



by **Ted Tederoff**

Gleanings From the NLC (National Leadership Conference)

Several AHEA board members had the privilege of attending a home education leadership event with 150 other Canadians. Here are some of the highlights. I'll start with Michael Smith, HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) USA, and his talk on the threats to home education freedoms. Second, during a town hall lunch, provincial leaders discussed some of the challenges and opportunities of home education.

Threats to our Home Education Freedoms

Michael Smith mentioned that there are still places in the USA and Canada that could have more freedoms in terms of home education. (See the update on issues Quebec home educators are facing in this newsletter for an example.) He stated that the key to home education is individualized learning. Institutionalized school is for the average child, which none of us have. The problem is that the state can't do individualized education, only standardized education. This provides some food for thought regarding following public curriculum rather than one best suited for each child.

Michael Smith then discussed the following threats:

I. Complacency / Apathy

Years back many parents home educated out of **conviction** whereas now many do it out of **convenience**. Yet, at some point in the future it may take as much work to keep our current freedoms as it took for pioneering home education parents in the 1980s to attain those freedoms.

II. Natural tendency to get someone else to share the load of home education

For example, some co-ops started at 3 hours per week and end up as a full time private school. And in some programs where the state gets involved, the parent is no longer a teacher but an assistant to a certified state teacher (in Alberta lingo, "facilitator"). If this is what a parent wants, so be it, but is this really home education?

III. Children's Rights Movement

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>), which Canada has ratified but the USA has not, has in it a belief that children's rights trump parental rights. This can potentially pose difficulty such as a judge deciding in favor of a child versus his parents in terms of his choosing public high school education over home education.

IV. Teachers' Unions

Teachers' Unions don't tend to look kindly on home education. Thankfully, though, they are held at bay thanks to the typically good academic scores achieved by home schoolers. (See the link at the end of this article.)

V. View that the primary purpose of schooling is not education but integration into society

One can see in some school circles that the focus is on socialization rather than on education. This seems backwards to me if that socialization is peer based and does not include the development of sound character as a top goal.

VI. Academic Elites

Some of the most "respected" and influential intellectuals on schooling continue to dismiss home education as a viable option..

In answer to these threats, Mr. Smith advises to:

- Strengthen provincial organizations
- Teach freedom to our children
- Work to broaden the home education movement (For example, the more home educated students who attempt to enter various post secondary institutions, the more barriers we can work to pull down).
- Pray for the home education movement as we see the hand of God on it's recent history

Canadian Home Education Leaders' Town Hall

Paul Faris, HSLDA Canada, asked two questions during a luncheon town hall. His questions and some pertinent answers from the group follow.

What are challenges regarding home educating the next generation?

- Take advantage of your schedule to have more real life experiences, such as field trips, as children tend to remember these.
- Going for a virtual school at home model can result in the use of someone else's mandate. This approach can lead to a limitation of parental choice for curriculum
- There's a trend away from choosing home education because we see it taught in the Bible, to doing it as just another educational option.
- Home schooling was previously a conviction and now it's

often just another consumer choice. A good question for each of us to ask is “Would I be willing to go to jail to fight for the freedom to home educate?”

- Realizing that our children are far removed from the pioneers of home education, let's look at what they can offer to society in terms of their technical prowess and business savvy
- We should prepare our children to at times have to go alone with their convictions and at the same time tell them to surround themselves with positive, godly people

What is working well with the younger generation of home schoolers?

- There are many sheep in the growing home education movement, which is good, but there are not enough shepherds. (How's that for a call to get involved with a local support group? – Ted)
- Open up your home's library to fellow parents and students and take advantage of your friends' libraries.
- Moms need each other's fellowship so work to get them together. (I'm sure this applies to fathers too! – Ted)
- A good way to grow the home education movement is to host a home education mother led support group for pre-schoolers where the home educational lifestyle can be seen in action
- Continue to host provincial conventions that focus on vision. Generally people are thankful for being provided vision and motivation more than just hearing about the latest curriculum or academic insights

Closing Comments – Home Educated Grads Score Well and Are Community Focused

I'll leave you with quotes from an article that shows success of home educated graduates in America: “Can Homeschoolers Do Well in College?” (<http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/can-homeschoolers-do-well-in-college/2551/>)

“A new study published in The Journal of College Admission suggests that homeschool students enjoy higher ACT scores, grade point averages and graduation rates compared with other college students.

...Another homeschool study that looked at more than 7,300 adults, who had been homeschooled, determined that the homeschool graduates were more likely to have voted and participated in community service than other adults.”

Referring back to my talk on support groups, someone in my local support group, HSCF (Home School Christian Fellowship), provided this information. If you see a similar article from a Canadian perspective, by all means share it with your support group and with AHEA. Till next time, continue to promote and defend home education.