

# Policy Analysis

## Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 53: Contradictions of Centralized Education

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### Executive Summary

In 1901, the College Entrance Examination Board did something it would not dare to do today. It recommended a list of specific books, by authors ranging from Shakespeare to Longfellow, that every prospective college freshman should have read.[1]

The most striking thing about the list was the fact that it was published at a time when every serious educational decision was made at the local level. Paradoxically, an almost "Balkanized" educational system--with finance and governance dispersed among more than 100,000 local school districts--produced through example and commitment what amounted to a de facto core national curriculum.

Since 1901 more than 80 percent of these local districts have disappeared, and the rest have seen their powers chipped away by judges and state and federal agencies. But the more the structure of education has been centralized, the more fragmented its content has become. Today's schoolwork, with courses on science fiction and bachelor living, is sometimes indistinguishable from popular entertainment.

This paradox--centralization of form with fragmentation of substance--bears profound lessons for today's education reformers.

Ignoring those who use "reform" merely as a slogan for bigger budgets, there are two groups of reformers who deserve to be taken seriously. One might be called the "neopluralists"; the other, the "neocentralists." These two groups agree on many things, including the proposition that a "rising tide of mediocrity" has engulfed the public schools. But they differ dramatically in their proposed solutions.

Neopluralists believe that most of what we now call "education policy" ought to be made by parents, teachers, and principals in daily contact with real children. Their tools of choice are vouchers, tuition tax credits, and "alternative" public schools. Not surprisingly, these reformers are hard to find in places like the U.S. Department of Education. Their leading spokesmen include Professor Stephen Arons, author of a brilliant theoretical critique of monopoly schooling,[2] and former teacher Joe Nathan, who is now promoting a controversial voucher proposal in Minnesota.[3]

Neocentralists, by contrast, are deeply embedded in the existing power structure. Despite its pathetic record, they believe that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this structure--that it only needs to be controlled by the right people. In fact, they want to make it even more centralized: their tool of choice is the "comprehensive" state reform plan, usually in the form of a detailed, lengthy statute enacted by the state legislature. Their leading spokesmen include American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker and California state school superintendent Bill Honig.

### The Rule of the Education Commissions

The neocentralists have won most of the battles of the last two years. In 1983 they seized the initiative with a half-dozen major official and quasi-official commissions, dominated by such neocentralist leaders as North Carolina governor James Hunt and then-secretary of education Terrel Bell.[4] These commissions captured the attention of the media and the imagination of the general public by admitting something that the education establishment had never admitted before: American public education is in sad shape. This admission, coming from such bodies as the Education Commission of the States, which had spent the previous decade pretending that the schools were good and getting better, gave the neocentralists instant and unprecedented credibility. They put this new credibility to good use, combining the rhetoric of reform with the substance of the status quo.

The neocentralist commissions were careful to avoid almost all lines of inquiry that might jeopardize the vested interests of the education establishment. For example, they refrained from asking the obvious question, why? Why did SAT scores decline steadily from 1963 to 1980, after rising for most of the previous decade? Why did the decline coincide with the fastest growth in government spending on education that the nation had ever seen, with the birth of dozens of new federal education programs under President Johnson's Great Society, and with the spread of teacher strikes and other forms of union militancy?[5] The neocentralists displayed a remarkable lack of curiosity about these questions. It was as if a doctor had proceeded directly from listing symptoms to prescribing remedies, without ever actually diagnosing the disease.[6]

The neocentralists were equally careful to omit any discussion of institutional structure. They simply assumed that matters of structure had no effect on policy or performance-- that the centralization of educational finance and governance and the simultaneous collapse of educational quality were entirely coincidental. The neocentralist commissions thus did more than any statement by the National Education Association or the American Federation of Teachers to slow down the realization of two of President Reagan's key campaign pledges: tuition tax credits and the abolition of the Department of Education. They took the steam out of the drive for parental choice in education precisely during the crucial period when the administration's tuition tax credit bill was moving toward the Senate floor.[7]

## **Is This Reform?**

The commissions' reports set the stage for a burst of education "reform" initiatives in 1983 and 1984. But interestingly, almost none of this activity took place in Washington. Rhetoric aside, the major legislation originating from the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Education Subcommittee during this period was no different from that enacted at the dawn of the Johnson administration: set-asides for favored pressure groups, like the research labs and centers of the National Institute of Education;[8] protection of demonstrably harmful programs, like bilingual education;[9] and increased porkbarrel funding, like that for the impact aid program.[10] The committees even used "reform" to justify whittling away at the Reagan administration's one tangible legislative achievement in education, the 1981 consolidation of funding for about 30 separate Department of Education programs into a single block grant.

During this period, I formulated a question designed to test the seriousness of any Washington policymaker who claimed to be a "reformer." That question was: "Out of the 120 separate programs in the U.S. Department of Education, can you name just one that you think is unsuccessful and should therefore be cut?" Between September 1983 and February 1985, I posed this question in various public forums to one of Secretary Bell's top aides, to a Carter holdover on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, to the chief Washington lobbyist of the National Education Association, and to a Democratic member of the House Education and Labor Committee.[11] Not one of them could name a single program. If they are right, the Department of Education is the most successful institution in the history of government.

In contrast to Washington, most of the state governments launched vigorous efforts for "reform" during this period. With few exceptions, these efforts reflected the neocentralist assumption that reform means a lot of little changes, not a few big changes. More than 250 state task forces sprang up,[12] which for the most part embraced the agenda of the Commission for Excellence and its partners. Six states--Arkansas, California, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas--enacted "comprehensive" reform bills along these lines, and these states were widely hailed as setting the pace for others to follow.

On the first anniversary of the Excellence Commission report, the Department of Education issued a euphoric progress report, declaring that "the response to the announcement that American education is in trouble has been nothing short of extraordinary."<sup>[13]</sup> Even by the Excellence Commission's own standards, however, such praise was undeserved. Consider the commission's most widely publicized reform proposal: merit pay for teachers.

If "merit pay" means anything at all, it means that superior teachers get higher pay than mediocre teachers. It does not mean that teachers who work 45 hours a week get higher pay than teachers who work 40 hours a week: that is called "overtime." It does not mean that teachers who accept non-teaching assignments get higher pay than teachers who do nothing but teach: that is just paying administrators more than teachers. By definition, merit pay rewards teachers not according to the amount or type of work they do, but according to the quality of their performance. As the Council for Basic Education puts it, merit pay is "any program in which some teachers get more pay than others as a result of a conscious judgment that they are more competent."

The 1983 commissions accepted that definition. The Excellence Commission urged that teacher pay be "performancebased . . . so that superior teachers can be rewarded." The task force of the Education Commission of the States urged "extraordinary rewards for extraordinary teachers . . . not just for reaching the upper levels of seniority, but for reaching the upper levels of competence and effectiveness as well."<sup>[14]</sup>

If any of the neocentralist commissions' proposals should have taken the nation by storm, it should have been that one. President Reagan made it the centerpiece of his response to the commissions, highlighting it in speech after speech in the spring and summer of 1983. Three of the Democratic presidential candidates embraced the concept, along with the National Governors Association. Polls showed that both teachers and the general public favored the idea by margins of about 2 to 1.<sup>[15]</sup>

But what happened next was a brilliant exercise in damage control by the education establishment. Every one of the six "comprehensive" state reform bills enacted in 1983 and 1984 included a provision labeled "merit pay." But only one, Tennessee's, really deserved that label, and even that was severely diluted. More typical was California's, which created a new category of "mentor teachers." These teachers would get \$4,000 pay bonuses and would be relieved of up to 40 percent of the time they previously spent teaching children. They would spend that time on such activities as giving "assistance and guidance to new teachers."

California's neocentralist policymakers made it unmistakably clear that quantity, not quality, would continue to be the key to teacher pay. After the legislature passed the bill, the chairman of the State Education Committee said, "I'm uncomfortable with saying we're going to pay someone more than another teacher who is doing the same thing." The state school superintendent said, "The prototype is the football coach or drama coach. We pay them more to take on extra work."

In essence, what these six states did was to attach the image of merit pay to the reality of across-the-board pay raises for all teachers, regardless of merit. Like "bait and switch" con artists, neocentralist "reformers" tapped into popular sentiment for reform to lure more dollars into structures that had already failed. In California, for example, they succeeded in raising state spending on the schools by \$468.5 million, of which a mere \$10.5 million was earmarked for a provision that can be called "merit pay" only if the term is meaningless.<sup>[16]</sup>

Other "reforms" enacted by these six states were more faithful to the neocentralist commissions' proposals. But the more closely one examines these reforms, the more one is forced to conclude that the proposals themselves were inadequate.

All six, for example, acted to "increase high school graduation requirements." But the essence of these new "requirements" is not depth of knowledge or quality of understanding, but the amount of time spent accumulating course credits. Unlike the 1901 recommendations of the College Board, such mechanistic requirements avoid the hard questions about the content of these courses. For example, they allow the contemporary "social studies" curriculum, with its emphasis on trendy ephemera, to continue usurping the place that was once and should still be held by solid history courses.

All six states created new training programs for educators, but only one took a few tiny steps toward lifting the

regulatory barriers against liberal-arts graduates, the most talented pool of would-be teachers. The others continue to enforce rules under which the only way to become a public-school teacher is to take stultifying education methods courses, the enrollees of which have lower SAT scores than any other group except clerical and vocational students. The best private schools, by contrast, recruit teachers who have spent their college years mastering the subjects they plan to teach. There is no reason public schools could not do likewise--no reason except special-interest lobbying.[17]

The six "reformist" states created plenty of new programs, activities, and institutions as part of their campaign, but none abolished any existing education program or institution. This omission is one of their most serious failings, for it suggests that the sine qua non of genuine reform is missing: willpower.

It takes a real effort of will for government agencies merely to identify programs that do not work, much less get rid of them. But the older an agency gets, the more deadweight it has probably accumulated. Since World War II--and especially during the 1960s and 1970s--the public schools have built up layer upon layer of specialized programs: driver education, consumer education, ethnic education, women's education, environmental education. Most of these so-called educations have long outlived the fads that gave them birth. Every one of them takes resources away from the core academic disciplines, which if properly taught give students the tools and motivation to master other subjects on their own. By continuing to tolerate these marginal activities, neocentralist reformers squander the most precious resource of all: time.

They also create an artificial need for bigger budgets. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to conclude that the most important practical effect of the six states' "reform" plans is higher spending. In the aggregate, these six state governments will now be spending about \$3 billion a year more on their public schools, over and above increases in local spending. Five of the six enacted substantial tax hikes to provide for this new spending. If all other states were to enact similar plans, the total new burden on taxpayers would be more than \$12 billion, or the equivalent of tripling the elementary-secondary component of the Department of Education.[18]

The second most important consequence of the recent "reforms" is increased centralization. For better or worse, each of the changes described above puts state officials in the position of setting policies on curricula or personnel, which local officials are supposed to implement. Important though it is, this development is not at all novel: it is merely a continuation of a strikingly consistent trend more than 20 years old.[19]

In 1960, the average local school district received 39.1 percent of its revenues from the state government. By 1980, this figure had grown to 46.8 percent; it now stands at 48.5 percent.[20] This shift in funding patterns has been accompanied by an even more dramatic shift in power. The federal education programs enacted in the mid-1960s gave state education agencies the resources to triple and even quintuple their staffs, as well as the leverage to attach more and more detailed conditions to both state and federal subsidies.[21] The movements of the 1970s for school finance "reform" and for increasingly detailed civil rights regulations gave the state governments even more opportunities to shape local decisions.

## **The Pursuit of Excellence**

Ironically, the reasons given for centralization in the 1960s and 1970s were quite different from the goals of today's neocentralists. Policymakers, it was said, had to use the schools as frontline weapons in the wars on poverty and racial segregation. It was said that more centralized powers were needed because the schools were shortchanging the poorest and lowest-achieving children.

Today's neocentralists say that more centralized powers are needed because the schools are shortchanging the gifted and talented. For the first time, they want state governments to take explicit responsibility for the quality of local educational services. Previously, centralized mandates and prohibitions were issued in the name of "equality"; now they are issued in the name of "excellence." But what neocentralists fail to see is that their model of governance, whether in pursuit of excellence or equality, violates almost everything we know about effective schools.

There has been a great deal of research during the last 15 years on what makes effective schools effective. Researchers started by pinpointing a few schools that have produced unusually impressive results, as measured by such objective standards as test scores. They then tried to isolate the special characteristics that these unusually successful schools

have in common with each other--and not with the run-of-the-mill schools. Researchers applied this technique to schools of all kinds-- urban and rural, public and private, middle-income and lowerincome.

The findings show that schools do make a difference. Contrary to what some social scientists thought in the early 1970s, a child's destiny in schooling--and in life--is not predetermined by the socioeconomic status of his parents. And it turns out that the things that set effective schools apart are not their student-teacher ratios, the size of their budgets, the number of books in their libraries, or other quantifiable factors. On the contrary, it is some of the more intangible or qualitative attributes of a school that seem to matter most: strong leadership from the principal, a sense of teamwork among the teachers, an atmosphere of shared values and commitment to common goals, and so on. Researchers struggling to sum up these attributes find themselves borrowing terms from Greek and German: *ethos*, *gemeinschaft*. These could almost be translated as "school spirit" if that term were not hopelessly weakened by images of cheerleaders and sock hops.

Effective schools manage to bring something of the same solidarity and sense of mission to academic activities that many other schools bring to athletics. They are not places of anonymity and impersonality, but genuine communities where teachers really get to know each other and their students. They welcome contact with parents, and they make sure that parents know whom to hold responsible for decisions. Not surprisingly, they are somewhat more likely to have small student bodies than are ineffective schools.

The findings, therefore, have populist implications: they suggest that the qualities a school should have are pretty much those that are valued by the average working-class or middle-class parent. It turns out that education reform is not something that a few heroic leaders have to force down the throats of the unenlightened masses, but something that ordinary people are eager to find on their own. Indeed, one of the more delightful ironies of contemporary American education is that the masses are more "elitist"--in the sense of wanting to establish and enforce high standards of character and intellect--than the professionals.

But although these findings tell us what to look for, they do not tell us how to create it. We have not yet found any formula for turning an ineffective school into an effective one--much less for mass-producing thousands of such schools from one centralized agency. It seems that one of the best ways to get an effective school is to find an effective principal; but nobody has perfected a technique for mass-producing them, either. To put it in social-science jargon, effective schools are "loosely coupled systems"; they cannot be run like assembly lines.[22] Thus, policymakers who try to impose educational change from the top down usually produce only frustration--not just for themselves, but for precisely those educators at the local level who are the most competent. Equally frustrated are parents looking for decision makers to hold account- able, for in today's super-centralized school systems, the buck stops nowhere.

Neocentralists, however, claim that the alternative is even worse. They argue that decentralization would be fatal to cultural literacy, a goal they share with most neopluralists. Both groups agree that there is a core of learning, beyond the mechanical skills of reading and writing, that should be transmitted to every educated person. They agree that Shakespeare is part of this core, that Stephen King is not, and that too many schools have surrendered to the kind of relativism that jeopardizes the very idea of a common cultural heritage. The neocentralists fear that individual schools, without standards set by society as a whole, will dart off in a hundred eccentric directions.

The trouble with this argument is that it fails to distinguish between "society" and "government." Our literary heritage, like most things worth preserving, is a social product. It took only one solitary genius to write "Paradise Lost," but the accumulated judgments of a thousand non-geniuses to certify it as part of the canon of great English verse. And just as Milton did not need a government agency to help him write that poem,[23] later generations did not need government help to judge it. The republic of letters has laws and leaders of its own, and its verdicts ultimately prevail even over the opposition of government. Witness Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Our society has hundreds of non-government organs to make and enforce judgments about what students should know. The most influential include the College Board, the American College Testing program, and the undergraduate admissions offices of Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. If only a few of these were to revive the admirable old practice of listing specific books for prospective college students, high schools would stumble all over each other in the rush to adapt.

Neocentralists, of course, claim that this can never happen without prodding from the government. But that tacitly assumes the Department of Education and its clones in the state capitals to be more attuned to excellence than the private sector. Four years ago I would have considered this assumption merely arbitrary; now that I have actually worked for the department, I find it ludicrous.

Besides, letting government tell children what books to read comes uncomfortably close to thought control. Neocentralists try to avoid this problem by being absolutist about culture and relativist about morality and religion. But culture and religion are not so easy to separate. Our culture is what it is in large part because it was built by Christians, not Hindus or Moslems. Value-free schools, like value-free cultures, are not only impossible but undesirable. The mere attempt to create such schools has given us the blandest, most boring textbooks in the history of formal education.[24]

## **The Neopluralist Alternative**

Some neocentralists are willing to speak of values, but usually only the lowest-common-denominator values of such groups as the Boy Scouts. Talk of unfashionable or controversial values, like chastity or piety, tends to make them blush and change the subject. But millions of parents want to raise their children in environments that celebrate and sustain various unfashionable values. Neocentralists therefore have three choices: let old-fashioned families impose their values on everybody else; let others impose a different set of values on old-fashioned families; or convert to the neopluralist model.

That model has its own paradox: moral and religious absolutism (at least on the part of many of its advocates), but with tolerance. Neopluralists are passionately devoted to their own convictions, but equally passionate in their refusal to use government to proselytize others. Not all Christians are neopluralists; some persist in the hopeless delusion that they can restore the Protestant statism of the nineteenth century. But the more realistic--and more charitable--Christians support parental rights in education for all Americans, not just for themselves. Similarly, not all neopluralists are Christians. Many are not in the least sympathetic to Christian doctrines, but militantly defend the right of Christian parents to patronize Christian schools.

The fastest way to learn whether someone is a neopluralist is to ask him two questions. Does he support the Arkansas and Louisiana laws that allowed fundamentalists to indoctrinate other people's children against evolution?[25] Does he support the federal programs that subsidize feminists to indoctrinate other people's children against the traditional family? Unless he answers no to both questions, he is not a true neopluralist.

The nation's most famous education reformer, Ronald Reagan, has a foot in both camps. His administration has fostered such neocentralist measures as nondenominational school prayer and stronger state education agencies. But he has also endorsed such neopluralist measures as vouchers, tuition tax credits, and a weaker U.S. Department of Education.

One observer has aptly called the administration "schizophrenic" on the education issue.[26] But the more deeply one probes, the easier it is to choose. The neocentralists are wrong, and the neopluralists are right.

## **FOOTNOTES**

This study is an expanded version of the author's article "Contradictions of Centralized Education" that appeared in the Wall Street Journal on January 4, 1985.

[1] See E. D. Hirsch, "Cultural Literacy," *The American Scholar* (Spring 1983).

[2] Stephen Arons, *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982).

[3] See Joe Nathan, *Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1984).

[4] See *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (Washington: Department of Education, National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983); *Action for Excellence: A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983);

John Goodland et. al., *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983); *Making the Grade: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1983); Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (Washington: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983); *Educating Americans for the 21st Century* (Washington: National Science Board, Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology, 1983).

[5] Total per-pupil spending on public elementary and secondary education rose nearly 450 percent from the beginning of the Johnson administration to the end of the Carter administration. Federal spending on the schools rose more than 900 percent. See *Digest of Education Statistics* (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 1982), p. 82.

[6] The most eloquent comment on any of these commissions was that of Professor Richard Mitchell's newsletter, *The Underground Grammarian*. Professor Mitchell compared Secretary Bell's National Commission on Excellence in Education with "the typical social studies text, which is likely to explain the Civil War by saying that 'problems arose.' . . . [It] laments all sorts of bad things that are said to have 'happened' in the schools. The commissioners are perturbed to notice that courses in physics and courses in bachelor living carry the same credit, but hardly the same enrollment, in most schools. That, as they must know, didn't just happen. Persons did it, and they did it by design and out of policy. All those people, however some of them may have profited, were acting on principle, the explicit principle of American schooling for the last sixty years or so. . . . the belief that the purpose of education is to bring about a certain kind of society, and that the individual benefits from education to the degree in which he is adjusted to that society. . . . Those bachelor living courses and all their siblings are not nasty growths on an otherwise healthy organism. They are the heart of the matter, and they will never go away unless the ideology that spawns them is specifically repudiated. There is nothing even close to such a repudiation in the report. . . . If it had said such things, however, the report would not have provided anyone with fresh ammunition in the Great War for Money. Good schools, stripped of all rubbish, would cost less money, but only the students would profit from such schools." See Richard Mitchell, *The Leaning Tower of Babel* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1984), pp. 134-37.

[7] The education establishment seized the reports immediately, especially that of the supposedly "Reaganite" Commission on Excellence in Education. The National Education Association called it "exciting." The chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee suggested that Reagan "take a signal from this report and put an end to his questioning of whether the federal government should be involved in education." After the president reaffirmed his support for decentralization, the report's chief author, Commissioner Gerard Holton, pointed out that its recommendations were "precisely the opposite of what Mr. Reagan had to say. The President can't possibly have read the report in full." See Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Education: Do More, or Do It Differently?" *Washington Times*, June 15, 1983. In both the Senate Finance Committee and Senate floor debates on the tuition tax credit bill, opponents repeatedly cited the Excellence Commission report's silence on the issue. Nobody pointed out that the commission was silent not because any of its members had changed their minds, but because the majority appointed by Secretary Bell were anti-choice to begin with.

[8] Chester E. Finn, Jr., "What the NIE Cannot Be," *Phi Delta Kappan*, February 1983.

[9] Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Lone Star State Solon Undermines Bilingual Reform," *Human Events*, August 25, 1984.

[10] The impact aid program, based on the transparently ludicrous premise that such federal installations as military bases are economic burdens rather than assets to the communities surrounding them, in effect transfers funds from poorer school districts to wealthier ones.

[11] The policymakers and the forums in which I questioned them were as follows: Lawrence Davenport, assistant secretary of education, at a Lincoln Institute seminar in Washington on September 28, 1983; Mary Berry, Civil Rights Commission, at the annual meeting of the College Entrance Examination Board in New York City on October 28, 1984; Linda Tarr-Whelan, NEA director of government relations, at Notre Dame Law School on November 13, 1984; and Rep. Pat Williams (D-Mont.), at a College Board regional meeting in Washington on February 7, 1985.

[12] See *Action in the States* (Education Commission of the States, July 1984).

[13] The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education (Department of Education, May 1984), p. 8.

[14] A Nation At Risk, p. 30; Action for Excellence, p. 37.

[15] Education Week, August 17 and 31, 1983.

[16] See Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Where Is the 'Merit' in New Merit-Pay Plans?" Education Week, September 14, 1983.

[17] A more aggressive reform proposal along these lines is that of New Jersey governor Thomas Kean. See Lawrence A. Uzzell's contribution to the special section on education reform in the American Spectator, September 1984.

[18] See idem, "Will Recent Changes in U.S. Schools Produce Significant and Lasting Reform?" Christian Science Monitor, November 5, 1984.

[19] See "The Vanishing Myth of Local Control," Phi Delta Kappan, November 1984.

[20] Digest of Education Statistics, 1982, p. 75; John Augenblick, "The States and School Finance," Phi Delta Kappan, November 1984, p. 198.

[21] Lorraine McDonnell, "The Impact of Federal Grants Consolidation on the States," in Grants Consolidation: A New Balance in Federal Aid to Schools? (Washington: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1979).

[22] See Michael Cohen, "Effective Schools: Accumulating Research Findings," American Education (January/February 1982); James Coleman, High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Ronald Edmonds, "Some Schools Work and More Can," Social Policy (March/April 1979); Michael Rutter et al., Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); Richard Weatherly and Michael Lipsky, "Street Level Bureaucrats and Institutional Innovation: Implementing Special Education Reform," Harvard Educational Review 47 (1977): 171-97; George Weber, Inner-City Children Can Be Taught to Read: Five Successful Schools (Washington: Council for Basic Education, 1971); Arthur E. Wise, Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Edward Wynne, Looking at Schools: Good, Bad, and Indifferent (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1980).

[23] A sharp-eyed Wall Street Journal reader, Stephen Liston of Mendota Heights, Minn., points out that Milton was employed by Oliver Cromwell's government as Latin secretary for foreign affairs. But the poet left this government job some eight years before the Restoration and fifteen years before the publication of "Paradise Lost." In any case, giving the Puritan Commonwealth credit for Milton's poetry would be like giving the British Postal Service credit for the works of Anthony Trollope, or Lloyd's Bank credit for those of T. S. Eliot.

[24] See Frances Fitzgerald, America Revised (New York: Random House, 1980).

[25] Both of these state laws have now been ruled unconstitutional by federal judges.

[26] See Chester E. Finn, Jr., "Our Schizophrenic Educational System," Wall Street Journal, October 23, 1984.