

demonstrate whether, indeed, its present policies are stable and worthy of confidence. For the burden of proof is on the Chinese Communist system, not on the system in Hong Kong, which has already brilliantly proved itself. Such an alternative would be conceivable only if the reigning "emperor" were less adamant and international pressure upon Peking concerted and unrelenting. But surely this is the biggest pipe dream of all.

In the real world everything will happen quite differently. The joint declaration will be generally acclaimed as the best possible document in the circumstances. A new era of Sino-British cooperation will begin, which will include ensuring the return of a "complete, stable, and prosperous Hong Kong" to China—the ripe plum to be dropped into the expectantly open mouth. Premier Zhao Ziyang will go, as planned, to London and Queen

Elizabeth will dine in Peking. The White House (which forty years later perceives clearly the folly of Yalta) will place faith in Peking's promise to maintain a free and stable Hong Kong. In line with a foreign policy similarly resting on faith and hope in Chinese continuities, Japan will stand aside like a jackal, reassessing its opportunities for profit, which may include using investment in Hong Kong—in one analyst's words—"as a stepping stone

into China." Deng Xiaoping will beam his Cheshire-cat smile and turn his attention optimistically to Taiwan. For the reality is that the very nations who should be most concerned about securing Hong Kong against the vagaries of Chinese Communism are themselves blindly scrambling to attach financial fortunes and geopolitical schemes to the swirling uncertainties of China's future. □

THE NATION'S PULSE



PUBLIC TEACHERS, PRIVATE SCHOOLS

by Denis P. Doyle

What do Walter Mondale and 46 percent of Chicago teachers have in common? For starters, they're Democrats. They'll vote against Reagan. (If the last election is any guide about 42 percent will vote for Reagan.) They believe in teachers

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unions. They're opposed to tuition tax credits. They "believe" in public education as the symbol and expression of American democracy. So much for common knowledge.

They share one other trait that few people know about, however. Walter Mondale and 46 percent of Chicago public school teachers send their own children to private schools. Limousine liberals, as they used to be called, are by now old stuff. But it is still something of a surprise to learn that the rank and file are not buying their own product. Although some observers of American education have long suspected that public school teachers send their children to private schools in disproportionately high numbers, until recently there were no good statistics to support the anecdotes.

The first numbers to surface came from a *Detroit Free Press* survey reported in the October 5, 1983 issue of *Education Week*. The results were striking—the poll found that 20 percent of Michigan public school teachers send their children to private schools while only 10 percent of Michiganders do. Based on a sample of 872 teachers in 35 districts throughout Michigan, it is believed to be accurate to within three and a half percentage points. Unfortunately, the survey results were not reported by race or place of residence: Had they been, the findings might have been even more striking, because urban parents are much more likely than suburban or rural parents to send their children to private schools.

The more dramatic news was re-

leased this spring by the *Chicago Reporter*, a monthly information service that reports on racial issues in metropolitan Chicago. Well regarded for its accuracy and fairness, in addition to its advocacy of more harmonious race relations, the *Chicago Reporter* has no private school axe to grind.

The numbers the *Reporter* uncovered are extraordinary. Chicago school teachers who are residents of the city are more than twice as likely to send their children to private schools as the population in general. (Forty-six percent as compared to 22 percent of Chicagoans at large.)

What does it mean? At one level it means just what it appears to—it is the education analogue of the chef who refuses to eat at his own restaurant or the doctor who won't be treated at his own hospital. As University of Illinois professor Herbert Walberg commented: "Teachers are like auto workers who wisely buy Japanese cars." Even more revealing is the comment by noted University of Chicago political analyst and proponent of school busing Gary Orfield: "This shows that the people who know the city's schools best know they are not functioning."

At another level, one can cite the simple and elegant theory developed by A.E. Hirschman more than a decade ago in a slender volume, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*. His theme is deceptively simple: If an institution does not serve one's needs—if one's voice is ignored—loyalty is exhausted and the discerning individual or family changes institutional affiliations. The quality

conscious consumer abandons one institution and patronizes another—if the first institution does not respond.

The phenomenon described by Hirschman is the political and social counterpart of the economic market and works precisely for that reason. Markets reveal preferences in ways that monopolies cannot. Education, no less than other activities, responds to market forces, but because of the virtual public monopoly at the elementary and secondary level education market forces operate only at the margins. Thanks to the *Chicago Reporter* study we can now see how Chicago public school teachers respond.

The example of the market permits one to escape Baudelaire's admonition in *Fleurs du Mal*: "hypocrit, lecteur, mon frère." If public school teachers who send their children to private schools were simply hypocrites there would not be much point to the story—what else is new? But their behavior reveals two themes that help explain our current education "troubles."

First, in most large school districts teaching is no longer an avocation—it is a job. It is a job in precisely the same way that being a policeman, motorman, clerk, or other public employee is. Its principal purposes are the production of income and job security—if you enjoy the work, so much the better. The distinction between an avocation and a job is important, because for generations we took for granted the self-sacrifice and dedication of devoted

teachers who thought teaching was a calling.

It also helps explain the emergence of teachers unions. When teachers see themselves as workers, administrators as management, the superintendent the CEO, the school committee the Board of Trustees, and the students the product, it is only a short step to unionization. And it is a long way from teaching as an avocation. When the avocational tie is broken, institutional loyalty is diminished or destroyed.

Second, it reveals one thing teachers' professional associations are loath to admit—public school teachers *do* know the difference between good and bad schools. That they care enough to act on that knowledge—at least where their own interest is involved—is a very good sign. Unfortunately, the logic of this position is too often lost on the

teachers themselves. Because it is so important it bears stating: What's good for the children of teachers is good for children generally. Choice, diversity, and quality *outside the public school monopoly* is not simply an ideological posture assumed by market-oriented economists.

When the *Chicago Reporter* interviewed a random sample of teachers, these teachers sounded like any other parents concerned about their children—they select private schools because they are academically more demanding, physically safer, have higher expectations for their students, and maintain an orderly learning environment. As one teacher said, "I wouldn't send my own kids to the place I teach."

Another teacher, a union delegate, is quoted as saying: "Teachers know

what is going on with the curriculum. In all fairness to my child, I don't think I would have a choice but to pull him out of public school."

Although the *Reporter's* sample was not large enough to be statistically accurate for racial categories, the paper reported that "some educators feel black teachers are a particularly discriminating group." An example is the private Ancona Montessori School that numbers so many public school teachers among its parents that the principal reports that she "schedules parent-teacher conferences on public school holidays."

One reason Chicago public school teachers are able to send their children to private schools is that they can afford to. Despite teacher organization claims that teachers have low incomes, teacher *family income* places them

squarely in the upper middle class. The sample of Chicago teachers, for example, have a family income of more than \$35,000 per year.

It is a fine bit of irony that nearly half of those who know most about Chicago's public schools—the trained adults who teach in them—would reject them for their own children. Any hypocrisy to be found in this tale, however, lies not in the decision to patronize the competition—that is, an affirmation of the importance of education and the idea that some schools are better than others. Rather, the hypocrisy is to be found in the professional teacher organizations that oppose tuition tax credits and education vouchers while a substantial number of their urban members refuse to patronize the schools in which they work. □

THE TALKIES



SOWING SALLY'S FIELD

by John Podhoretz

What is most impressive about the very impressive new movie, *Places in the Heart*, is its cool, understated evocation of a time in this country when blacks were second-class citizens. Set in Texas in 1935, the movie tells the story of Edna Spaulding (Sally Field), the wife of Royce Spaulding, the town sheriff. At the beginning of the movie Royce goes out on a routine call to pacify and bring in to the station a sweet-faced young black who has gone on a drunken tear down by the railroad tracks. The black man has a gun, and in his stupor mistakenly fires it at the sheriff, killing him.

Already in this first scene we can tell that we are not about to see the typical race-relations hysteria Hollywood always foists upon us. The black man calls the sheriff "Mistah Royce," the sheriff deals with him as he would with a tiresome child. The murder is a freak accident, not retribution for an unpleasant, criminal mistreatment of an entire race.

Similarly, when the unhappy murderer is dragged through the streets of Waxahachie, Texas tied to a pickup

truck, we do not see the cackling smiles of the evil posse, the vengeful glee of the dead sheriff's wife, or the unleashed fury of the young black's oppressed family. This may be a racist community, but its racism is only one characteristic among many, and hardly the most important.

Edna's sister Margaret curtly tells the men in the pickup truck to drive away from Edna's house. She does not express any moral disapproval of their action, but rather seems to think that stopping by Edna's place with body in tow is inappropriate, and that the sight of the dust-ridden corpse will only further upset the grieving widow. The lynch mob looks discontented and solemn, as though they have had to perform a necessary but unpleasant task. And the family of the young murderer quietly cuts him down from the tree on which he has been strung up, as though they have been through this sort of thing before. As though they have full knowledge of the fact that the whites will exact this sort of price if any of their race steps out of bounds.

We are not pounded over the head with the great injustices being perpetrated on the black people in general and the young murderer in par-

ticular. These incidents are allowed to speak for themselves. People in Waxahachie are more concerned with mortgage foreclosure, marital indiscretions, and how to make ends meet. The residents of Waxahachie, both black and white, are bound by a set of standards and rules that they simply live by. They do not rebel, they do not question. They simply try to get by. They go to church, they say grace, they struggle, they grieve. They are used to these things, to the random acts of violence and the retaliatory lynchings. No good modern liberal grafted from later decades appears here to preach integration, or to offer maudlin, self-righteous appeals to the natural brotherhood of man.

We are being taught no lessons here. Robert Benton, the writer-director whose last film was *Kramer vs. Kramer*, wishes to show us what life was like in Depression-era Texas, with all its great flaws and strengths. People can be racists, like Margaret who speaks to blacks only in a clipped, officious tone, and yet have their own troubles as well. Margaret never injures a black; she just does not like them very much. She is more concerned with her failing beauty salon and the philandering of her hand-

some, ne'er-do-well husband.

The plot of *Places in the Heart* deals with Edna's great difficulties after her husband's death. She has no money, and has never done anything other than being a wife and a mother. The town's sanctimonious bank vice-president advises her to sell her house, send her children away to relatives, and eke by on a small living. She refuses to consider this possibility, and is saved by a traveling black man with a business proposition.

Just as the racial tensions are depicted here in a quiet and detached way, so are the racial harmonies. Moze, the vagrant black, stops by Edna's house looking for some work. He says that her land would make a good cotton farm: He has been picking cotton since his childhood, he knows. Edna gives him a meal and sends him away. He steals some of her silver as he goes, and is returned a day later by the police. He has told the police that Edna has hired him on as a hand. Facing Edna, Moze is terrified and cowed, and does not look her in the eye. Edna has had time to reconsider Moze's offer, and tells the police that he does, in fact, work for her. The