

LIFE IN THE U.S.

Seeking educational alternatives

THEORY

TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

By Lawrence A. Cremin
Basic Books, New York, 1977

Lawrence Cremin, president of Teachers College, Columbia University, is a powerful figure in American educational circles. Perhaps the most well known historian of American education, he began a major reassessment of that topic in 1970 with the publication of *American Education: The Colonial Experience*. We are promised two further volumes, *The National Experience* for the period from the 1780s to the 1870s, and *The Metropolitan Experience* for the last century. *Traditions of American Education* briefly summarizes all three volumes.

Cremin's history, in theme and organization, closely parallels Daniel Boorstin's *The Americans*. Both historians stress the flexibility and expansiveness of the country's economic, social, cultural, intellectual and physical environments, permitting and encouraging the fit and opportunistic to succeed.

Breaking with other historians of education, who concentrate on the development and meaning of schooling, Cremin argues that education is the conscious attempt by society to influence people (not just the young) through churches, families, government, the media, work experience, as well as schools.

Cremin, following Boorstin and countless others, stresses the openness of American society from its inception. He is convinced that "individuals made their own way, irregularly, intermittently, and indeterminately, through the educational configurations of the nineteenth-century frontier, going back and forth across the permeable boundaries of household, church, school, and apprenticeship, largely self-motivated and largely self-directed toward particular goals."

Twentieth century society is considerably more complex, but the same sort of process has prevailed.

If the American educational experience has not been absolutely the best, Cremin argues, surely its relative success should be applauded. Other disagree.

For the past ten years many younger historians of American education (and a few older ones), concentrating on the rise and development of public schooling, have been seriously challenging this democratic thesis. Sparked by the work of the system.

Just as the cold war, imperialism, poverty, violence, racism, segregation and the like had deep roots in the country's past, as radical (or revisionist) historians had begun to discover, the schools' problems were equally long-lived. Moreover, schools were not only responsible for their own problems, but also contributed to perpetuating others as well.

Katz, for example, argues that the class, racist, and bureaucratic nature of public schooling, as developed since the mid-nineteenth century, both mirrored and contributed to similar problems throughout society. Schools have not just been boring, they have been dangerous.

The revisionists' arguments have become influential within certain circles, but like radical views generally have had little impact on popular thinking. Interestingly, the same can be said for Cremin's interpretation. Schooling and education are still seen as synonymous.

It is important, however, to counter strongly Cremin's conservative message, for it further diverts us from the major tasks facing our society, particularly the promotion of economic, social, sexual, racial, and political equality. In the process we must continue to make the schools more humane and responsive to commun-



Ken Firestone

The '50s and '60s saw many innovative educational experiments that could have benefited from knowledge of their historical roots.

ity needs and interests.

Schools, public and private, can be useful in promoting a healthy, prosperous, socialistic society, but not until more fundamental issues have been dealt with. As Katz, Christopher Jencks, and others sensibly argue, schools are only the mirror of the larger society; they can be reformed by it, but not vice versa.

This is perhaps the most important lesson of the revisionists' findings and also, oddly, of Cremin's interpretation. Schools are only one ingredient in influencing and manipulating the young, for good or evil. And they will only do the job society demands of them.

—Ronald D. Cohen

Ronald D. Cohen teaches history at Indiana University Northwest in Gary.

PRACTICE

ROOTS OF OPEN EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Edited by Ruth Dropkin and Arthur Tobier

City College Workshop Center for Open Education, New York, 1976

In 1816, as he led the drive to establish a system of public schools in North Carolina, judge and financier Archibald Douglass Murphey wrote, "...All the children shall be taught in them...the precepts of morality and religions should be inculcated, and habits of subordination and obedience be formed... Their parents know not how to instruct them... The state, in the warmth of her affection and solicitude for their welfare, must take charge of these children and place them in school where their minds can be enlightened and their hearts can be trained to virtue." At that time people had great hopes for public education.

A century and a half later many parents and even more children were wondering (sometimes in print) whether the affectionate and solicitous state had not become overzealous in its determination to indoctrinate with obedience and subordination.

The 1950s and '60s saw the founding of a number of schools that inculcated loyalty to the idea of freedom, not to the state, and were humanely respectful of the intellectual and emotional needs of teacher and learner.

There was a rich educational tradition on which such enterprises could have drawn, but in the excitement of those heady days before Nixon and crew, most of the experimenters seemed determined to reinvent the educational wheel, remaining ignorant of previous experience.

Today, when there is more somber reflection about the demise of so many great starts in education than there is joy in their continuation and achievements, is an appropriate time for publication of *The Roots of Open Education in America*, a book taken from a conference with that title at New York's City College in 1975.

Fifteen conference participants and four formal speakers record how the spirit and tradition of open education was continued, by themselves and others, in one-room school houses in North and South, in long-forgotten WPA experiments, in Yiddish shules, in settlement houses, among the Mohawk Nation of the Iroquois Confederacy, and through Citizenship Schools spawned in the late '50s to teach southern blacks how to read and write.

They describe unsung persons in often unheard of places who have kept alive—through practice, endurance and frequent sacrifice—the idea that education means growth, change and the questioning of all boundaries.

One might fault the lack of acknowledgement of the European origins of many of these ideas, but it is exciting to know so much has been accomplished in America by so few, with so little and under such odds.

Many of the storytellers continue working today as teachers in nontraditional schools. Their stories demonstrate how practitioners have managed—now and in the past—to encourage learning through collaboration, interdependence, and by viewing leadership as a function that all may exercise, where results are measured in terms of the ability to make decisions, to value, to think critically, to act democratically, to laugh, cry and be one's self, and not merely by the accumulation of expertise.

This book will bother both the tradition-bound educator and the searcher for a quick formula or method. None is offered save for the abiding characteristic

seemingly shared by the storyteller/teachers of an abiding respect for man and womankind, coupled with the determination to bring about basic social change.

Page after page reflects how these educators related their teaching to the political and economic forces in America. The movement towards open education is rhythmically related to the American economy, just as the political and economic demands of the state shape traditional schooling.

After Nixon's election, for instance, high inflation rates, double digit unemployment and a substantial fall in real wages were used to deliberately stifle the rising expectations of Americans. Fear about the future was created. At that time, not coincidentally, many of the most promising open school endeavors ground to a halt, or were severely cramped.

"The chief enemy of open education," notes Paul Nash in one of the formal presentations in the book, "is fear. Fear has many allies, one of the most important being inflation. Inflation means working harder this year than last to stay in the same place... It means subordinating, perhaps ingratiating yourself, and developing whole categories of attitudes and procedures regarding authority that are the enemies of self-actualization, self-confidence, independence and interdependence. Therefore, in times of inflation or economic recession, it is very hard... to nurture open education, because in these times the forces of fear are strengthened."

The climate of fear created by Nixon and continued by Ford apparently lingers.

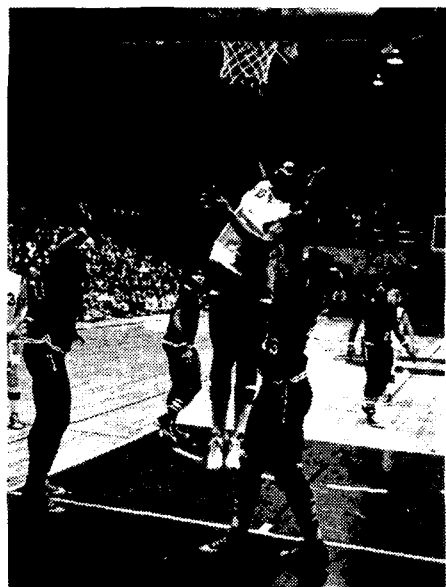
So while this plague is upon the land, the priority task facing those concerned about fostering the traditions of open education is two-fold: to support and continue those few open educational places still flourishing, and to evaluate and test our own experiences against those of persons such as the ones in this book. Its unstated message suggests that hope for change will again stir in the land, and that it is out of hope and not despair that revolutions are born.

—Frank Adams

Frank Adams is a cobbler and writer. His shoe repair shop in Gatesville, N.C., is also used as a center for community education for social change.

SPORTS

Confusion over sports equality



By Barry Jacobs

Last season, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) Tarheels' men's basketball team finished first in its conference and second in the nation. Much was done to see that the team was well taken care of on and off the court. Meanwhile UNC's women's basketball team struggled along without adequate shower or locker facilities, without practice uniforms, without a full-time coach. The women's athletic director had little time to recruit and few scholarships to offer.

In 1974, of the literally hundreds of millions of dollars budgeted for athletics by American colleges and universities, only 2 percent went to women's programs. Few schools offered women athletic scholarships. Little was done to provide adequate coaching, facilities or equipment in the few intercollegiate sports played by women athletes.

Change with Title IX.

Spurred by the anti-discrimination requirements of Title IX of the federal Educational Amendments Act of 1972, change has come to intercollegiate athletics. A school like the University of California at Berkeley, which spent \$5,000 on women's athletics in 1972, now budgets \$448,000 for its women's programs.

Many schools are striving to upgrade their women's athletics programs and to end the inequities which have existed in the past. It's no simple task. And with the deadline for full Title IX compliance less than nine months away, confusion and a lack of uniform progress mark the efforts of administrators to achieve the "equal opportunity" mandated by the act.

According to Section 86.41 of Title IX, "No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, be treated differently from another person or otherwise be discriminated against in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics" offered by any school receiving federal funds.

Universities were required to submit an internal self-evaluative report to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare by July 21, 1976, detailing their efforts to meet the requirements of Title IX. They are expected to be in full compliance by July 21, 1978.

But just what full compliance entails is a matter of considerable conjecture and debate.

Confusing guidelines.

"HEW has given us some guidelines and they're confusing guidelines," said Jeffrey Orleans, a special assistant to the president of the University of North Carolina. Orleans' job is to oversee the implementation of Title IX within the 16-campus state system.

"It's up to each university to decide what is compliance and what is not," he said. "You can do anything you want as

long as you don't discriminate." Spurred by the anti-discrimination rules of Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act, change is coming to intercollegiate athletics. More and more schools are moving to equalize treatment of men and women. But efforts are hindered by confusion in the government over just what schools are required to do to provide equal opportunity and treatment in their athletic programs.

long as you don't discriminate."

This vagueness has led to a wide divergence of responses in the application of Title IX. Some schools have gone to considerable lengths to extend full athletic benefits to women. They are the exceptions.

Many see Title IX as a threat to their men's programs or as a strain on their budgets and have resisted making changes to accommodate women.

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), representing men's intercollegiate athletics, is currently pressing a lawsuit that would void that part of Title IX that requires equality between men's and women's athletic programs.

A quick look at two schools in the same state university system illustrates how greatly the approach to Title IX can vary. North Carolina State University gives its full-time women's athletic director, Kay Yow, a two-room office in the basketball arena, as well as a full-time secretary. Yow has time to travel, to recruit, to devote to coaching strategy sessions. This year she's sharing her duties with a full-time assistant.

Noted Frank Weedon, assistant athletic director at State, "We're doing, within the rules, whatever it takes to win. We want the best program that money can buy."

Contrast that with UNC, State's arch rival. UNC's women's athletic director, Frances Hogan, must teach a full load of physical education classes. Her secretary also does physical education department work. Hogan has little time to travel, to recruit athletes, to devote to long range planning. She has a small office in an old building tucked far away from the rest of the athletic administration. And Hogan complains that she is not even listed in UNC game programs among "key athletic personnel," though the ticket manager and the equipment manager rate such mention.

"Sometimes I get the feeling that we're not part of athletics," she protested.

UNC is not the only school that has been slow to embrace an expanded women's program. And UNC at least has a woman as women's athletic director, something that many other schools lack.

No action from HEW.

Different schools' attitudes are also reflected in their Title IX self-evaluation re-

ports. Some schools, like Duke and the University of Maryland, are proud of the thorough detailed analyses they made in their reports, and officials at these schools make their reports readily available for inspection. Others refuse to let an outsider see their self-evaluation report. In fact, many have not yet submitted their reports to HEW.

Jeffrey Orleans, who once worked for HEW and helped draft much of the Title IX legislation, claimed the department has thus far made little effort to enforce or clarify the Title IX regulations.

"HEW has done few reviews of the interim reports," he noted. "Nor have they answered our questions on any substantive issue."

Orleans explained HEW's inability to press for compliance as both "a legacy from past administrations" (Nixon's and Ford's) in which civil rights issues were not given high priority, and a result of a turnover in personnel that has created confusion within the Civil Rights Division of HEW.

Groping for guidance, Orleans expressed the hope that the federal government would come to North Carolina to examine the state university system's athletic programs.

"It would be very useful to find out you have a problem or you have a clean bill of health," he noted wryly.

As matters now stand, questions regarding compliance are registered by HEW, but no answers are forthcoming.

Orleans reported that an informal agreement exists whereby anyone submitting a question to HEW concerning their program will be immune to prosecution should HEW later rule the practice to be in violation of Title IX.

Lots of questions.

The questions regarding Title IX are plentiful. Does "equal opportunity" mean equal funding or comparable funding? By what magic formula does HEW expect "equality" to be measured?

And how are schools to treat the so-called "revenue-producing sports" — men's basketball and football in most of the country—in allocating funding and facilities? Is it acceptable to consider these sports separately from nonrevenue sports like wrestling, fencing, most women's sports and intramural programs?

Most schools think so, funding the revenue sports first, then dividing the remainder of their athletic budget among the other sports. Men in the so-called "minor" sports have long complained about such treatment—now women are experiencing it too.

Experts like Orleans hope the "impact of revenue" on people's thinking can be reduced soon. "The question of revenue-producing and nonrevenue-producing is irrelevant to the question of equal opportunity in intercollegiate athletics," he maintained. He prefers to approach Title IX compliance by deemphasizing a concern with money, asking instead, "How would the students best be served?"

It's unlikely many major universities will take such a dispassionate approach to their athletic programs, not when they see basketball and football attracting large donations, publicity and national prestige.

Differing athletic associations.

Even if schools work out their difficulties in allocating resources, and manage to overcome old stereotypes and prejudices about women, other problems remain.

Women's teams belong to the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women), which has a different set of rules than the men's NCAA. In several areas—tutoring, recruiting, scholarships—the organizations have conflicting regulations; schools which belong to both are forced to apply different, often clearly unequal standards to their men's and women's programs in order to maintain their eligibility in the NCAA and the AIAW. How these inequities will be viewed by HEW in its evaluation of a university's compliance with Title IX is anybody's guess.

For the fact is that while every college administration in the U.S. has had to respond to Title IX, no one knows for certain what Title IX is all about. No one knows what compliance means, let alone what is enough compliance. And until someone decrees otherwise, women's athletic programs will continue to stumble along at as many different paces as there are administrators to set them.

Barry Jacobs is a freelance writer in North Carolina.

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