

regions become competitive with North Carolina, Mississippi, or Taiwan. You can bet your bottom dollar that private industry will then come knocking at the door again." They overstate the case. Actually, if tax-cut fever were to hit the Graybelt, if public spending could be reduced, and if unions could be persuaded to moderate their wage demands and give up the antiquated work rules that are pricing their labor off the market, it could be enough. As William Simon has commented, fringe benefits to New York City employees cost 68 cents over and above every dollar paid out in wages and salaries. The average for benefits to federal employees was 35 cents. Had New York's fringe benefits been held to the federal level of 35 percent, total costs would have been \$1.5 billion less—the difference between a billion-dollar deficit and a half-billion-dollar surplus for the city's hard-pressed treasury.

## Exposing Virulent Lies

Diane Ravitch: *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools*; Basic Books; New York.

by David Pietrusza

During the late 1960s the nation's educational system, like so many other institutions, came under heavy theoretical attack from the big guns of the radical left. Now, obviously there was—and is—a lot to be criticized concerning the conduct of our academics, drastic fallings-off in basic skills, a laxity of discipline, ballooning budgets. And there was much to be criticized in the standard histories of American education. Often the tone was unctuous, holier-than-thou, and biased in its own right.

*Mr. Pietrusza, an historian and free-lance critic, has recently written a book on Senator Joseph McCarthy.*

Another instructive model is New Hampshire. By keeping its per capita tax bite the lowest in the nation, it has become the fastest growing state in New England and has an unemployment rate half that of other states in the area. Furthermore, it has achieved this prosperity without sacrificing quality of life. A study prepared by two Dartmouth professors, comparing New Hampshire with Vermont—its twin sister and one of the most highly-taxed states in the nation—failed to establish that life in one was superior to life in the other.

Clearly, the application of common sense and sound economics could go far toward revitalizing the other states of the Graybelt. The North may indeed rise again, but the way to renewed prosperity lies through capitalist production and not socialist dogma. □

Yet the new revisionist thrust ignored these very real failings and focused instead on jamming their facts into a tortured marxist or anarchist straight jacket. The classroom, they charged, was a sinister instrument of class oppression, reinforcing the status quo, hindering the upward rise of the immigrant and the disadvantaged while simultaneously and forcibly uprooting ethnic traditions.

There were in these fevered arguments virulent strains of utopianism

ideas, these too met with token opposition. Some educators went over to the revisionist side. Others refused to take the challenge seriously. No coherent body of thought arose to point out the gaping inconsistencies or to skewer their unsupported generalizations. Now Diane Ravitch, author of *The Great School Wars*, a study of New York City's tortured school board politics, has taken the time to puncture a few selected ideological balloons using solid statistical and historical research and the powers of a rigorously logical mind.

"When they are effective, reformers become responsible for the changes they initiate," she notes, zeroing in on a prime weakness of the revisionists. "And when at some future date, the reforms need reforming, their original sponsors can be disparaged for not having the prescience to see what could go wrong. Thus, anyone who gets involved in a political action runs the considerable risk of failing, while those who refuse to abandon their utopian ideals can never be held accountable."

The intellectual mind-fix of the revisionist school may best be gauged by author Michael Katz's sweeping assertion that American education has for a century been "universal, tax-supported, free, compulsory, bureaucrat, racist, and class-biased . . . Bureaucracy came about because men confronted particular kinds of social problems with particular social purposes. Those purposes reflected class attitudes and class interests. Modern bureaucracy is a bourgeois invention; it represents a crystallization

"And it will be a pity if talents such as Diane Ravitch turn away from the fundamental questions raised by radicals merely because they smack of something forbidden called 'ideology'."

—*New York Times Book Review*

and paranoia. If society still harbors elitism, snobbery or racism, it was obvious to the revisionists that the schools had *planned* it that way despite all their words and actions to the contrary.

Like so many other faulty avant-garde

of bourgeois social attitudes."

The bias is, of course, apparent. In Katz's warped perception only bourgeois capitalism creates bureaucracy, as if it does not exist behind the Iron Curtain, or in a democratic-socialist society like

Sweden, or as if it did not exist even in hereditary monarchies or the medieval Catholic Church. Bureaucracy, people like Katz contend, is instituted in modern America specifically to reinforce class attitudes and racial discrimination through a forced regimentation which imposes mandatory education on a reluctant proletariat.

The facts are just the opposite of this contention. The immigrant and the native working man have always correctly seen clearly that education was a way out of the blue-collar trap. At the turn of the century, Lower East Side Jewish parents nearly rioted when, because of overcrowding, their children were threatened with exclusion from the classroom. Slaves and freedmen sought education with the same passion, often risking the wrath of the law to gain it. White Southerners operated on the same principle, fighting tenaciously to keep the black man unlettered, knowing instinctively that education was the vital key to upward mobility.

Neither was the American public school system genocidal in terms of ethnic heritage and traditions as this new class of historians argues. Miss Ravitch contends that American society has been singularly tolerant of foreign customs, citing the ironclad rights of immigrants to use their native language freely and publicly, to establish papers and schools and organizations using that tongue—often with tax-exempt status. This was not always the case abroad. Today society leans over backward for the immigrant, often establishing bilingual education in large Spanish-speaking areas—a precedent created by turn-of-the-century bilingualism for German-speaking students in such areas as Indianapolis and Baltimore.

Yet the revisionists argue that the immigrant was assimilated through educational coercion, conveniently forgetting many of the realities of American life. "The non-English ethnic groups in the United States of America were Anglicized not because of nationality laws which were unfavorable towards

their language but in spite of nationality laws favorable to them," Miss Ravitch quotes Heinz Kloss, a German scholar. "The nationalities could be given as many opportunities as possible to retain their identity, yet the achievements of the Anglo-American society and the achievements which this society offered were so attractive that the descendants of the 'aliens' sooner or later voluntarily integrated themselves to this society."

Another of the favorite revisionist *bête noires* is vocational training, as they posit that the practice has been one of the most class conscious and exploitative of all educational practices. Obviously, in some cases, intellectually talented youths were pigeonholed away from academic courses, but in the majority of instances the choice was not between "shop" and a doctorate in humane letters, but between a trade and life as an unskilled laborer without even a high school education. Interpreting such circumstances in a scholarly proper method, Miss Ravitch also demolishes several studies contending that public education reinforces some supposed form of class structure; utilizing well-analyzed sophisticated data, she proves firmly that upward social mobility is a fact—not a sinister myth—in American society.

In most measurable categories of social mobility, the United States offers the greatest opportunities for its citizens, particularly for members of the working

class to move into "elite" occupations. Fully 10 percent "of sons whose fathers were manual laborers moved into these vocations, a greater percentage than any other industrial nation. Similarly, a 1964 study found that a mere 10.5 percent of the current generation of big-business executives . . . are sons of wealthy families; as recently as 1950 the corresponding figure was 36.1 percent, and at the turn of the century 45.6 percent."

The net effect of *Revising the Revisionists* is a thorough refutation of the claims of those who see a clichéd, "fascist," "racist," class-biased monolith controlling the educational system. It opens the windows and allows some fresh air into the closed confines of previously unchallenged dogma, injecting a dose of common sense into an important debate. "The schools," says Miss Ravitch, "are limited instruments which have certain general responsibilities and certain specific capacities; sometimes they have failed to meet realistic expectations, and at other times they have succeeded beyond realistic expectations in dispersing intelligence and opportunity throughout the community. In order to judge them by reasonable standards and in order to have any chance of improving their future performance, it is necessary to abandon the simplistic search for heroes and devils, for scapegoats and panaceas." □

**In *Persuasion At Work*, Vol. I, No. 9, "ATTACKING WALL STREET UNDER THE BANNER OF GOD":**

"The thorny issue of church/state relationships now has a thorny twin, church/economy relationships. Just as the Jonestown disaster raised the question of what kind of operation Mr. Jones conducted within the shelter of the church label, so the thrust by religious groups to regulate the business community raises a question about the nature and intent of these operations which claim the immunities of the church."

"As elements of the church gather momentum in their determined campaign to destroy one economic system and impose another upon capitalistic nations, they are inviting, nay, forcing a public reassessment of whether special privileges or tax exemptions can be granted carte blanche to every activity conducted under the name of religion."

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# Harvard's *Dégringolade*

John LeBoutillier: *Harvard Hates America: The Odyssey of a Born-Again American*; Gateway Editions; South Bend, Indiana.

by Walter Trohan

Ours is a society in which high esteem was once given to the search for truth in our institutions of higher learning. This search was conducted in an atmosphere as dedicated as that of Plato's groved academy, but one hallowed by the measurement of social values against spiritual unity. Perhaps none of these institutions is more influential, if not more venerated, than Harvard, which has turned out more presidents, more philosophers, more Nobel Prize winners, more writers, more poets and more professors than any American hall of learning.

But it is a long way from the college of Charles William Eliot, and his five foot shelf of the world's great literature, to the university of John LeBoutillier, where four-letter words are intoned in ivy-mantled classrooms and red radicalism is often more honored than the crimson badge of the institution. The not-so-old Harvard was designed to promote independence of thought and mind, whereas the new Harvard thrives on regurgitation and imitation of the liberal line, according to its recent graduate and undergraduate, who is so obviously literate and challenging.

Only about half of this slender but explosive volume is devoted to Harvard and the rest to politics, which is concerned with how the Republican Party lost its soul and how it might regain the kingdom of the elected. The academic section commands our attention, because all who are attending college or

have left, more or less recently, will find matching experiences in their own schools, if only they have the honesty and courage to say it in these days of regimented conformity, which has become the cult of culture.

Dr. Eliot became president of Harvard in 1869 at the age of 35. He labored for forty years to make it a great university. Before his death in retirement in 1926, the cultists had begun their transformation of thought by inquiry into thought by conformity, which so distresses Mr. LeBoutillier, who wrote his book in his 23rd year and is now only 25.

In Eliot's later days, many professors abandoned spiritual unity and turned to the calls for social justice, voiced in the storm and bloodletting of the French Revolution. It was easy for them to forget the reign of terror in their absorption with the goals of demagogues, and no less easy to forget that the cries ended in the despotic empire of Napoleon. Naturally, it was not difficult for many of these cultists to embrace the revolution of Lenin and to forget its resulting mass purges and slave labor camps, which have ended in the only surviving and aggressive empire of our day.

The objectivity of the 19th century was abandoned for the calls for social justice of the 17th. Truths were jettisoned as ephemeral; history was rewritten, courses were reshuffled. In all fields, teachers were enlisted in what was held to be a war for social progress, even though what was offered was rooted in the failures of the guillotine.

When LeBoutillier passed through the gates of the Harvard yard, with their invitation: Enter To Grow in Wisdom, the first professorial voice he heard was one calling for the election of George McGovern in 1972, partly because the senator was calling for the imposition of a 100 percent tax on in-

heritance. This same professor, LeBoutillier learned some minutes later, was the third largest contributor to McGovern's campaign, having given or loaned more than \$250,000 of his wife's inherited sewing machine millions to the man dedicated to end inheritance. LeBoutillier found that another faculty member, given to scatological outbursts against America, owed his home, car and fine clothes to his wife's father, the chairman of the board of a huge Wall Street bank. This same teacher railed against America and bowed to Marx, Hegel, Mao and their peers in a course supposedly devoted to such 19th century developments as slavery in America and the English industrial revolution.

The sale and use of pot and other drugs on the campus, the cuddling of homosexuals and lax grading for favored students was shocking enough, but it was the interjection of personal opinions by professors and invitations to controversial characters or groups to lecture on the campus which launched the new Harvard student on the warpath. This, of course, is not confined to Harvard. Liberal students and professors, LeBoutillier concludes, are not "ideological soldiers engaged in a lifetime commitment to some ideal, but rather they are insecure people desperately searching for some sort of identity." He adds that in almost every case, "the loud and ranting voices calling for radical changes in America were not the voices of dedicated sacrificing ideologues; no, they were really the voices of a generation searching for something that would provide an umbrella under which they could find security and legitimacy." No doubt conformity is the womb to which the uncertain seek to return. He emphasizes that not all of the students and faculty he knew at Harvard were as bad as the instances cited. Yet on the day of his graduation with honors, his house master urged him to take a few steps to the left, and the good man

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*Mr. Trohan, now retired, was on the editorial staff of the Chicago Tribune and chief of that journal's Washington bureau.*