

ANTI-MEETING ON EDUCATION

Athens, Pandio University

Saturday March 1st, Sunday March 2nd 2003

A united manifesto of all Federations of Greek Teachers

As it is already known, the non formal conference of the EU Ministers of Education is held on March 1st and 2nd. Given this opportunity, the federations of all grades of education (primary, secondary and university education) DOE (federation of primary school teachers), OLME (federation of secondary school teachers), POSDEP (federation of university professors), OSEP- TEI (federation of polytechnic professors) as well as ASGME (the supreme federation of students' parents in Greece) are co-organizing a Panhellenic Rally on Friday, 28-11-03 at 13:00 am in Syntagma Square, as well as an “ Anti-meeting on Education”, having as a slogan “ Education above all profits”. The “Anti-meeting” will be held in Pandio University, in Athens, on Saturday, March 1st (afternoon) and on Sunday, March 2nd (morning). Representatives of social movements, students, pupils and citizens interested in education have been invited to participate.

We have decided to take that initiative in order to express our will to react against the continuous, extending under grading of education offered today and to defend Public Education in all means. Our common link is our total opposition to the educational policy of “market”, promoted by the EU, a policy that is subverting the future of our society, a policy that cannot, however, undermine our will to cancel it!

We refuse to support a kind of education that follows the politics focusing on the needs and aims of an economic oligarchy hidden behind a deceitful democratic- progressive updating. Education is now officially, following the congress of Worldwide Trade Organization in Katar, being characterized as merchandise and its basic sections, given to private initiative, are considered as simple services.

We oppose to the commercialization of education, as it is actively becoming a part of the attack against the public character of goods and services offered to the citizens of all nations. We oppose to it as it undermines the public nature of education which is a result of long lasting democratic and social fights.

We condemn the cutback of public expenses on education, which restrains its accessibility, encourages rank barriers and leads all educational institutions to compete on attracting customers. Our aim is to express our deep opposition to the particular central guidelines of the educational policy of the EU, serving the above mentioned policy in education. This policy has as a main focus to convert education into training in international companies, in other words to help its submission to the aims of the economic oligarchy.

We are taking this action to express our decision on irreconcilable fight against neo-liberal globalization and war. We are taking this action to prove that a different world and a different kind of education, creative and democratic, are feasible.

Education is a right for all and not a privilege for the few. We fight for an education that will provide the means (cognitive and educational) for the total understanding of our social being and their critical and creative intervention to it. An education that will form active citizens, able to oppose and to fight against the commercialization of human value. We want an education that will cultivate the conscious involvement in politics, the spirit of collectiveness, and the approval of difference that will help the full-scale development of humans and will form a culture of everyday civilization.

The politics followed by the Greek Ministry of Education is in complete accordance with the politics of the EU. The government, instead of working on the radical confrontation and solution of educational problems, is aiming at the handling of the crisis in education. In Greece, 10,000 students quit obligatory education (most of them come from poor and fringe social groups). The percentage of illiteracy is growing among the children of the unemployed, the immigrants and the socially excluded, confirming thus the negative social dimension of the educational policy. The number of students attending Lyceum has fallen into half, particularly among the financially weak classes; while for those who are still at school TEE (technical lyceums) seem to be the solution, where, unfortunately, the necessary education and training is not offered.

The “unified” Lyceum is actually an exam center for a “free access” to Universities, while university education is being gradually transformed in vocational training leading to a seemingly vocational rehabilitation. By blaming the universities for the unemployment the Ministry of Education is hiding its real financial and social causes. Actually, it is transforming AEI (Universities) and TEI (Polytechnics) in mechanisms producing trained employees to cover the needs of the market. The text published by the Greek University of Education is confirming the priority given to fragmentary knowledge and skills that have to do with the market. The predominance of technocracy on education, which transforms all references to the social values of democracy to simple decoration, can be clearly detected in that passage. The true content of that policy is revealed when the general aims change into certain policies: the emphasis is given on the evaluation and the inspection of teachers and the submission of education to the needs of “market” through the supposed exploitation of new technology. The social values, which are misleading, are downgraded to social skills useful for the organization of production, just because the total educational process is downgraded to the current needs of the “market”. The centralized, bureaucratic and authoritarian policies of the Greek Ministry of Education are excluding all the federations of teachers, students and parents. A place for the educational federations is nowhere to be found in the programming of the Greek Presidency. The young are also treated under the same authoritarian scope.

We have a different vision both for education and society. We demand free, public education for all grades, free of discrimination and exclusions.

We demand a totally alternative approach, embodying a total change in education. Our answer includes unity of the labor forces, unity of material and cultural creativity and their activation towards social development, equality and justice, security of human rights, peace and collaboration of nations.

The main target of the reform we fight for is unified, obligatory 12-year education highly upgraded, being a public offer for all citizens, free of discrimination and exclusions, a kind of education that will turn difference into an advantage and an opportunity for cultural enrichment and creativity.

We demand:

- Essential and decisive reform of public, free education.
- A rise on the amount spent on education from 3, 5% at least to 5% on the GNP (15% on the national budget) and on survey from 0, 6% to 1, 5% on the GNP.
- A halt in the implementation of the “market” policies, leading to a university working as a company and to a school working as a company.
- A halt in the implementation of a neo-liberal approach to education, as expressed during the Bologna congress and the ones following it. We want a four-year course of studies to secure the academic function of the universities.
- Scientific, financial and professional support of teachers.
- To promote and institute a course of 12-year, obligatory education (plus 2 years of pre school education) and to secure its autonomous and educational status.
- General education and work for all.

We invite all teachers, parents, pupils, university students, social bodies and all citizens to participate in:

- The Pan-Educational rally in Syntagma, Athens on February 28th at 13.00.
- The anti-meeting that will take place in Pandio University in Athens, on Saturday, March 1st (afternoon) and on Sunday, March 2nd (morning).