mysteries of life itself.

For good or ill, teachers will then 'see through' even reasoned argument against their experience and convictions. They will see the old-style techniques whereby assertive management creates a consensus to 'shame' them into 'common sense' as a form of bullying and a refusal of debate among equals.

There are some who believe that teachers merely need a bit more algebra. You may recall the sort. 25,000 secondary teachers, various salary rates and the proportions of teachers on each rate, expressed in symbols, are multiplied by 130%. (This percentage is to take in both present pay rates plus current claims). Some argue the result of all this would be a Bankrupt National Treasury, and set disruptive precedents. Perhaps. But teachers are aware too of the performance of our economy in EU terms, and surprising numbers have friends and contacts teaching in others countries of the EU. So the first thing to give teachers is respect, and a presumption of intelligence. It will be found that they do understand algebra, the bottom line and the common good, that indeed they can teach many of us much about these things. There is a sufficient number of teachers in the Dail, such as Mr Kitt and Mr Noonan, who can make the relevant, necessary private contacts to trigger the mutual realism process which can then inform discussion with ASTI and INTO. Hopefully that is already underway?

# Values?

In November last then Fine Gael leader John Bruton made a statement that from now on educational programmes designed "to inculcate values in the next generation of Irish people" should be placed before the Dail for approval. He was reacting to a statement by Education Minister, Michael Woods, that the controversial "Exploring Masculinities" programme had been developed over a five year period by second level teachers working with Department of Education officials and then made available to schools without ever being debated in the Dail.

Mr. Bruton asserted: "Exploring Masculinities sets out to inculcate values in the next generation of Irish people. While second level teachers and the Department of Education have very valuable expertise to contribute, I do not believe that values for the next generation is something that any society should delegate to 'experts'. I believe that any programme of this nature should be put before the Dail Committee of Education and Science before being put into effect. In that way there would be a political debate on the value judgments that are being incorporated into the Education curriculum".

The extract shown is from an actual RSE Training Day manual for teachers held in

### What's The Difference?

Suggested model lesson for senior infants STRAND : Myself STRAND UNIT: My body

*The following picture and poem could be used to set the scene for a short discussion about all the things which boys and girls have in common with each other, as well as the differences between them.*

*The key focus is not on the sex difference, but on the unsensational way that commonality and difference between the sexes may be discussed with and by children.*

*The exercises may be adapted according to whether or not the class is single sex or mixed. The teacher can emphasize equality in games participation.*

**Aim:** To provide an appropriate setting for introducing correct terminology for body parts to young children.

**Objectives:** (a) To encourage children to discuss what boys and girls have in common, in terms of things they can do.  
(b) To introduce the names for the genitals in an unsensational way.

**Aids:** A picture of two children - a boy and a girl playing. The picture provided has NO implication of the girl "mothering/minding" her brother. Photos of babies from magazines; baby photos of pupils.

**Introductory Activity : Colour the picture**

**TEACHER SHOWS COLOURED VERSION OF PICTURE TO ALL.**

Q. What is the picture about?  
A. A boy and a girl playing together.

Q. How are the children dressed?  
Q. What kind of clothes do you like to wear?  
A. Elicit responses about home wear and school wear etc.

Q. Why do we wear clothes?  
A. To keep us warm; to make us look good / feel good etc.

Q. What are the children in the picture doing?  
A. They're playing together.


Q. Do girls ever play football?  
A. Of course!

Q. Are there any games you won't join in? Why?  
A. Various answers

Q. Are there such things as boys' games or girls' games?  
A. Not really! Refer to the Olympic games and list common sports

Q. If so, who told you?  
A. ... establish that while ...

*N.B. These questions and possible answers MAY prove useful for exploring the lesson. Infant teachers in the groups may suggest alternatives.*



Tipperary. Perhaps this is what Deputy Bruton had in mind when he made his

statement. This lesson in 'values' is targeted at children in Senior Infants !

## TELLING THE TRUTH

*continued from page 1*

underwrite their campaigns, lobbying and lawsuits with public funds.

Similarly with the great racial totem of multiculturalism, a pious front for attacks on established values, authority, genuine eclecticism, objective norms, and indeed whiteness. Thus, historical narratives or artistic works that do not conform to the new orthodoxies are banished, deconstructed or debunked. Christopher Columbus is treated as a war criminal. Cleopatra is declared black. Babar the Elephant is deemed an assault on the dignity of animals that choose to remain in the jungle.

Cheney reveals how a systematic programme of undermining the very notion of truth itself has furthered the agendas of the "oppressed minorities". She examines the connection between recovered memory and women's studies, and looks at how law students are expected to study not law but the personal experiences of their teachers and classmates. Everything and anything is justified so long as the cause being promoted is a recognized victimology. "Consciousness-raising" which is an Orwellian euphemism

for self-serving propaganda, has replaced study of objective fact and reality with "personal narratives" that depict the victimhood of the oppressed group. Everyone's experience is "equal" to everyone else's (except, of course, that of the duly designated "oppressors"). Anyone who complains about this is acting in a "racist" or "sexist" fashion.

This thinking has seeped into politics, where the new narrative techniques are working assiduously to banish all concepts of objective truth or empiricism, replacing these with a form of politics built on rhetoric or spin whereby reality depends not on facts or the public record but on factors which change with mood or circumstance. This in turn is leading to the growing public cynicism about politics and politicians.

The spectre of relativism that Lynne V. Cheney so eloquently reveals has already swept through Irish society and culture, and indeed is influencing the Irish education system. Some Irish university departments seem to be at the mercy of such agendas, especially in education and the social sciences.

The secondary system has recently come under assault with the imposition of the

Exploring Masculinities programme designed for transition-year boys. While the programme was introduced behind a smokescreen of concern for the welfare of teenage boys – whom suicide figures had revealed as perhaps the most vulnerable group in Irish society – it rapidly becomes clear, leafing through the programme and watching the accompanying video, that Exploring Masculinities was not about making men more aware of their masculinity, but about eliminating all existing and traditional forms of masculinity from coming generations.

In other words, those who suggested themselves as the most likely suspects in the search for the malaise afflicting young males were selected as physicians. This assault on manhood, male values and masculinity is not simply a question of ideological spite. It is central to the requirements of the new power elites in creating new logic and belief systems that will enable them to come to power. It may be convenient now to see this as a mere changing of the guard, but what Lynne Cheney has unraveled in this fine book is the extent to which it will also mean the obliteration of truth, excellence, justice, objectivity and historical fact.