

# Uses and Abuses

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

Muslim activists have been exerting pressure within state schools in Birmingham UK to Islamize them by firing or sidelining uncooperative staff, segregating and discriminating against non-Muslim pupils, removing parts and whole subjects of the state curriculum that they deem offensive, and inviting al-Qaeda members and jihadi imams to speak.

According to [the UK Daily Telegraph, April 2014](#):

“At least six schools are implicated in the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ plot by extremists to ‘Islamise’ secular state education. . . .senior sources at the Department for Education say they have established an ‘overlapping web of connections’ in the schools affected, with a ‘driving force which appears to be explicitly Islamist. . . .The report said girls at Park View and Golden Hillock were made to sit at the back of the class; some Christian pupils at Golden Hillock were left to ‘teach themselves’ and at Park View a supporter of al-Qaeda was invited to speak at assembly. Aspects of the GCSE curriculum were ignored as un-Islamic, even though needed by pupils for exams.”

Respected and successful head teachers who resist the moves are either sacked or marginalized. Government inspectors are, at a further nine schools in the city where the attempted Islamic takeover is less advanced, or where secular head teachers are trying to resist it.

The article continues:

“Michael Gove, the Education Secretary last week controversially appointed Peter Clarke, the former head of counter-terrorism at Scotland Yard, to investigate the issue. Ministers and DIE officials were understood to be frustrated at what one senior figure called ‘the willful attempt at every stage to minimise what is happening’ by local Muslim leaders in Birmingham.”

According to another article in the Telegraph, on May 2, says the problem has now extended to 17 other schools in Birmingham, Bradford, London, and Manchester. In other words, this is now a veritable epidemic that the government has been warned about for ages and which it is only responding to now, when it is probably too late. This is precisely the problem that Tony Blair had the courage to raise and was excoriated for only last month.

But this attitude of undermining the state is a Jewish problem too, although we do not try to change the rules for everyone else, only for ourselves. In

Antwerp, London, and Manchester, state-aided Orthodox schools are also refusing to teach government curricula which include subjects and values they do not approve of, and the governments are loathe to do much about it. It is true that we Jews do not preach jihad or try to impose our values on non-Jews. But still, the principle of taking money from the state and then undermining or ignoring it is a common thread. It is uncommon in Israel and in the United States too mainly in very religious communities who have often been found guilty of misusing government funds as well as circumventing curricular demands.

On the other hand completely spurious charges have been made against the ultra-orthodox by non-Jews and liberal Jews alike. There has been a lot of publicity in the USA because the school board of the East Ramapo Central School District in Spring Valley, a heavily Charedi area in New York, is run primarily by Charedi Jews. About 20,000 Jewish children in the area go to non-state schools which get certain types of non-denominational aid and subsidies, while the remaining 8,100 children face reduced state and federal funding for their State schools as the number of students declines. In addition, it is claimed that redundant state school buildings have been sold to independent Jewish schools below the market price.

The school board says it is merely carrying out state policy and using state criteria for valuing state property. Cuts in state funding for education are the fault of Governor Cuomo, not the school board. They have been operating legally, and even the district superintendent says the issue has nothing to do with the religion of the board members. There has been no charge of illegality.

However, both in Britain and, to a much lesser extent, in the USA, government policy has increasingly been to encourage schools to either opt out of the state system or for academies (charter schools, in America) to offer an alternative. Particularly in failing districts where the poorer and disadvantaged population get the worst education instead of more help, charters and academies are often seen as ways of offering a better alternative. In the USA, where private education is prohibitively expensive, charter schools set up by Jewish interests offer a sort of way out socially, but they cannot teach religion, for that would contravene the First Amendment which in effect separates of state and religion.

In Britain, Tristram Hunt, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, has said Mr Gove's policies of encouraging academies and allowing schools to take more responsibility for their own affairs is to blame, because there is much less government control over the curriculum and the policies of the schools once they have left the mainstream.

The threat posed by extremists taking over schools is of course far more worrying and potentially disastrous than Charedi schools refusing to teach evolution or secular studies altogether. Trying to manipulate one system that exists to help you and replace it with a dangerous ideology is altogether different. There is nothing wrong with taking advantage of benefits, subsidies, or support from the state, so long as you abide by its conditions. But the immorality of taking advantage of the state and then undermining it

remains the same. As with welfare, the state should get its act together, protect its values, and stop abuse. If citizens or residents do not like government educational policy, they can try to set up their own schools. Or as a recent case of refugees from Germany who wanted to homeschool in contravention of state policy, they can always try to move somewhere else.