

# Schools open with no money, Bush blather

In the midst of strikes, budget shortfalls, abysmal test scores for reading and math, and record truancy, President Bush and Education Secretary Lamar Alexander are informing the public that the only problem is one of "attitude."

Bush chose back-to-school week in September to stage photo opportunities in Lewiston, Maine and to state his concerns for education, expressed in terms of "demanding more" from teachers, students, and parents. The tens of thousands of teachers and students that went on strike in September, and the angry mood of millions of parents, rightly indicate that it is Bush who has the attitude problem.

On Sept. 9, a teachers' walkout took place in Elgin, Illinois—the second largest school district in the state. More than 28,000 students were kept out of classrooms by the action. The issue is teachers' salaries. The 1,700-member Elgin Teachers Association began its seventh strike in 20 years, in a bitter clash in which the two sides could not even agree on what percentage salary increase the other was talking about.

However, in no school district across the country is the strife the result of "historical" animosity. State and local budgets everywhere are experiencing budget crises, and making desperate cuts in basic services such as health, water treatment, and schooling.

The wave of school strikes reflects the protest mood over the collapsing economy. In Illinois, a total of five walkouts across the state affected some 37,000 students and nearly 2,220 teachers. Gavin District 37 in Lake County had an 11-day strike, the first since the district was formed in 1944.

Dozens of strike actions swept Pennsylvania when school opening day came around. In two school districts, teachers began selective striking, deciding each day if they would return the next.

In New Jersey, talks were scheduled Sept. 9 for two districts where teachers already have defied court orders to return to work. Secretaries and teachers' aides also defied back-to-work orders, despite some being threatened with losing their jobs.

In Rhode Island, some 10,700 students were affected by strikes.

In Dallas, 3,000 students struck when a court ordered money taken from one district to be shared with another less fortunate. They demonstrated along with the teachers who were to be fired. Police units moved through the throngs with crowd control methods usually reserved for violent events.

In New York, the student enrollment increased by 25,000 while a staff cut of 5,000 was imposed.

## 'Choice' program bankrupt

In the face of this overwhelming need for emergency economic measures to meet school and other basic social requirements, George Bush focused in particular on a version of deregulation as his solution. He said that parents should be given the right to decide which school they prefer for their children—called the "Choice" approach. This social darwinism of the classroom is Bush's adaptation to education of the deregulation hocus-pocus that has ruined so much of the rest of the economy.

The national model school district for "Choice," the Richmond unified school district northeast of San Francisco—which went with a Choice program in 1988—officially went bankrupt last school year. Each of the 47 schools had a specialty. The students could pick among different programs. According to one report, a popular pick was video production. But fun can be expensive: This district ended up \$29 million in debt.

Actually, like much of Bush's agenda, it isn't exactly original. In 1988, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher enacted the Education Reform Act, under which England's schools made similar moves. Not only were zoning restrictions relaxed to allow movement outside of one's district, but the government would subsidize a certain amount per pupil for such a move. An entire school might even "move out" of any kind of system, and operate autonomously! Meantime, the British economy sinks even deeper into depression.

So, when the President says, "It's time parents were free to choose the schools that their children attend. This approach will create the competitive climate that stimulates excellence in our private and parochial schools as well," we can translate that to mean: There's not enough money, and we hope that the folks choose a school with a curriculum that only calls for crayons, not bunsen burners.

## Kookery in the classroom

Crazy curricula are also replacing real education. One such is Tesseract. This refers to a school in Minnesota set up in 1986 by Control Data Corp., and later expanded to a budget-crisis-wracked district in Miami. The idea is a "wall-less" approach to classrooms. There are no set lesson plans for teachers; the students decide on a daily basis what they'll discuss, in an atmosphere which is supposed to "be like home."

Another is Teachable Moments. In Idaho, parents are appalled by an experiment on some junior high students designed for TV-damaged minds. Under the rationalization that youth's concentrations spans have been limited by television, the lessons are to be taught in five-minute "thought bytes" called "Teachable Moments."

**“One of the most profound crises—and perhaps the most fundamental one—confronting the United States of America, is the catastrophic situation in our educational institutions. Despairing parents have long recognized that the effects of America’s broken-down educational system on students’ capacity to think, are threatening to become as devastating as the drug plague. . . .”**

## An EIR Special Report

# The libertarian conspiracy to destroy America’s schools

Perhaps you think you “already know” about the crimes of the National Education Association. But do you know that our education system may now be one of the biggest threats to national security?

This remarkable report takes up the defense of American education in the thoroughly documented, polemical style *EIR* is famous for. It was prepared by Carol White and Carol Cleary, who previously collaborated on the book, *The New Dark Ages Conspiracy*. It includes:

- **Documentation on how the National Education Association** has, over decades, progressively rewritten public school curriculum to foster the amoral celebration of infantilism. The result: rampant illiteracy and a hideous paradigm shift associated with the “me” generation, to such lifestyles as “free” love, homosexuality, pederasty, pornography, violence, and satanic cults.
- **The names of those who created the crisis** and how they did it—facts which have not been published by other reports such as the one put out by the National Academy of Sciences, describing the collapse of U.S. education, particularly in the sciences.
- **The alternative to this fast-approaching dark age** in culture: orienting education toward transmitting the classical heights of Western Judeo-Christian civilization. Lyndon H. LaRouche’s curriculum for bringing this classical tradition into the 20th century.
- **The 19th-century Humboldt curriculum**, which has recently been the focus of attacks by groups opposed in principle to public education—in its first English translation.

152 pp.

Order your copy today!

Price: \$250

From

**EIR** News Service  
P.O. Box 17390  
Washington, D.C.  
20041-0390