

**MONTHLY LETTER TO FRIENDS OF  
THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
No. 8**

**JUNE 15, 1994**

Dear Friends:

This month we're covering more than usual because we are going to take a break for the rest of the summer. We will report back officially in early September. We will be in touch, however, through our scheduled fax communications and whatever else it takes to keep you well-informed on any important issues or developments.



**Up to Their Old Tricks, and Some New Ones**

- If it wasn't apparent before, it now is: the teachers unions are really becoming unhinged. In Michigan, the Michigan Education Association (MEA) has told several universities that it will not accept their student teachers if these universities authorize charter schools without the union's approval. Saginaw State University, among others, was also told that the MEA would tell alums to stop donating to their alma mater, and would further tell its professional staff to stop participating in training programs and professional development. The reason is obvious: Michigan's charter school law does not require charters to observe collective bargaining rules.
- Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania State Education Association pays out more than \$15 million in salaries and benefits to its 250 employees — an average of \$60,000 per staff member. The state's largest teachers union also controls more than \$1 billion in assets, according to a study by the Pennsylvania Leadership Council. For the 1993-94 year, PSEA employed nine registered lobbyists at a cost of \$850,000. In 1992, the most recent election year for the state's General Assembly, the union's PAC spent over a half million dollars in campaign contributions. In 1993, an off-year, the union spent about half that. Despite this cash flow, the agenda of the PSEA has been frustrated in the Capitol; according to PSEA President Annette Palutis, the word is getting out "that public schools are failing ... and that we, as a union, are to blame.... Those who have supported us in the past are finding it more difficult to support us and those who have not supported us



in the past are stepping up the attack." For the full report, contact Sean Duffy, President of the Pennsylvania Leadership Council, at (717) 232-1186.

- While on the subject, we were thrilled to see that Arizona Governor Fife Symington is demanding an investigation of alleged money laundering by the Arizona Education Association. Arizona law prohibits political contributions by corporations and unions. Symington is asking the legislature to investigate \$50,000 worth of contributions made to various democratic candidates after being passed through two separate organizations.

### **Around the Nation**

- Also in Arizona, the dynamic and pro-reform State Representative Lisa Graham is running for Superintendent of Public Education. The climate couldn't be better. The Phoenix-based Goldwater Institute just released the results of a poll it commissioned on school choice. It found that 76% of Arizona voters support some form of voucher. This was not a typical poll. Respondents were asked very specifically what kinds of programs they would back. While 55% said they would favor a blanket voucher across the state, and 34% were opposed, an additional 39% of those opposed to the first question (18% of the entire sample) said they would favor giving parents the same right that public school officials have to transfer a child to private school if that child is not profiting from public school. That was the essence of one proposal that emerged late in the negotiations over the recently defeated choice bill — to expand the public voucher program currently on the books to allow parents, as well as schools, to decide when their children are not profiting from the public school system and should be allowed to transfer into a private school.

Those who remained opposed after these questions were then asked if they would favor a means-tested program. Thirteen percent of those opposed (3% of the entire sample) said they would, bringing support for some form of voucher up to 76%. While it was clear that those polled liked some restrictions, Goldwater's Jeff Flake concluded that limiting plans to low-income families doesn't necessarily translate into more public support. New Jersey Mayor Bret Schundler also found this to be the case in a poll of Jersey City he commissioned by Fabrizio/McLaughlin. But although such is the case in most polls, it is important tactically that we distinguish between what people truly believe they would support, and what they are willing to stand up for, and vote for, after the muck-raking begins. And, of course, there are always the legislators, who quickly fall to pieces on these essential issues when opposition is breathing down their necks. The moral of this story: polls are essential to selling our message, and to helping support the bills, but they don't always help us when it is time to vote.



- Mayor Schundler is gearing up for a major initiative to build support for his Jersey City-based education reform proposals. Lots of local and national groups have promised him support and assistance, and he has sounded a clarion call for financial support to help muster the funds necessary to carry out the campaign and to build a war chest for state legislators who dare to follow his lead. Connecticut State Representative Tim Barth has joined the Mayor's staff to help him execute his plan. For more information, call Tim at (201) 547-5200.
- Milwaukee is shaping up to be fertile ground for expansion of the parental choice program there. With Mayor Norquist as an avid supporter, and with a built-in coalition of parents in both the public voucher program and the private PAVE program, now comes the addition of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and Industry. They have tapped veteran campaign consultant Susan Mitchell to build a campaign for expanding the program, and they are already embarking on an effective grass roots strategy to win.
- Business was instrumental in the last run in Arizona. (If it looks like I'm favoring Arizona this month, you're right — I'm hoping that my continual mentions will result in an all-expenses-paid vacation this winter to Scottsdale!). We've followed the progress of The Arizona Business Leadership for Education (ABLE) since its inception in the mid-1980s. ABLE this year provided much of the leadership, money and direction for the education reform package in the state. Although they are now disbanding, business is not throwing in the towel. The Chamber of Commerce there may take up the flag, and at the very least, individual members of ABLE have agreed to continue to push for reform. In a few weeks, it might already be half-done. Symington has called a special session to consider charter schools legislation, among other things, and our friends there are hopeful that they'll walk away as the tenth state that has enacted charter legislation. Good luck!

### **More on Charters**

- A Massachusetts bill being pushed by Governor Weld would lift the cap on the number of charters permitted in the state and on the number of children who are permitted to attend. Currently only 25 charter schools may be established, and no more than 0.75% of the state's public school students may enroll in those charter schools. Opponents, meanwhile, are trying to repeal the charter school law, which has already led to the creation of 15 new charter schools, with another 10 to be awarded by next March. The unions are heavily pushing legislation that would impose collective bargaining requirements on the existing charters.



- We were stunned and delighted to learn that there is an active contingency of charter school supporters communicating through Compuserve and America On-Line, with dedicated systems people to help direct users in the right direction. This information, and more, comes from the new Charter School Chronicle, published by The Great Lakes Group in Lansing, Michigan. Call (517) 772-9115 for more information.
- A parent revolt in Alberta, Canada, has led to the adoption of charter school legislation which many see as a way to take back their schools and restore a back-to-basics approach. According to The Financial Post, "There are scores of applications.... To establish one, parents and principal must first apply to the local board and can appeal the board's decision to the minister." Parent councils will run each charter. The rest of the details will be decided by the main Ministry of Education.
- Colorado has approved its third charter on appeal, after petitioning the Colorado Board of Education. All three approved schools offer traditional back-to-basics curriculum.

### **On Choice**

- There is a tremendous amount to be learned from "School: A Matter of Choice, " produced by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to the report, Britain, New Zealand and Sweden have created more opportunities for parental choice, and Australia, Denmark and Holland continue to support their age-old policies of providing support for private schools, depending upon a parent's choice. Interestingly, the report makes an inadvertent pitch for competition among all public and private schools, rather than programs that limit choice to the public sector. It argues that choice limited to "similar suppliers" does not encourage these schools to compete vigorously, and instead, creates limited competition where there is a hierarchy of "similar schools, good, bad and indifferent." There's lots more juicy info in the report. To obtain a copy from the U.S./OECD publications office, call (202) 785-6323.
- Despite the limited supply of options, Los Angeles parents are busy gathering new brochures, watching public service announcements, and attending informational seminars to help them choose a public school for their child by month's end. The open-enrollment act, sparked by Proposition 174 and subsequent events in California, is making many districts work a little harder to keep students from leaving their normally assigned schools. There is a major story just about every week in the California media, and, nationally, news of California choice has been covered by all the major networks. One theory goes that if it produces the





kind of parental satisfaction predicted, it will be good fodder for more expansive choice efforts.

- Allan Parker's Texas Justice Foundation argued the case for low-income choice before the Texas Supreme Court on May 25. A decision is not likely until after the November elections. And as you may know from Clint Bolick at the Institute for Justice, oral arguments were heard on May 31 before the Puerto Rico Supreme Court over that territory's full choice program that has been in effect since last September. Clint says the court was not too friendly, with six of the seven justices having been appointed by the opposition party. Still, it could go in several directions, and we'll wait with baited breath to learn more from IJ.

### **A View from the Blob:**

*"We have not failed. But we are part of a system in crisis.... Schools are in fact better than they used to be."* — Paul Houston, Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators and formerly with the Massachusetts Department of Education.

(Houston, incidentally, has taken up the cause of promoting the "truth" about public education, along with his good friend Gerald Bracey, the former NEA analyst turned independent "scholar." Look for more to come from these two, including new interpretations that things are not as bad as they look.)

### **And Finally,**

There has been an unprecedented number of attacks on naturally concerned people being type-cast as radical-right, religious-right or otherwise "extremist" categories. A special report in the Phi Delta Kappan magazine discusses the new and unforeseen clout of the religious right, and mainstream America's slow inclination towards it. (What PDK overlooks is that perhaps there are common principles shared by Americas regardless of affiliation.

People for the American Way has just published its year-end update on The Radical Right's Grassroots Agenda. Interestingly, they include in this wrap-up the promotion of an "experimental voucher scheme," by GOP legislators in Chicago, the IJ suit there on behalf of low-income children, and an attempt by Indiana parents to review all curriculum materials. Of course, they also include choice efforts in Arizona and New Jersey in their "radical right" review! We'd be happy to send the report to anyone interested. Postage and handling costs would be appreciated, as it's a rather hefty piece.



## Organizational News

- We are often asked about the status of other groups involved in the reform movement. Thus we regret to report that Americans for School Choice has officially closed its doors, and will try to operate with new activities through its Foundation, the Alliance for Better Schools. It's always a shame to see a group like this not make it, because the tendency of the opposition will be to declare the issue unpopular as a result. We wish the people involved the best of luck in their endeavors.
- California business leaders have launched a private scholarship program for Los Angeles and Orange Counties that promises to provide tuition support up to \$1,300 for 1,000 low-income children for three years. This new CEO Foundation becomes the 18th such program in the U.S. (13th if you only count those that are similar to the original Rooney model). Thanks should go to John Walton and Larry Smead for their dedication in bringing this vision to the children in and around L.A. For more information, contact Kevin Teasley at (310) 391-1912.
- The Republican National Committee's Candidate Briefing Book contains a strong endorsement of full school choice and accountability. It is being mailed this week to all congressional candidates and state party leaders. This is being done, no doubt, because of the clear will of voters in support of these reforms. We hope it will have an impact on the tenor of the candidates' stands this fall.
- *The Executive Editor* recently published a good piece on teaching professionalism by Chris Yelich, president of the American Association of Educators in Private Practice, which we've enclosed with this month's letter.

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Look for a special excerpt of The School Reform Handbook which is in the works and will be in the mail shortly.

Have a relaxing summer,



As we often asked about the effect of other groups involved in the reform movement. This was meant to suggest that "organizational justice" did not necessarily depend on the actions of other groups. It was also meant to suggest that the "organizational justice" movement was not necessarily a movement for reform, but rather a movement for justice. It was also meant to suggest that the "organizational justice" movement was not necessarily a movement for justice, but rather a movement for reform. It was also meant to suggest that the "organizational justice" movement was not necessarily a movement for justice, but rather a movement for reform.

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