

crazy notion that our only relation to other countries in the world can either be to prepare to fight them, spending billions on missiles and arms, or to spend billions to aid them, prop them up, speed their "development," etc. (Sometimes, of course, we do both at the same time, as in Somalia.) Can't we simply butt out? Can't we pursue that wonderful program that Edmund Burke celebrated in the policy toward the Ameri-

can colonies of the brilliant English politician Robert Walpole: "salutary neglect"? "Salutary neglect"—what a wonderful concept! and how remote from the minds and hearts of twentieth-century Americans! When will we learn that we don't *have* to take sides in every damned conflict on the face of the globe, that we don't *have* to pick rulers of every country? *We really don't.* ■

plish liberal goals through the "market."

Speaking of liberal goals, remember federal aid to education? The neocons are jumping on that train as well, but they want aid for private schools as well. Writing in the *Washington Times* (10/5/93), American Enterprise Institute scholar Robert Hahn comes out for a "\$10 billion National Choice Initiative" that would give federal vouchers of \$1,000 per child. It would tax the people, then give them their own money back with strings attached, so as to force private schools to obey the Department of Education.

Insight magazine recently asked Bill Bennett: what's wrong with cutting taxes as a way of giving parents the money to spend on school tuition? His answer: we couldn't be sure people would spend their money on education. So much for "choice."

What are the problems with public schools? Violence, drugs, falling test scores, and low graduation rates—all of which has been true for at least thirty years. It's not enough to condemn public schools. We have to understand why they've failed, in part so we can avoid repeating the same errors if vouchered schools are established.

Here are some theories as to why public schools have failed:

First, public funding makes public schools immune from the market and its discipline, so no one worries about trying to serve customers; public funding also makes efficient cost accounting impossible.

Yet the voucher system would fail on the same terms. Vouchers

Defeat "Choice"

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

"School choice" promoters—that is, people who oppose school districts and want tax subsidies for private schools—ask us to believe that their only opposition is the National Education Association. Yet all over the country, conservatives are organizing to prevent their private schools from being statized, which is exactly where vouchers will lead.

In California, the anti-voucher movement has gained a new set of converts in the suburbs. "When Kemp and Bennett stump for Proposition 174," Damon Darlin explains in *Forbes* (10/25/93), "they are finding many deaf ears among voters who stood foursquare with Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon." Why is that? "Those with good schools want to preserve the status quo—and suburbanites are the ones who tend to turn out for ballot initiatives. Inner-city minorities tend to stay home."

Why do suburbanites think school choice will harm their schools? The secret is in a clause (174,a,6) that voucher advocates haven't exactly trumpeted. It allows students to attend any school to which buses can take them, without regard to district lines.

What would happen if school-district lines are erased? School-districts are correlated to home prices. Mix up the districts and the values of homes would take a roller coaster ride.

Property values aren't all that's at stake, of course. There is also the quality of the schools. And suburbanites know that busing innercity kids doesn't change their behavior, which often includes an opposition to learning and a propensity to drugs and gangs.

Erasing lines of demarcation is called "interdistrict school choice," but it's no different from what the paleo-left has always wanted. In the sixties, liberals didn't dare propose the outright elimination of district lines; they simply bused kids around to stir up the demographic pot. Leave it to the neocons to try to accom-

consist of public money, funds that become an entitlement so long as the seats in the classroom are filled. In comparison with their own money, parents would have far less incentive to spend it wisely because it is not theirs. They have no alternative use of the funds other than education. And the schools getting the money would be less careful as well, because of altered customer incentives and the need to be more responsive to the bureaucracy.

Second, public schools are centrally controlled, so local schools and communities have little authority. Public schools worked better before centralization, first at the state level and later at the federal. But the proponents of vouchers are doing everything possible to centralize private schools.

Third, public schools were undermined by coerced demographic upheavals, like busing and forced integration. If the goal is learning (as versus political indoctrination), the more homogeneous the background, behavior, and intelligence of the children in the classroom, the better. Certainly, no high-achieving child is better off in a room of misfits.

Yet vouchers are as egalitarian as present public schools, forbidding any admissions policies which appear "discriminatory" and setting up strict guidelines for admissions and discipline.

Fourth, public schools were harmed by secularization. The elimination of traditional religion opened up the way for condoms and Mother Earth.

Voucher programs differ in their treatment of religion, but

the Supreme Court has been clear: education is a public good, and when receiving public money, schools cannot promote sectarian purposes. For now, most voucher initiatives allow private schools to keep their religious identity. Will this hold up in court? It didn't for colleges getting public money.

Under vouchers, private schools would be subject to all the problems now plaguing the public schools. Voucher academies would be publicly funded, centrally controlled, unable to discriminate, and eventually secular. If private schools are good now, and they are, why saddle them with all the problems the public schools have? Why not protect them from corruption?

Voucher lawyers claim they can write initiative language that protects private schools from regulation. But neocon voucher advocate Chester Finn cleared this up in 1982: "Some to be sure, like to think they can have it both ways. But most acknowledge the general applicability of the old adage that he who pays the piper calls the tune, and are more or less resigned to amalgamating or choosing between assistance and autonomy."

But schools don't have to accept vouchers, right? Sure, then they'll be outcompeted by those that do, and will have to shut down. It's unfair competition to force unsubsidized schools to compete with those on the dole.

Thank goodness the voters are catching on to the real meaning of vouchers: that they will erase

public school boundaries and control private schools. What middle-class parent or taxpayer could be for that? ■

Waco, Weaver, and Centralization by L.H.R., Jr.

The Treasury Department's Waco report shows what happens when the fox is charged with investigating the chicken coop. Instead of early retirements and fat pensions, there should be indictments for one of the most egregious state actions in American history.

Amidst all the talk of whether David Koresh knew about the raid, and whether the agents knew he knew, the real questions have yet to be answered. The issue is not, as the report would have us believe, that the assault could have been even sneakier.

The attack on the Branch Davidians resulted in horrifying deaths for 86 men, women, and children. If the agents had not sacked the farm house, these people would still be living peacefully in their community, just as they were before the blitzkrieg.

In preparing the report, the Treasury conducted lots of interviews and wrote many analyses, the bulk of which the public will apparently not be allowed to examine. There is much that people would like to know.

For example, was the affidavit used to justify the attack