

# NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION DOES ABOUT-FACE

The Catholic League had a problem with the National Education Association (NEA), let them know about it, and got back a letter of apology. We are grateful that there was a happy ending. Here's what happened.

In the August edition of the NEA's newsletter ("NEA NOW!"), there was a cartoon that showed a church sitting atop the rubble of crumbled public schools. Above the door of the church was the inscription, "Public funding of religious schools." Moreover, there was a broken sign reading "Public Education" sitting amidst the rubble, with the following line printed below the cartoon: "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church,..."

One of our courageous members, Mrs. Patricia Stebbins of East Sandwich, Massachusetts, complained to the NEA about the cartoon; she is a retired teacher and a 30 year member of the NEA. In response, she was told that the cartoon was not meant to single out any particular religion. In defense, the letter read, "The cartoonist, in an editorial type statement, uses a symbolic metaphor to make a point, that is, there are some people and organizations who want to appropriate and use public tax dollars to fund sectarian schools."

Our take, conveyed to the NEA, was different. William Donohue wrote saying that the cartoon "strokes the flames of bigotry by suggesting to the reader that it is the goal of religious-based schools, particularly Catholic ones (that is what the reference to Peter means), to crush public education." He then added, "Having spent 20 years as an educator, teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through graduate school, I find it appalling that a serious debate over school choice is caricatured this way."

We are delighted to report that Robert Chase, president of the NEA, wrote a letter of apology to Dr. Donohue pledging never to publish the cartoon again. We thank him for his professional response.

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