‘Questions... but only soft answers’

Cult schools: parents seek a bigger say

From The Standard of June 9.
PARENTS of pupils at three London independent schools which The Standard have exposed as run by a secretive religious cult last night had an opportunity to hear teaching staff answer criticism.

The majority of parents are members of the cult—called the School of Economic Science—but a quarter have no connection with it. Many of this group were unaware of the connection.

Some of the parents are considering taking their children away from the schools after attending the meeting and listening to the head teachers’ answers to questions.

More than 500 parents at the meeting in Kensington heard principal teachers from all schools defend their orthodox teaching methods—which include strict discipline and meditation—and their discipleship.

There were delays at some schools. In one case, a student who did not know they were small children in the primary school were beaten with rulers. A Standard investigation last year revealed that St James School for Boys, St James School for Girls and St Vedast School for Girls, based at premises in Queen’s Gate, Kensington and Chepstow Villas, Notting Hill Gate, are all part of the School of Economic Science.

Mystic

The School of Economic Science has been condemned by several prominent churchmen, including the Bishop of Woolwich, after claims that some had suffering mental and marital problems. It is said this year by the Dean of St Albans.

The SSES preaches a mixture of theosophy—drawing much of its guidance from a Hindu mystic—and theosophy—drawing much of its guidance from a Hindu mystic. It is said this year by the Dean of St Albans.

Once past the initial stage, adults are given a set of strict guidelines about the way they live their lives. They must show obedience to their superiors in the movement and seek permission for major decisions in their lives— including child bearing and change of job.

Many of the parents at the three schools—and a fourth, St Vedast School for Girls, in West Hampstead, where parents meet tonight—and the two boys are said to be happy with their report and are having a chance to talk to the head teachers.

REPORT by Peter Hounam, Andrew Hogg and Colin Adamson

Backings for the SES teachers

MR DAVID BODDY, currently a press spokesman for the School of Economic Science and a parent of children at the day schools, strongly defended them.

"I do not send my children to these schools," he said, "and I know nothing about them. I do not even know if they are good."

Surprise

Mrs Arnold accused The Standard of being "sensationalistic.

The rush of complaints on corporal punishment is timed to exploit the parents who have been attacked by a young mother near the front of the audience.

She said: "I was shocked when my son, who is only five years old, told me he was struck on the hands with a ruler by his teacher."

A denial from the headmaster of St James School for Boys, Mr Nicholas Debenham, that any form of punishment was greater than a slap on the hands was ever imposed by his teachers on juniors failed to placate the mother.

Corresponding to the PTA suggestion, school master Mr Bernard Sanderson of St James School in Kensington, said that there was no more of a surprise to the PTA than any other thing, as that would be a very good thing."

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