

EDITORIALS

"Our aim: To fear God, tell the truth and make money."
H. C. PADDOCK 1852-1905

Making schools more effective

Editor's note: This is the second of four editorials on school reform in Illinois.

In her most recent book, *The Schools We Deserve*, educational historian Diane Ravitch notes that it was assumed not so long ago that all schools were doing their job and that one was not more effective than the other. Differences in student achievement were determined by other factors such as poverty or quality of home life.

However, by the late 1970s researchers had identified a number of factors that were common to effective schools. Principally, they are: 1. An effective principal who is a true educational leader.

2. A school climate that is safe, orderly and focused on learning. 3. A schoolwide emphasis on basic skills. 4. Teachers who have high expectations of all students. 5. Maximum time devoted to learning, often called "time on task."

Observed Ravitch: "These conclusions may have seemed like a series of commonplace observations to most people, but they were received as stunning insights in the arcane world of educational policy." In Illinois, these principles run through many of the proposed reforms. That is certainly encouraging.

Last year the General Assembly upped graduation requirements. This year legislation would create a principals' academy, while another would mandate that a principal's job description stress instructional functions. There is legislation to give teachers more power to remove disruptive students, and a bill to fund research on how to improve students' self-concept. At the same time, recognizing that tougher standards — both for academics and behavior — would push many dropout-prone students out the door, the reforms seek the creation of innovative programs to provide remedial education and prevent students from dropping out.

The public has certainly noted that all schools are not equal, and that some of our young people put in their time but learn very little. That's why it is important to stress what a student should learn and then devise curricula and tests that make sure this task is accomplished.

As we have noted earlier, many area schools already have extensive testing programs and are stressing educational "outcomes" instead of an assurance that students simply put in their time. Test results every few years — the Senate and House have not agreed whether students should be tested three or four times between grades 3 and 11 — should be made public. Clearly testing is an issue of accountability. Schools must now prove to the community that the students they are turning out have learned something.

The danger, of course, is that too much emphasis is put on the test itself. Tests should simply be seen as measuring devices. However, tests can be properly constructed to measure valued knowledge and skills. Thus teaching toward a test is not always bad.

There is another danger. It would be wrong to make unrealistic comparisons of test data — such as between New Trier and Marshall High Schools. The results should reflect anticipated educational progress and the schools' success in attaining those results.

It makes sense that students achieve more when they spend more time with a subject. Reforms designed to give teachers in grades kindergarten through 3 more time with their students by providing grants for more teacher aides are right on target. In like manner, state mandates for courses like physical education in grades 11 and 12, driver education and consumer education should be eased. A sensible compromise is to require schools to offer them, but not require students to take them. Bright, college-bound students who want more time for academic subjects should have that time, as well as those students in need of remedial courses.

Local districts should also be given more flexibility in setting up remedial programs. Legislation now pending would require that students be held back if they did not test up to a certain level. Such rigid standards might be counterproductive. Let local districts decide if a student needs summer classes, special tutoring or to be held back a year.

These reforms all are designed to create more effective schools. The next question is how well can these reforms be implemented?

Tomorrow: Our teachers.

Shultz warns us all about Nicaragua

With the Reagan administration, the more things change, the more they remain the same. Despite the president's landslide victory, the "liberal" press is still lambasted for being too influential. Despite a crop of young people who yearn for nothing else than businesses and homes of their own, we are told that values will have to be taught in the schools. And despite a religious revival that the president himself has proclaimed, the administration says all is lost unless prayer is returned to the schools.

Some of this is funny, some of it not. But where things get both tragic and funny is Nicaragua. Talking to a group of lawyers the other day, Secretary of State George Shultz finally said what heretofore had only been whispered: The United States might have to send troops to Nicaragua. This "agonizing choice," Shultz said, could result from the very failure of Congress to aid the so-called contras — the CIA created army which, in a feat of creative packaging, are called Freedom Fighters.

It's not difficult to see what Shultz is telling Congress: Either supply the money for others to do the fighting or, someday, we might have to do the fighting ourselves. What he does not explain is

Richard Cohen



why anybody has to do the fighting. In other words, what is the threat that prompts a secretary of state to even suggest that Americans will once again have to kill and be killed in yet another foreign country?

Aside from brandishing words like "communist," Shultz supplies no answers and history instructs that we do not need to make war on a nation just because its stamps bear the picture of Karl Marx. But even aside from that, Shultz's remarks come at a peculiar time. After all, the administration can claim that things are going its way in Central America. The clear and present danger allegedly posed by Nicaragua is a lot less clear and present than it may have been.

Take the situation in El Salvador. The foremost accusation against Nicaragua is that it is "exporting revolution" to its

neighbor to the north — arms and supplies across the Gulf of Fonseca to the waiting Salvadoran guerrillas. But the El Salvador guerrillas are reeling, falling back on desperation tactics, and both the government and its army are resurgent. As if that were not enough, we are also told that the El Salvador right, often so ruthless, is also in a state of disarray. Moderation — wonderful moderation — is supposedly the idea whose time has come in El Salvador.

As for Nicaragua itself, it reels. Its economy is in a shambles. Draft evaders take to the hills. It has to rely almost entirely on Moscow for its economic sustenance and it is surrounded by hostile neighbors with armies — and air forces — bigger than its own. It's hard to see that it represents a threat to anything other than the lingering belief that revolutions from the left are always wonderful ideas.

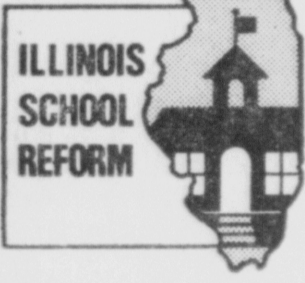
Nevertheless, Shultz raises the prospect of war. He does so not a week after the president of Honduras was assured that the United States stood ready to come to his aid should he get into a scrap with Nicaragua. This is yet another intimation of American involvement since it is the Hondurans who shelter the con-

tras. Sooner or later any nation — Nicaragua included — would seek to destroy its enemies, no matter where they are harbored.

For some time now, Shultz has been having an identity problem in which he sees himself as the secretary of defense. His speeches — and not Caspar Weinberger's — are muggy with martial airs while it is Weinberger who warns that war is about killing and should be entered into reluctantly. It is impossible to say who speaks for the president but, in this case, it appears to be Shultz. When the president pounds his desk in an anti-Nicaragua fury, it is Shultz who responds with talk of troops.

As with so much else in this administration, results take a back seat to ideology. It hardly seems to matter that Nicaragua is less of a threat now than it was, say, two years ago. What really matters is that it exists — yet another Marxist state in the Western Hemisphere. It is certainly clear to Managua — and may be even to the Contadora nations — that nothing but the eradication of the Sandinista regime will appease Reagan. Listen to Shultz: It's not Nicaragua he's warning — it's us.

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Bring competition to Pentagon

The media have been having a field day with disclosures that private industry has been ripping off the Pentagon — charging it \$7,600 for coffee makers, adding the kennel expenses of executives' dogs to the bill, and in some cases overcharging to the point of criminal misconduct. Less remarked has been the fact that the great majority of these disclosures resulted not from zealous investigative reporting, or even from the probings of those famous (and publicity-hungry) whistle blowers, but from the patient efforts of the Pentagon's own corps of full-time inspectors. If Congress and the public are going to indulge in a spasm of Pentagon-bashing every time the Defense Department uncovers and puts a stop to another corrupt practice, they will have only themselves to blame if fewer such corrupt practices come to light in the future.

It is, of course, no coincidence that all this hullabaloo occurs just as Congress is arguing over the 1986 budget. There are all sorts of special interests lined up for some of those precious dollars.

At the same time, certain current Pentagon practices in the matter of procurement are not, and ought not to be, above criticism. In particular, the tide has been running in favor of increased competition recently in everything from airline

William Rusher



placed with the winner and subjected to all sorts of adjustments for increased costs owing to inflation and other factors. Such sole-source suppliers haven't the slightest economic inducement either to improve the product or to reduce its cost.

That is why the Northrop Corporation's recent proposal to the Air Force deserves consideration. At present, the Air Force's state-of-the-art fighter plane is the F-16, built by General Dynamics at a price that wobbles between \$18 and \$20 million per plane. Northrop proposes to supply the Air Force with 396 of its equivalent F-20s over a period of four years at a fixed price of \$15 million each. What's more, Northrop will provide all necessary spare parts for a similarly fixed price of just \$475 per flying hour over a period of 20 years — which is only a quarter of what General Dynamics is charging Uncle Sam for spare parts for the F-16.

Not surprisingly, the Air Force is taking a serious look at Northrop's proposal. Perhaps the key point is not so much the immediate saving as the competitive pressure the deal would put on General Dynamics to bring its own costs for the F-16 and its spare parts into line.

Newspaper Enterprise Association

Peres shows he can take the heat

If there is one leader who deserves a salute these days for governing well in the midst of turmoil, it is Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

As Israel moves into the last stage of pulling its troops out of Lebanon, it is torn by new controversy over the exchange of 1,150 Arab prisoners for three Israeli soldiers. The Israeli economy remains disjointed. At best, the peace with Egypt is lukewarm. And Israel's fighting hawks continue to assail Peres.

And yet Peres maintains a balancing act in a statesmanlike fashion, making no wild promises, and offering no master plan for a way out of Israel's troubles. He's done this while operating on only half-power because he heads a coalition government whose other half is entitled to take office one year from now.

The right-wing Likud bloc in Israel is potent enough that a few wrong moves by Peres could topple his government. But in a half-dozen instances, Peres' response to a vexing situation has been firm and reasonable, and the other side had to go along.

He's got a tough one going on the prisoner swap controversy. Among those hundreds of Arab prisoners released by the Israeli military, there are many hard-core criminals, call them terrorists or whatever. They are responsible for many bombings, deaths, wounding, and

Nick Thimmesh



have conspired to kill even more Israelis.

Take Kozo Okamoto, a member of the terrorist Japanese Red Army. In 1972, he and two other pro-PLO terrorists landed at Tel Aviv airport, opened their baggage, pulled out machine guns and grenades and wantonly fired into the crowd, killing 26 people, most of them Christian pilgrims. Well, he was released in the swap, and so were some equally vicious killers.

The exchange of Okamoto and other thugs for Israeli soldiers is a bit much for most Israelis to swallow, even though it is an ironclad principle in the Jewish state that its soldiers should never be left to rot in anybody's prison.

It so happens that 15 Israeli members of an underground organization are now in the courts being tried for similar terrorist offenses. They are charged with bombings, maiming, and murder of Palestinian West Bank mayors and students

A dozen other members of the gang pleaded guilty and received reduced sentences.

Many Israelis — and by no means not all right-wingers — now demand that the 27 underground members be given amnesty. What kind of justice, they ask, allows Arabs convicted of murder to be freed while Jews are tried on the same charges in the Israeli courts?

Quite expectedly, Ariel Sharon is at the front of these protests, and Jewish settlers on the occupied West Bank have posted 1,000 notices warning returned Arab prisoners to leave the area.

This Israeli-Arab prisoner swap is not the first or even the largest. And it was approved by both factions in Israel's "inner Cabinet." Moreover, former Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin told Israeli radio that no linkage should be made between the exchange and the current trial of the accused Jewish terrorists. Begin is being consistent and fair on this question.

Even with public opinion against him, Peres maintains that the government should not intervene in the judicial process. If the accused were released because of the current emotional atmosphere, the integrity of the courts and Israel's strong opposition to terrorism would be diminished.

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Fence post

letters to the editor

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Outstanding teacher

Recently The Daily Herald printed an article that listed teachers being honored by High School District 214. I wish that parents could have had some input in this decision, as they, with their children, could have added much to the choices.

I would like to add to this list the calculus teacher from Buffalo Grove High School, Don Purcell. Not only is this man a superb teacher, he offers the most valuable gift any human being can bestow — his time.

Much of his spare time is devoted to assisting any student with problems. He has even gone to homes of sick students to tutor them so they wouldn't fall behind. He avidly listens to his students when they come to him with "growing" problems as well as those having to do with the subject matter. He is demanding, yet compassionate and has made every student feel that they can do what they think impossible, building the student's confidence in school and outside.

He keeps in touch with his students who have graduated, as well as those still at the school, and is always able to relate to them with sensitivity and personal concern.

He would be one of our choices for an Outstanding Teacher Award not only because he is a superb teacher but because he cares.

Barbara Engel
Arlington Heights

Mixed emotions

Thank you to those — from the youngest child through the band to the police and community organizations and older folks too — who participated in the Libertyville Memorial Day observances.

I personally felt the dry throat and watery eyes, even though I didn't think I heard mention of the Vietnam War.

I only blocked my bad thoughts with the thought that I will celebrate victory over America's enemies, and mourn the deaths of America's youthful fighting men and women.

I am sorry if someone thinks me rude, but I have mixed emotions on Memorial Day. Maybe some day hopefully I will be able to cope with my inner feelings more respectably when the shots are fired and taps are played.

J. Lortie
Libertyville

It was satire

D. M. McDonald's comments regarding my recent letter are definitely appropriate if one read my letter literally. However, my purpose in writing the original letter was of supporting a dedicated teacher who had been in my opinion wrongfully attacked and of pointing out the absurd folly of reactionary thinking. If I am guilty of anything, it is that I am "a liberal" who likes to use satire when writing. I hope the above clarifies my position concerning former Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the obvious merits of exposure to opposing viewpoints.

Jerry A. Treppa
Arlington Heights

Jim Berry



Hey, how's Mike Deaver, formerly "beleaguered Mike Deaver?"

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