

Pedophiles Don't Belong in Classroom

By Arnold Beichman

Suppose a tenured teacher in a New York high school was in his private life a leader of, say, "the Union for White Supremacy in America."

Suppose this teacher's name appeared as editor on the masthead of the "UWSIA" newsletter, which propagandized racist doctrines against blacks, especially South African blacks. And suppose, for good measure, the newsletter also called the Holocaust a hoax and praised Adolf Hitler.

Suppose parents, white and black, complained to the authorities that they were troubled about an avowed racist teaching their children. Suppose that the authorities, in defense of the teacher, told the parents that in his 31 years as a teacher he hadn't uttered a word of calumny in the classroom against blacks or Jews.

There is no constitutional right to a job as a teacher, any more than a longtime drug addict could successfully claim a constitutional right to work behind a pharmacy counter or a necrophiliac in a funeral home.

What should be done with such a teacher? You might ask what the *New York Times* editorial page, a moral beacon, would recommend?

Well, the *Times* editors have just wrestled with a moral issue of some significance: Should the Board of Education fire Peter Melzer, a physics teacher at the Bronx High School of Science? No, Melzer is not a racist. He is an open and avowed pedophile and is a leader of the North American Man/Boy Love Association, or NAM-

BLA. The organization's magazine, which Melzer edits, has included articles on how to seduce young boys.

The *Times* editorial on Oct. 9, "The Case of the Pedophile Teacher," defended Melzer's right to his teaching job because there "is no evidence whatever that he poses any danger, sexual or otherwise, to his students. . . . Thus moves by the New York City Board of Education to dismiss him for these articles raise troubling issues of free speech and civil rights." For the moment, Melzer is not teaching. He has been assigned to a desk job until a disciplinary panel hears the case. "The idea of returning Mr. Melzer to the classroom troubles us," said the *Times*. "But the idea of dismissing a tenured teacher with an apparently sound record because of views expressed outside the classroom troubles us more."

While Melzer may have a constitutional right to disseminate his views, however abhorrent they may be, there is no constitutional right to a job as a teacher, any more than a longtime drug addict could successfully claim a constitutional right to work behind a pharmacy counter or a necrophiliac in a funeral home. Would Max Frankel, the *Times's* executive editor, hire as a reporter a known pedophile who as a sideline was also editing under his own name a pedophile newsletter? He certainly wouldn't tolerate a racist — why then immunity for a pedophile?

There are certain jobs in which personal character must be considered. Are not character and fitness prerequisites for becoming and remaining a lawyer or a doctor? Are all views equal and therefore deserving of equal protection under the Bill of Rights? Would the *Times* editors defend the right of a racist teacher, as described in my first paragraph scenario, to teach in the tinderbox known as the New York school system?

In the October issue of *Reader's Digest*, there appears a special report by Paul Ehrlich titled "Asia's Shocking Secret." I recommend that the editors of the *Times* read it and then ask themselves why the members of their foreign staff have never published a line about the victims of "sex tourism" in Burma, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, where the child-sex industry thrives. According to the report, NAMBLA is "the most visible and influential group" among pedophile organizations.

The *New York Times* has run innumerable stories about sex abuse of children. These are crimes. Is there not some character flaw in a pedophile teacher who flaunts his vice and seeks repeal of all laws against pedophilia even though he supposedly has kept his predatory paws off the students in his classes? Should such a man be allowed to teach in any school, public or private?

Arnold Beichman, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, is a columnist for the Washington Times.