

school for 18 years, when vocational training can begin early. Far better to learn the basics, and then a skill that will actually be useful.

The traditional idea of apprenticeship allows a person to work for no wage or even a negative wage (i.e. the worker pays the employer) in exchange for the chance to learn. The Labor Department doesn't like this idea, because it violates every labor law on the books. A solution: throw out every labor law on the books.

What about higher education? It "imposes a crushing financial burden on professionals (or their parents), because they do not enter the labour market until their late 20s." Mr. Prowse would reverse the sequence. Young people would start working early, and pay out-of-pocket for needed education.

Besides, not everybody is suited for 16 or 21 years in school. Giving high school diplomas to 90% doesn't make them better educated or more prepared to make their own way in life. We hold the idea of "universal access" so dear that we can't see how inferior the universal product has become.

"Why is the world of education—from kindergarten to post-graduate study—so hidebound?" Mr. Prowse asks. Because it is "almost everywhere dominated by the public sector. Without huge subsidies higher education simply would not exist on its present scale. And this might not matter: lack of university chairs did not exert

much of a drag on the 18th-century Enlightenment."

Mr. Prowse raises the specter of people paying for what they learn, meaning that they would value it. "We now live in a topsyturvy world where most parents are happy to spend large sums on cars, homes, gadgets, and holidays but regard 'free' state education as a natural right."

"If more people," he continues, "could be persuaded to regard education as a service for which they should pay at least something (preferably a lot), and hence assume some direct control, they might be amazed by the subsequent pace of reform."

Revolutionary? Absolutely. But far from unthinkable. Every other good and service must fit the needs of individual customers. Why not education? Some people write treatises

on law, history, and economics. Others manage businesses, build houses, and repair cars. Others are day laborers. Others are entrepreneurs. In a free society, everyone can make a contribution.

From Mr. Prowse, we can draw up two good goals for 2000. First, every student will get the education that suits

his needs, talents, and desires. Second, education will be funded by the student, the parent, or some other party in the private sector. A final proposal: get the central government out of education, and save that \$647 million. ■

Gatt Tricks

by L.H.R., Jr.

Read the fine print on a contract, your Dad said. And his

rule applies to nations too, especially for treaties that purport to establish free trade.

The Clinton negotiators helped write the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, signed by the President on April 15. These advocates of statism and trade wars are anxious to pass Gatt. What do

they know that conservative Gatt supporters do not?

They know that this Gatt round is not about lowering tariffs to expand the international economy. It is about controlling that economy. To that purpose, Article One establishes a new international bureaucracy called the World Trade Organization

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(WTO), complete with a new Ministerial Conference, a Director-General, and a Secretariat, and a plethora of committees, councils, and review bodies.

This powerful world agency will replace the old Gatt framework set up in 1947, and add new powers of enforcement. The voting rule among members, for example, will no longer center on unanimity. That's a prescription for either supranational bribery or coercion of non-obedient countries.

Will those powers be used for free trade? No, for WTO's stated mission is "greater coherence in global economic policymaking," meaning "greater surveillance" and "enforcement" of dumping rules and other damaging non-tariff barriers.

The WTO will make a bad system worse by increasing the role of governments in hobbling the global economy. As the preamble to the charter shows, the agency is founded on outdated Keynesian notions of "full employment," "effective demand," and "sustainable development."

Anyone who follows interventionist codewords knows

that "full employment" means massive public works and other government spending. "Effective demand" is the

theory that long-term private investment and capital accumulation aren't as socially useful as central planning. And "sustainable development" is eco-speak for putting bugs before people.

The WTO preamble also promises that "developing countries" will "secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development."

That means redistribution from the productive to the deservedly poor.

As Hollywood lawyer and U.S. Trade Rep. Mickey Kantor toasted the completion of Gatt negotiations in December, the *New York Times* hailed the WTO as the equivalent of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These two agencies are expensive and destructive. We do not need a trade version.

The mystery is that some Republicans are cheering a text that offers bureaucracy, foreign aid, eco-regulation, and economic planning. These concepts understand-

ably thrill the trade negotiators of the most left-wing administration since Franklin D. Roosevelt, but Republicans should be burying them.

Even for political reasons, Republicans should consider doing the right thing. Despite the administration's confidence, the battle over Gatt and the WTO is far from over. It may yet be defeated by conservatives suspicious of international bureaucracies and independent businessmen resentful of a treaty that benefits large corporations while crippling medium and small-sized ones.

Four times in this century (1918, 1950, 1955, and 1974), such a coalition woke up the American people to defeat other international trade bureaucracies.

The most intense battle took place over the International Trade Organization (ITO), proposed in 1945. Like WTO, the ITO charter imposed detailed rules for tariffs, quotas, exchange controls, government loans, intergovernmental enforcement, and "full-employment" policies. And also like the WTO, it represented economic planning on a global scale.

So intense was public and Congressional dislike of the ITO that President Truman was forced to withdraw it. Big newspapers, big corporations, and big banks were for it, but the free-market forces in the House and Senate won out.

When Truman surrendered, "the most ambitious attempt ever made to reach

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agreement on a comprehensive code of rules" for international trade "ended in failure," wrote William Diebold, Jr., in his lament for the ITO published in 1952 by the Council on Foreign Relations.

The definitive attack had been written by Philip Cortney, an attorney and businessman in New York City whose book, *The Economic Munich*, was inspired by free-market economists Ludwig von Mises and Henry Hazlitt.

In the run-up to WTO ratification, we'll hear the usual apocalyptic predictions (world trade will collapse!) and the usual smears (protectionist! isolationist!). Yet the global economy has ballooned over the last two decades without management from above.

Conservative Republicans, who ought to be concerned for U.S. sovereignty and real free trade, should strangle the WTO in its crib. As in the past, only the free-market Right can do the job. ■

Gunning for the Insurance Industry

by L.H.R., Jr.

Brace yourself. Liberals in Congress have targeted another industry for government takeover. Housing and commercial insurance companies, they charge, don't provide enough coverage to

enough people at low enough rates. The politicians want to fix that with legislation that will raise premiums for the middle class.

Two bills are on the table. Massachusetts Democrat Joseph Kennedy's legislation would require insurance companies to disclose internal data from 150 metropolitan areas, separated into

tiny census tracts. The figures will be turned over to HUD, so it can crack down on companies with racial or ethnic disparities.

The second and slightly less onerous bill is Illinois Democrat Cardiss Collins's. It would force companies to disclose information in 25 areas by zip code and leave enforcement to the Depart-

Quotes That Need No Comment

Long ago, sometime between the sketching of the paleolithic cave paintings and the beginning of real history in 1965 when the NEA was foisted upon us, there used to be a real popular culture in America....In that veiled and lost epoch, many Americans played musical instruments instead of buying recordings produced by European musicians and Japanese corporations, wrote poetry for themselves instead of puzzling over thin volumes of crippled and bitter verse cranked out by whatever lesbian poetess-in-residence New York publishing houses have decided to make a celebrity for a week....—Samuel Francis, *Chronicles*

In the span of the same 50 years that America has slipped into crime and disorder under an ever more incoherent set of legal manipulations that have deprived society of the right to protect itself, Singapore has risen from a seamy, corrupt seaport to the astonishingly productive, orderly multicultural society that lives in peace because of respect for and enforcement of high standards of civil behavior.—Dr. Gregory P. Hetter, Letter to the *Wall Street Journal*

They [the Christian Coalition] want to undermine the public education system as we know it.—Frances S. Stein, executive director, Planned Parenthood of Westchester and Rockland Counties, *New York Times*

It was a country [Rwanda] with a very good record, proposing and implementing development activities. Obviously our democratization efforts aren't getting very far. If only we could somehow get a cease-fire, if you could find a number of qualified people still living or bring them back from abroad....It is heart-rending—the beauty of the whole place, the responsiveness of the people, their desire for a better life, for democracy and development, set against this intense struggle to dominate, a struggle for political power.—David Rawson, U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda, upon being evacuated to the U.S., *New York Times*

The obsession with a unitary state must be wrong. Only a hundred years ago, "South Africa" was no more than a geographical expression, a congeries of Boer republics, British colonies and African kingdoms. Its transformation into a single state in the wake of the Boer War was a mistake....—Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *Wall Street Journal*

In living rooms and cafes [in Hungary] some are asking: If Paul Touvier, a Nazi collaborator, can be tried in France for crimes against humanity on charges that he ordered the execution of seven Jews, why can't Communists who ordered and took part in the shootings in 1956 also be tried?—*New York Times*

The tragedy is that I don't know whether anyone will be able to stop it. When you negotiate with people with machetes, how can you make them understand about humanitarian neutrality?—Philippe Gaillard, head of International Red Cross, Rwanda, *New York Times*