

Synopsis of a speech given by:

THOMAS HOGAN

Board of Education Supervisor for Non-Public Schools, State of New York

Keynote speaker at an event organized and completely paid for by:

THE FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOOL, Hancock, New York

Event held at: Bombay Palace Restaurant, NYC

February 24, 2010

Hogan began the speech by outlining how the school chartering procedure for New York State works. He noted that Alexander Hamilton, the author of the Federalist Papers, initiated the idea of school charters in America. He implied that he, and he alone, had the authority to give out Regent's Charters for non-public schools in New York State. He kept using the words "I" and "me" when discussing the hows and whys of the State Regent's Chartering system. He said that he alone made the decisions about which schools were granted a Charter by the Board of Regents, and he alone could take these Charters away.

Hogan said that he has known the Argiros family for many years. He specifically mentioned his deep friendship and admiration for Betty and Tony Agiros, the founders of FFS. He also mentioned Mike Agiros, current FFS administrator, by name. He noted that he was familiar with FFS, or The Family as it was known as during the 1970s and 80s, before they were officially granted a Regent's Charter.

He said that in his job, he is in charge of about 2000 non-public schools in NYS. This group includes many religious-based schools. He has to visit all of them occasionally as part of his job. He has visited FFS on at least several occasions and specifically spoke of two visits. On one visit he had a lunch meeting with some students, and then principal Robin Ducey. A second time, he attended a commencement exercise. He also mentioned being present at some sort of musical performance. Each time he visited, the students 'astonished' him. He mentioned several times that he was impressed at how neatly they were dressed. He seemed very impressed by the neat, controlled atmosphere at FFS; this was reflected in the students' dress.

Hogan acknowledged that he was at least familiar with The Truth Campaign, but did not elaborate. He very quickly mentioned it by name (sort of) and described it as "that FFS TC or BC, or whatever". He dismissed our campaign as "cyberspace" and encouraged the audience to do so as well. Hogan went on to say that "cyberspace" is not the real story at FFS. He said he knows the real story, as he has been at the school and seen the students and witnessed their "astonishing" transformations. He recalled that at one event, maybe the musical event, he saw tears streaming down parent's faces in the audience as they were so moved by the supposed complete transformation of their children.

Hogan mentioned Congressman Miller, the Chairman of the Education and Labor

Committee, who has supported Federal legislation and introduced a Bill into Congress to properly regulate therapeutic boarding schools and the like. Hogan dismissed Miller's efforts as a "personal crusade."

Hogan repeatedly stated that he had the power to both grant and take away a Regent's Charter for a school. He recalled that in "the 1980s", the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) as well as a State agency that advocates for youth with disabilities contacted him. Hogan was asked by these agencies to 'join together to shut this place (FFS) down.' He told OASAS that they had no "authority to take away a school's Charter". He said that very recently he was again approached by OASAS, and asked the same question he was asked in the 1980s: 'Will you join us in shutting that place (FFS) down?' He said he responded the same way he did the first time they asked: "You have no authority to take away this school's Charter". It was unclear to us why OASAS approached the Board of Education about closing down FFS. Hogan only said he was approached and asked to join forces, but did not give a reason. Listening to the evangelical tenor of this part of Hogan's speech, we have to think that OASAS was really pressing him to cooperate and he has been steadfastly refusing to do so for about 25 years now. He then clearly stated his opinion on the possibility of FFS being shut down by other State agencies, he said:

'As long as I am (supervisor?), I do not see this happening.'

Hogan then went on to tell the story of another therapeutic boarding school in NYS that was closed down about 3 years ago. He did not mention the school by name, but we know that he was referring to the Academy at Ivy Ridge, another NATSAP member. Hogan said that he was called by certain State agencies to investigate Ivy Ridge. The "school" had been handing out regent's diplomas when they did not have a State Regent's charter to do so. Hogan said that in that case, he was happy to cooperate with State agencies that were investigating Ivy Ridge because he sensed that there was real wrongdoing. We know that Ivy Ridge was investigated by the Attorney General Office and closed down. Hogan said that the high school credits and diplomas handed out at Ivy Ridge would not be accepted at any other NYS high school or at any college. He said that FFS does have a Regent's Charter and FFS credits would be accepted at any high school or college.

Hogan told parents how important it was to write down their positive stories about FFS. He gave out very specific instructions on how to do this and exactly what to write. It was unclear to us exactly why he was encouraging parents to do this. Was he going to gather them at the end of the evening? Were they just for FFS to use for marketing purposes? Was Hogan going to use this material to strengthen his case in the event that the pressure by OASAS to close down FFS persisted?

Hogan ended the speech by saying that there is 'only one' FFS in all of New York State.

He praised the school, its administrators and the “program” taught there. He proudly acknowledged that FFS figured out how to ‘put square pegs into round holes’ and that is a great thing.