

The Politics of Policy Analysis: The Day Care Experience

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The advent of policy analysis is one of the more interesting innovations in government during the last generation. This essay will briefly describe this important development, illustrating it by the examination of a particular issue in policy analysis—the controversy over federally-sponsored day care.

Superficially, the idea of applying social science method to government activities sounds promising or ominous, depending on your point of view. On the one side, the application of systematic thinking to public policy would seem obviously beneficial—do not businesses and other organizations employ “scientific management”? Conversely, policy analysis could be labeled “social engineering”—just as physical engineering wields the natural sciences for real-world applications, policy analysis applies the technique of social science to “social problems,” which is bound to unnerve those who bristle at the idea of government manipulating society.

But perhaps the most valid characterization of policy analysis is that it is “banal”—governments have always made decisions, have always contemplated options before making decisions, and have always considered the costs and benefits of those various options. Policy analysis does little more than formalize this process, albeit with a fixation for “hard” data reflecting the high value placed on numeracy in contemporary culture. All the policy analyst does—or is supposed to do—is bring information to the attention of decision-makers regarding the costs and benefits of various alternative means of achieving *given* goals. This last is important: in any polity, be it communist or democratic, the ultimate decision-making ability rests with the political leadership—those with power. The policy analyst can only inform—he is the quintessential staff man.

It may be objected that this is a naive formulation—yes, he can only inform, but through his control of the flow of information he can affect decisions. If the analyst lays out the options of a, b, and c, but deletes d, e, and f, he has already loaded the decision and, to the degree that he manipulates the information on costs and on benefits, he is controlling the decision. Fortunately, no policy analyst to my knowledge has ever had such power. Efficient decision-mak-

ers do not trust anyone entirely and seek alternative advice. Furthermore, a policy analyst is trained and conditioned to work as a disinterested technician, largely ignorant of the politics involved in the decision. This factor often leads eager young policy analysts to despair or cynicism at learning that what was obviously the preferred solution was rejected for political reasons. That is as it should be—politics is the politician's job. And, to return to the theme, the policy analyst only deals with means, not ends. It is not his decision that America should abolish poverty, spread democracy throughout the world, or upgrade public health—in the American system, such goals are the province of the appointed executives, the elected legislatures, and presumably, ultimately the electorate.

What? The policy analyst is supposed to be indifferent to the ends to which his knowledge is used? Yes, indeed; he is supposed to be "a professional." Just as the doctor should cure any patient regardless of his opinion of the moral quality of that patient or as the lawyer must defend his client regardless of his opinion of the justice of the client's case, the policy analyst, having once decided to be a policy analyst, is supposed to go disinterestedly toward the goals set by his client.

Since the New Deal the national government has been dominated by elements that favor revisions to the political economy which are advocated by persons identified as "liberals"; so, most domestic policy analysis has been of programs which tend to expand government intervention into areas previously reserved for private decision-making. So, on the domestic side, policy analysis has been, if you like, aiding and abetting Big Government. The analyst usually faces a situation in which the decision-maker believes that his political well-being demands that government "do something"—so the analyst must advise what can be done which will be the most effective or, at the minimum, the least ineffective. To those who consider that these reforms have been adverse to the national well-being, so-called "conservatives," policy analysis seems "Left."

National Security Agencies, the Biggest Consumer

This is not quite true. While I know of no calculation of the relative amounts, most policy analysis has been conducted under the auspices of national security agencies. Indeed, the first formal policy analysis was performed for the Department of Defense, particularly for the U.S. Air Force, which took a lead in engaging technicians and scientists to work on military problems. Here the

problem of the analyst was how to most efficiently bolster the armed strength of the United States. This analysis, as in all human endeavor, has been considerably less than entirely successful—indeed, in many cases one can see where more primitive forms of analysis might have been superior. For example, the claim of conservatives and of the bulk of ordinary Americans that the correct Indochina policy in the early 1960s was “get in or get out” in retrospect seems far better informed than the more subtle calculations of Messrs. Bundy, McNamara, and their peers. However, these were political decisions made not by rationality but by “pseudo-rationality.”¹

Returning to the domestic side, one could elaborate for the length of this journal on how policy analysis could be put to “conservative” purposes. Let me suggest a case which is trivial but not bizarre. Many persons of a conservative bent believe that requiring school children to wear uniform clothing would improve what once was called “deportment.” Here is how a policy analyst would deal with this issue: first, such a policy has obvious costs; the administrators must invest time, energy, and perhaps even money in initiating, implementing, and enforcing such a policy; the parents would have financial costs; and the students would lose liberty in their personal choice of clothing. These costs are apparent, so an advocate of a school uniform policy must be prepared to demonstrate benefits. There must be a positive output. What do you mean by “deportment”? How do you know it is better or worse? How do you compare it? Therefore, how do you measure it? How valid are the data on poor deportment? How reliable is the reporting?

Having established measures, then output can be examined. Merely comparing deportment in schools with or without uniforms is interesting but insufficient—other variables may lie behind the decision to have uniforms or not. Examining historical changes before and after dress codes have changed has the same weaknesses; other things have changed—all deportment may have become better or worse. So the analyst would gather data on many schools and try to estimate how much deportment change was related to uniform variables and how much to other factors. The best approach is a formal experiment, comparing uniformed students with a non-uniformed “control group.” (But here great care is necessary, be-

1. For example, Mr. McNamara’s passion for standardization led to the attempt to specify one single belt buckle for all the military services, as if any substantial benefits were to be gained from producing three million of one belt buckle versus three runs of a million each.

cause if the students resist the dress code and know that its permanence depends upon their deportment, obviously they will have strong incentives to behave more ruffianly or sluttishly than previously, so the purpose and length of the experiment must be kept secret from them and—yes, one is manipulating them.²⁾

Neutrality of Approach

Note that the approach above is cool and presumably objective. Policy analysts tend to think of themselves as complete products of the Age of Reason; among them “ideologue” is a term of reprobation. To go into a problem with preconceived notions of how it should turn out is considered rather bad form and unprofessional. In the real world, however, this value-free approach is impossible. Indeed, the belief in the validity of reason applied to policy is in itself, as has been pointed out by critics of Left and Right, an ideology. The charges from the Left that policy analysis is basically conservative because it props up the existing capitalist system cannot be refuted within the ideological framework of the complaints; however, most of the objections of the Right may be fought off a little more easily. Take the most thoroughgoing and learned attack on political positivism, F. A. Hayek’s elegant *The Counter-Revolution of Science*. He challenges the idea of using science to shape an entire society toward some predetermined end. No policy analyst would even dream of doing so. They devote themselves to specific, concrete problems and, like the individual actor in the ideal free market, they do not seek infinity or zero, but more or less. The first lesson taught to the student at a school of policy analysis is that everything in this world has costs. That is a fundamentally sobering notion, and no person can then act under such assumptions and have a grandiose idea of building a brave new world, for better or for worse. It is the political leadership, in its wisdom, that announces social goals such as “full employment,” “abolishing poverty,” “sweeping the criminals from our streets,” or “pure air and water.” The policy analyst, no matter what the goals of his boss may be, must limit himself to less poverty, less crime, less impure water, and so on. Nonetheless, the charge that policy analysis is “statist”

2. Some of the problems inherent in social experiments of this type are nicely summarized in Martin Anderson’s *Welfare* (Palo Alto, 1978), pp. 103-127.

is correct; however conservative, it assumes the power of government to make decisions.

This does not mean that policy analysts cannot be on the Left. Indeed, the earliest serious precursors were the English Fabian socialists; they were by no means “bleeding-heart” liberals or believers in some socialist millennium, but were advocates of tough-minded administration from the top. Of course, they had an exaggerated notion of their own cleverness, a sentiment not limited, I believe, to the Left, and a rather superstitious regard for official published numbers which, among other things, led them to some rather unusual ideas about the character of Stalin’s Russia. On the Right, of course, one of the great triumphs of policy analysis in recent years was the welfare reforms carried out by the Reagan administration in California, which have to a considerable degree been adopted throughout the nation.

Still, at another level, the policy analyst, by the nature of his activities, is not working for himself. He has an employer or a client. Like any prudent person in such a position, he is not about to tell his patron loudly that his goals are stupid or that the means used to pursue them in the past have been ineffectual or even backward (“counterproductive” in the jargon of the field). And there is, as in all relations between people, the temptation to tell the purchaser of the services what he wants to hear. The bearer of bad news has not been well rewarded by popes, kings, or corporation presidents. One must be at least very cautious in presenting bad news.

The Early Days of Policy Analysis

For this reason much policy research is let out to outside contracting agencies. This originated in the engagement of scientific talent in the Second World War and was institutionalized by Project RAND of the U.S. Air Force and its imitators. This arrangement was considered desirable for two reasons. This kind of talent did not lend itself to routine civil service personnel procedures—it was necessary to promote, redeploy, or discharge people without regard to their seniority or standing in the “merit” system. Also, there was a desire to pay people much more than the limited salaries available in the then (but obviously no longer) parsimonious civil service scales. Furthermore, the central point of policy analysis was to get an outside, independent judgment, and people who were permanently within the system would clearly be too prudent to tell the emperor that he had no clothes.

At first, the outside policy analysts got away with murder because no one inside could evaluate their output. Much of the work, especially the early RAND work, was of enormous value, but much of it also was quite worthless, the pursuit of individual hobbies and occasional charlatanry. This has been mitigated considerably by building a capability within the system for critical consumption of policy research. For example, a serious grounding in policy research is now part of the education of military officers who seek high command, and for better or worse, they know how to deal with "whiz kids."

It has also been noticed that, in many instances, individuals have left the bureaucracy, formed outside consulting organizations, and then contracted with their former agencies. It seems rather smelly, but is probably inevitable, considering human nature and organizational requirements. People prefer to deal with people whom they know to be competent and whom they know to be conversant with their problems. The alternatives would be to put matters out to purely anonymous bids, which would lead to all sorts of peculiar results, or to keep all analysis within the government, thus reinforcing its inbred bureaucratic quality.

The other option, of course, is to get rid of policy analysis altogether, which would then leave the government entirely at the mercy of the political leadership and of civil servants dumbly carrying out orders. The only influences would then come from whom-ever was organized to manipulate data outside the government. In practice, this would mean the universities and other organizations, such as the Brookings Institution, and these, for the most part, must be considered agencies of "the New Class" which benefits from the expansion of government. In truth, concerns about consultancies are political—the Right objects to them in the social agencies; the Left objects to them in the national security agencies. Since the great bulk of such arrangements are with national security agencies, abolition of the policy consultancies would, on balance, aid the American Left and its friends abroad.

The Day Care Controversy

But other forms of political influence and their effects on policy also interject themselves into the system. Let me use as a case the current struggle over the expansion of government-sponsored day care in the United States. First, let me set forth *my* interest in this matter. I became involved in the subject of day care in a peculiar manner which made me about as disinterested as any analyst could

be. Several years ago I had a sort of summer fellowship at a leading business newspaper. Among other things, it conventionally asked what the costs are of the various programs advocated by politicians. My attention was called to a speech made by a then presidential candidate, Mr. James Earl Carter, regarding his program for the improvement of family life in America, which included a vastly expanded system of "day care." Wanting to cost this out and noting that a well-known congresswoman had written in defense of day care for that very newspaper some months before, I called her office and asked for the staff man who was working on day care. The woman who came on the phone was quite effusive—in addition to advocating a universal day care system, she claimed that she had no idea what it would cost per child or in total but it was terribly needed, and told me some other things that were so bizarre that I concluded that the issue warranted closer examination.³

Even though the particular newspaper is scrupulous in its concern for accuracy, in-depth study is not cost-effective for journalism, so the research was mostly done by telephone, attempting to represent differing views on the cost and effectiveness of day care. Coming from a background of policy analysis, I asked around to find who had done serious independent work on the subject and came upon a group of researchers who had been active in the field. These people on the whole talked with what sounded like sense.

The other principal actors were the supporters of day care who in every instance gave me information which was not believable, or worse, from their point of view, which actually damaged their cause. Another group of players was identified by vaguely recalling a paper on child development produced by a woman at The Heritage Foundation. She was tracked back to Texas and located a network of women who were actively engaged in fighting government-sponsored day care, presumably on "ideological" grounds. That is, they had no economic or organizational interest in the matter, but were motivated by their views of what should be the proper relationship between mother and child and between family and state. As a policy analyst, I was not particularly impressed by their ideological concerns. After all, their ideology did not address itself to the central issue—that is, were children and mothers suffering because of a lack of day care in the United States?

3. I later learned she was not staff at all, but a full-time lobbyist for the social services department of a major city.

Sufficient data were eventually gathered to write what I considered to be a credible newspaper piece. It was, on the whole, critical of the position held by the advocates of the need for an expanded government role in day care, but not hostile on ideological grounds, that is, it did not see day care as some threat to the family, the nation, or Christian civilization, but rather for the ordinary reasons that the need for day care was grossly exaggerated by its supporters and the presumed benefits of day care to the recipients were not proven because the data were inadequate. In policy analysis the implicit assumption is that a lack of data on something weakens a case. This is a flaw, but it is in a considerable sense a conservative flaw. That is, if you must have persuasive data before you can change something, you strengthen the *status quo*. Furthermore, my disregard of the viewpoint of the anti-day care ideologues points out another issue—it is quite conceivable on theoretical grounds that their concerns are a real possibility—that government day care could be part of a long-term erosion of the individual family, part of the evolution of America toward a thoroughly statist system. But, if you cannot act before being sure the long-term effects are entirely benign, you cannot do anything—witness the effective blocking tactics of the environmentalists.

On the basis of the newspaper article, the editors of *The Public Interest* commissioned me to do a longer, presumably more serious piece, offering the opportunity to review studies and reports. The data were surprisingly slim in nature. This is understandable because day care as a public policy issue only really emerged seriously in the 1970s and by 1976 there had not been adequate time to commission and carry out serious in-depth studies of the desirability and effectiveness of day care. However, it was possible to draw some conclusions on the basis of the data then available. This is a summary of *The Public Interest* article which was submitted to *Sociological Abstracts*:

An analysis of the political debate over a major expansion of the role of the U.S. government in assisting institutional services for children, especially infants, or so-called “day care,” which, on the basis of available social science data, policy research, and personal interviews, concludes that: (1) the alleged need/demand for day care is grossly exaggerated by its supporters; (2) the alleged positive effects of day care on child development are dubiously supported; (3) the enormous expense of universal “professional” day care would certainly add to the tax burden on families, possibly exacerbating the family problems day care is held to alleviate; and (4) the most efficient explanation for the day care agitation is the direct economic interest of its supporters.

Let me elaborate on this slightly. On Number 1 above the data seem quite clear, namely that the day care advocates' assertion of a huge unmet demand is largely specious. Almost all children are cared for by their mothers or by a relative or by a neighbor woman. Only a very few women avail themselves of or seem to want the type of institutional day care considered in most policy discussions. But a subtle ideological issue inevitably intrudes. Even if women are now satisfied with the care of their children, what if they had the option of a nearby facility, well-equipped, staffed by well-trained professionals, and "free"? When offered that choice, obviously many will be dissatisfied with searching for day-care on their own. Government-induced supply inevitably generates increased demand.

Gathering Data on Day Care

It is also unchallengeable that the sort of day care advocated by the day care lobby is incredibly expensive. In late 1977 a representative of the Child Welfare League of America, one of the most aggressive of the lobbyists, cited costs of \$3,317 for "acceptable" care and \$4,131 for "desirable" care per child per year.⁴ There seems to be no definitive explanation or justification of these incredible costs, almost all of which are for "professional" staff. And, indeed, the federally-mandated standards for day care centers seem to be based upon no serious evaluation of the costs whatever (which has not escaped the notice of Congress; HEW is currently under a mandate to come up with new ones—which are strangely delayed).

Number 2 is the most doubtful of all. Measuring the effects of various types of programs upon children is extremely difficult. Testing is a tricky enough business for literate children, much less for pre-literate ones, and determining the long-term psychological effects seems particularly intractable. Here we must resort to examples of long-term effects of day care in socialist countries which is intended to generate a social personality—conformist and re-

4. It has now been almost forgotten that modern interest in government day care began as a "conservative" policy initiative, to respond to the enormous costs of supporting the children of welfare mothers by providing care for their children so the mothers could be put to work. Policy analysis—in this case simple arithmetic—has killed this idea; providing institutional day care is *more* expensive than straight AFDC payments and at least the welfare money goes mostly to the poor rather than mostly to "helping professionals."

spectful of the state and its institutions—not considered the ideal by the sort of people who advocate government day care in America. The other major example, the kibbutzim of Israel, is so obviously a special case that it would hardly seem worth examining for relevance to American conditions.

However, here the “one-way” argument is relevant—advocates were for years claiming that children would be *better off* under day care than being cared for by the woman down the block—and there does not seem to be a shred of evidence to indicate that this is so. Since the woman down the block is there and is performing the service, why replace her with expensive “professionals” in formal day care centers? Stripped of all the qualifications and jargon, my conclusion was that the day care agitation was a blatant racket to aid the people in the day care business.

In the course of this research I became unintentionally embroiled in another matter, of little import in the wider scheme of things, but wonderfully illustrative of the pitfalls of policy analysis. Very early on I was informed of the “Larson Study” which I learned was a study conducted by the Stanford Research Institute. This is a highly regarded institution, formerly affiliated with Stanford University, which conducts policy research for government organizations, as well as consultancy for business. Its work is rarely brilliant—little work is brilliant—but usually competent. “Larson” turned out to be Meredith A. Larson, a staff member of SRI who had conducted a piece of policy research on day care published in 1975. On the basis of her study, correspondence, and telephone conversations, I conclude that Miss Larson is a good journeyman policy analyst. This is not to be perjorative or damning with faint praise—her work is competent but not brilliant, indeed, of the level that should be expected of good work in any field.

As appropriate to policy analysis, she had not done any original research of her own, but gathered and examined that research related to the issues posed by the terms of the study. In this case, she addressed the conventional questions—what is the demand for, what are the costs of, and what are the results of formal day care? Her conclusions were even more negative than mine.

Those who have an image of the social welfare bureaucracies as insatiable octopi grasping for power will be surprised to learn that this study was funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and at a level low enough that any “conservative” political influence from the top of the Nixon administration was highly unlikely. (Policy research must be performed for clients high

enough in the bureaucracy to be useful, but low enough to be honest and objective; it cannot be done for the political leadership to whom opposition is near treason.) The client was the Office of Education whose function is to administer the various federal-aid-to-education programs put into effect in the 1960s and whose principal constituency is what former Representative Edith Green called "the educational-industrial complex," one of the chief figures of which, Mr. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, has advocated universal "free" day care, federally financed and administered through the schools. (By the way, this would cost \$100 billion annually.)

At the present time federal control of day care is up for grabs. Those programs, which have crept incrementally over the last decade up to roughly \$1.8 billion a year, are now scattered among dozens of agencies. They are mostly, but not exclusively, in HEW. A bureaucratic operative maximizing his interest as indicated by political theoreticians should be eager to get his snout in this particular trough. Not so. OE was behaving perfectly rationally. Few bureaucrats are the greedy power seekers lately depicted, but resemble more closely the older style of time-serving hacks. In any field of human endeavor, entrepreneurs are rare. OE has enough trouble dealing with the difficulty it causes local school districts with the quite impossible goals that Congress has set for it. Day care is just another potential hassle; had OE any doubts on that score, they were disabused shortly after the publication of Larson's study.⁵

The Response of the Day Care Lobby

The day care lobby responded almost immediately and vigorously. A "critique" of the SRI study appeared, labeled "illustrations of errors in fact and judgment, selective use of data, improper methodology, unfamiliarity with the subject and unsubstantiated conclusions found to characterize . . ." the Larson study. This was produced under the rubric of the National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth, the umbrella day care lobbying organization. The critique was unsigned by any individual, but was endorsed by many institutions. In addition to obvious interested parties such

5. I have heard the theory that OE supported the Larson study as part of a conspiracy to block government day care *now* in order that the field will be open for the teachers in the future. Since I also heard that I was part of that conspiracy, the theory lacks credibility.

as The Association for Child Education International, The Child Welfare League of America, and so on, more broad-based national institutions such as the American Association of University Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Consumers League, American Federation of Teachers, and the Salvation Army also had their names on it. One leading day care figure advised me that the critique was written by Mary Dublin Keyserling of the National Consumer League (former head of the Women's Bureau and wife of the economist Leon Keyserling). Mrs. Keyserling denied it; however, in conversation she described the report as "damnable." Miss Larson was characterized as incompetent and/or dishonest. More important, "On the basis of the memorandum's serious inadequacies and unscientific approach we wish strongly to recommend that your Office return it to the Stanford Research Institute as unacceptable, with a request that the Institute not release it to the public."

The critique makes two legitimate points. The study lacks the usual disclaimer to the effect that the opinions expressed therein are those of the author and of the research organization and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of the contracting agency. If the client were held responsible unbiased research would be impossible. This was a serious slip, but does not reflect on the quality of the research.

The most substantial criticism in the day care critique is properly put right up front. They challenge Miss Larson's implication that the "need" for day care is not expanding rapidly. The wording in the original report (modified in response to the critique) is ambiguous and practically unreadable. Day care advocates like to emphasize the increase in the percentage of women working outside the home, which implies a rapidly increasing demand for institutionalized day care, while Miss Larson wished to emphasize that the birth rate has been declining so that the total effect is that the potential market for day care has been increasing only slowly. Her phrasing emphasized that the increase in the demand for day care was not as much as had been projected in the late 1960s. Here we may witness the glee of the researcher in discovering something contrary to the common opinion in the field—in policy research, satisfaction and reputation go with results that go against the "conventional wisdom" or are "counter-intuitive."

The remainder and the bulk of the critique is easily refuted by reference to the original report or to Miss Larson's rejoinder. Let me cite several examples.

The critique reads, "In addition, by failing to mention that the number of young school-age children who need before- and after-school care is even larger than the number of pre-school children that need day care, the author considerably understates the need." The report, however, is clearly titled "Federal Policy for *Pre-School Services*."

"She contends," the critique continues, "that the increasing availability of affordable day care services will not reduce the number of latch-key children and states (p. 50) 'making changes in the existing center-care programs does not seem to offer much hope, since latch-key families are from predominantly middle-class families.' The author offers no evidence that the problem is mainly middle-class and essentially attitudinal."

As I read her paper, however, she does not characterize the problem as "essentially attitudinal" and does cite evidence in a table on page 44 that latch-key children are predominately from middle-class families.

The critique goes on to quote Miss Larson as follows: "She states that '... programs which include health and educational components, along with all day care, cost a minimum of \$6,000 a year' (p. 20)."

Her text on page 20, however, states "Finally, there are some day-care centers, almost always highly research oriented, that provide 'maximum' health and educational programs along with all-day care. We have labeled such centers 'intensive' and discussed them in greater detail later. First-hand accounts of operating costs for these intensive centers are almost impossible to obtain. Rough estimates for their services, based on reported personnel use, would be at least \$6,000 per-child, per-annum. Costs could exceed this by a factor of 2." In her paper, she nowhere implies that this level of expenditure is typical.

The critique also picks nits on the numbers of children and working mothers, offering alternatives differing only slightly and in no way affecting the analysis. Miss Larson was easily able to respond by merely citing her sources.

In summary, the critique was mendacious, but, more importantly, it was stupidly mendacious, in that it is very easy to check. I have belabored this to emphasize what seems to me to be a very important point: If we accept a cynical view of the motivation of the day care lobby—that they are deliberately lying to raid the Treasury, one would think that they would lie intelligently; in fact, they simply

cannot respond to any evidence injurious to their cause except by hysteria.⁶

Policy Analysts Are Not ‘Experts’

It might seem the epitome of gall for the day care lobby to charge Miss Larson with not being like them, an “expert.” But they are absolutely right; a policy analyst is not an expert, does not pretend to be an expert, and is therefore in many cases *more* competent to evaluate the material impartially than the expert is. An expert in any field is almost certainly an interested party. He makes his living from the field; he has taken positions he must defend; he has cronies and rivals; he must live with his colleagues. The policy analyst is the hired gun who comes to town to make one hit.

The worst flaw in the Larson study was not called out by the NCOCY critique, but is all too typical of policy research—the study was naive in two ways: by assuming that the existing research was the last word and by taking the “data” at face value. While she was correct in pointing out that the existing evidence did not support the day care position, she did not properly recognize that the evidence was far too weak to justify any strong statement on most aspects of the issue. Since policy analysts live by their ability to manipulate data, they have strong incentives to make more of them than is warranted. As Herman Kahn has pointed out, most data are made up. All indicators such as averages, medians, and percentages, are abstractions calculated from gathered numbers, often of doubtful reliability (especially when the source of the data has an interest in the outcome of the analysis). This is an inevitable fault which can only be controlled by continual skeptical criticism.

The Larson study was done under a contractual arrangement characteristic to policy research operations. SRI had (and has as of this writing) one of three “educational policy research centers” under a three year contract from the OE. A long-term contract has the obvious advantage of permitting the research organization to recruit a staff or, more probably, to permit permanent staff to

6. This is a Marxian, rather than a Beardian, interpretation of the economic motivation of ideology. An acquaintance of mine who is a trustee of an ancient settlement house in New York, which has long provided day care, reports that the staff formerly complained that government standards were hindering their performance, but now sincerely demand more government funding to meet those same standards. Having bit the apple, they cannot believe that it is poisoned.

familiarize themselves with the problems and concerns of the contracting organization. Typically, contracts are written to cover specific annual research, but in practice a great deal of latitude and flexibility are tolerated. As with so much in policy analysis, this sort of arrangement was first derived from the experience of "Project RAND" of the Air Force in the late 1940s which led to the formation of the RAND Corporation. The interplay between the contractor and the research organization is complex; for it to survive there must be a considerable level of harmony. One key element is geographic. By accident, the RAND operation was begun at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica, California, three thousand miles from the Pentagon, and distance seems necessary for the research organization not to get bogged down in day-to-day operations (such as, answering the latest inane query from some junior congressional staff member). Distance also quarantines the staff from "Washington Fever," the belief that the attitudes and issues of the government and its surrounding aura of lobbyists and other hangers-on are the nation. Any self-respecting government agency must now have its contract research organization. Obviously, wending between the Scylla of being a rubber stamp and mouthpiece for the contracting agency and the Charybdis of being totally "independent" (which in practice means being answerable to one's academic peers and therefore being irrelevant to policy) is very difficult to achieve. Whether or not SRI is doing so in its educational policy research center, I am not competent to judge. But the Larson work looks rather good beside some examples of research commissioned directly by the day care bureaucracy.

Interest Group Surveys

As one would expect, research produced by the agency with the most direct interest in the subject, the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, at HEW, has been much more favorable to day care. A poll of day care usage. "The National Child Care Consumer Study," discovered an enormous volume of day care used in the United States. Of course, almost all of this was by relatives, friends, and neighbors—which we already knew. And the summary reads, "Fifty per cent of all respondents were either neutral toward or in agreement with the statement 'I would be willing to have my taxes raised in order to support child care activities.'" Since the data read, "agreed," 9%; "strongly agreed," 26%; "neutral," 20%—this would normally be presented as stating that half the public is

not willing to pay more taxes. A good rule for consumers of policy analysis is to read summaries and highlights to determine what the producers/promoters want the reader to believe—then go deeply into the detailed data.

Another effort supported by ACYF was a survey of the persistence of pre-school educational programs, evaluating the outcome of some seventeen studies performed from the late fifties to the early seventies. Going back to groups of children studied previously, some of whom are now in their teens, to see how they were doing later on is potentially a very promising approach. Unfortunately, despite some references to them in the text, these long-term effects are not detailed. The oldest age shown for any children is ten years, and although the authors and the ACYF claim that the study proves the beneficial effects of day care, this is by no means demonstrated by the sparse and rather confused data displayed. In fact, several of the studies were not of day care, but of programs such as “Home Start” which merely send social workers around to homes occasionally to advise parents on taking care of kids. “The Persistence of Pre-School Effects” study demonstrates only what previous studies have shown—that pre-school programs can have some small measurable positive effects in the first three years of school which disappear thereafter.

The oddest claim in the study is the conclusion that: “Well planned curricula for young children in day care and Head Start are likely to reduce later costly special education or remedial programs in schools.” Not a scrap of data is presented to justify this contention. Whether or not this was intended to be propaganda is difficult to say because the internal organization of the report is so thoroughly muddled that this probably reflects a lack of competence rather than conscious mendacity. It was performed by a consortium consisting mostly of professors at obscure universities.⁷

In fact, the serious studies on the effects of day care on child development follow along the lines laid down by “The Coleman Report.” At the beginning of The War On Poverty, Congress directed that a study be made of the deprivation of black school children in the United States. A team led by James Coleman, a sociologist of impeccable liberal credentials, labored mightily and produced its report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which doc-

7. The study opens with an attack on “elite” Harvard scholars, ranging from the hereditarian Herrnstein to the socialist Jencks. “The new class” is no more monolithic than “the working class” or “the business class.”

umented how black schools had less spending per student, older facilities, less well-equipped facilities, less well-paid and well-educated teachers, and so on. They concluded, however, that it made no perceptible difference in the quality of education. What matters is who the children's parents are. The Coleman data have been reanalyzed by Right, Left, and Center, and found to be essentially sound. Nevertheless, since 1965 spending on education and teacher training has grown to a level where more is spent on education than on national defense.

Perhaps one could say that the Coleman report was an obscure tract for scholars which could not be expected to affect the public consciousness. Not so—one of Coleman's findings was the suggestion that students from less advantaged backgrounds did better in school when mixed with students of higher socio-economic status—and this finding (which has since been challenged and refuted) became one of the ideological underpinnings for school busing-for-racial-balance. Coleman himself has since analyzed more recent data and concluded that no benefit whatever derives to black or white students from school busing—and has been branded a racist for his efforts.

When used properly, policy analysis can serve the function of a shock absorber on a car—the wheel still bounces, but in a more controlled and predictable fashion. Policy analysis helps, but interest and ideology override—but we knew that already.

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—LONDON—

"In this country, *Britain*, I believe the old Fabian left is intellectually bankrupt. It has nothing to say that any longer can excite the enthusiasm of the youth. The young in this country are far more likely to be attracted by the free-market doctrines that are so effectively presented by the *Institute of Economic Affairs* than they are likely to be by the standard socialist tack which still dominates university reading lists."

Milton Friedman

Hoover Foundation Lecture at Strathclyde Business School, Scotland, April, 1978.

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The Third World and the Free Enterprise Press

JEFFREY ST. JOHN

The Russians and their Iron Curtain allies seek to foster news media control worldwide because control of media is a major element in their political system, and they want their system to penetrate the world. Third World nations are strongly drawn to controls because for the most part they have fragile and authoritarian governments lacking a secure popular base.¹

Clayton Kirkpatrick
Editor,
Chicago Tribune

The main mechanism for this attempt to erect a global dictatorship of thought is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), using a campaign cleverly camouflaged as “developmental journalism.” The United Nations, since its founding, has promoted state economic planning at the expense of private enterprise. The idea, therefore, that the state should plan and control the content and own the means of communication is only an extension of state ownership of the means of economic production embraced by Communist and some Third World nations.

Chicago Tribune editor Clayton Kirkpatrick, at a November 1977 Nairobi UNESCO conference, rebuked delegates who sought to pass a resolution sanctioning state ownership and control of the means of communication; not only was the resolution, he said, “truly revolutionary for UNESCO,” but a complete repudiation of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Draft declaration 19C/9, [argued Kirkpatrick] reflects the views of some nations that regard the mass media as a political arm of the state. It reflects the view that information media are to be used as a tool or implement to further the aims of the state. In these states the interests of the state take precedence over the interests of citizens as individuals. Therefore,

1. Transcript, speech before Newspaper Publishers Association, April 2, 1977, San Francisco, California.