Ravitch and Reform: Should *Left Back* Be Left Back?

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This is a review essay of Diane Ravitch's recent work, Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms *(Simon & Schuster, 2000). I note in the introduction the impact that educational historians can have on policy making by establishing the historical context for contemporary debate. Relying on my experience in the schools during the reform eras of the century and accompanying sources, I call attention to the tendentiousness of* Left Back, *the limitations of its documentation, the neglect of important reform movements, and its troubling accusation that there is an elitist attitude in public education that has historically been detrimental to the underprivileged. I argue that public education, including its reformist and experimental elements, have provided unique opportunities for upwardly mobile segments of society without making the humanities the only focus of the school curriculum. I conclude that* Left Back *is wittingly or unwittingly a part of the contemporary culture wars in which public education is an important battleground. It, therefore, deserves an in-depth analysis and commentary.*

Historians, as has been noted often not only write about the past, but they are also in a unique position to create the past. Today, when educational reform is a dominating political issue, an ideological lightning rod, and school curriculum and budgets are linked to economic well-being, historians of education relatively few in number are in a powerful position to establish the historical context for what has been going on in "the schools" for the past century. Enter *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms,* by the highly regarded historian of education Diane Ravitch of New York University, telling us in unusually bold and sometimes shrill terms that the massive public school system, where so many of us have been educated, has a history of "failed reforms" for the entire twentieth century. Not only have these reforms failed academically—we have heard that before—but they have also encouraged "racial and social stratification in the schools" with "profoundly undemocratic" and "harmful" effects for children and society.[1]

If this bumptious conclusion does not shake you up enough, Ravitch then detects comparable evidence almost a century later (1996), citing the wrangling at the Princeton (New Jersey) Board of Education over a pro-

Teachers College Record Volume 104, Number 6, September 2002, pp. 1204–1228

0161-4681

posal to establish an intensely academic charter school as a critical historical event. The opposition to the charter school proposal she avers, demonstrates that public schools still do not provide a rigorous academic education for all students because of fear there "might not be enough uneducated people to do menial work," like the member of the Princeton Board who asked "Who's going to collect your garbage."[2] Ravitch then connects this "anti-democratic" view to the "anti-democratic" views of earlier reformers, such as David Snedden and other progressive reformers, to support what is a radically revisionist view of the origins and nature of public education.

I would not usually challenge remarks of research specialists as distinguished as Ms. Ravitch, whose historical work I have often admired over the years, but public schools are my turf, too, having spent parts of eight decades there if I include my student days. For a participant observer—as student, teacher, school and college supervisor—during the reform cycles that Ravitch writes about, there are just too many glib generalizations and inferences that are incongruous with a lifetime of experience, significant omissions, as well as a persistent and troubling tendentiousness throughout her historical analysis. The causation, for example, is shockingly reductive: "opponents of liberal education rose like dragon's teeth from the soil"[3] to subvert a proposed high school curriculum of reformed liberal arts for all students created by a Committee of Ten of the National Education Association in 1893, then mainly consisting of presidents of universities and the headmasters of private schools. When it was rejected in 1916–1918 by a reorganized National Education Association advocating "Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" that expanded the responsibility of the high school and its curriculum beyond the academic, it was all downhill from there.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE FIRST HALF

Left Back lays the case for the antiacademic and antidemocratic bias of progressives at the turn of the century with another sweeping and undocumented statement: "Immigrant parents and African-American parents wanted their children to have the same kind of education children from more favored circumstances not job training that might lock them into low status-occupations."[4] I was startled by the statement as the son of an Italian immigrant mother of peasant stock. The community where I grew up, ravaged by the depression, was largely composed of first- and second-generation Italian, Irish, and Slovak immigrants with smaller groups of Eastern European Jews and African Americans. In a different time-space continuum perhaps a liberal education would have served them all well, but I never heard—nor can I imagine—my grandparents, my parents, or any of

their eight siblings who started work full-time at fourteen years of age commiserating about being deprived of a Classical or Latin-Scientific Curriculum as outlined by the Committee of Ten. None of them even made it to the minuscule high school that drew from at least five other townships and yet had only 19 graduates in 1919. For many in that generation of immigrants that I grew up with in my hometown, the schools were clearly uncharted territory. Nathan Glazer, one of the authors of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, pointed out poignantly that it was "the bad boy" who wanted to go to college in many Italian families.[5] Even as late as the end of World War II, when I started college, many parents like my own were deeply skeptical and sometimes even angry when we expressed an interest in higher education. "So you don't want to go to work like your father?" It was a different world, and *Left Back* does not capture it well.

The pervasive progressivism of the early decades of the century was a sprawling and powerful movement that touched many phases of life in the period before World War I, containing many different activist types and contradictory ideologies and creating a problem for generations of American historians. Otis L. Graham, Jr., in a search for a definition, could only conclude after a painstaking analysis that the progressives were a "vexatious group,"[6] a majority of its survivors voting Republican in 1936.[7] The influential historian Richard Hofstadter distinguished the WASP dominated progressivism from the "social-democratic tinge" of the New Deal reforms in his seminal work, *The Age of Reform*.[8] More recently Eric Foner warned us not to think of progressivism "as the precursor to major [democratic] developments of the twentieth century" without keeping in mind that it "still bore the marks of their nineteenth century origins," especially on race and ethnicity.[9] In making his point, he called attention to the segregationist policies of the Wilson Administration.[10]

Not surprisingly Ravitch documents some undemocratic ideas from "pedagogues" who had picked up Edward Lee Thorndike's "scientific" doubts about the value of transfer of training and began shuffling the young into a curriculum appropriate to their test-verified ability, thus innovating "cultural differentiation."[11] Recall that progressive reformers of the era were part of a political mix that was still debating women's suffrage, direct election of senators, and how to handle immigrants overindulging in alcoholic substances. These issues would eventually become democratized under pressure of the immigrants themselves, the challenges to racist ideology formulated by anthropologists like Franz Boas, Arthur Kroeber, and Ruth Benedict[12] and the work of progressives like Randolph Bourne and Jane Addams[13] as well as the social changes born of the depression and World War II. Foner claims that one of the intellectuals who struggled till his death with the issue of social equality was John Dewey.[14] Edward Lee Thorndike and his pedagogical interpreters were not forever.

The educational progressives who looked to the school as a leading agency of reform were as vexatious and complex as their progressive brethren in the larger political sphere. *Left Back* is at its best when describing the individual lives of these educational reformers, analyzing their philosophies, and discussing their intramural squabbles. David Snedden comes across today as a control freak determined to replace outdated academics in the school with a curriculum to educate youth in "social efficiency," so they could contribute to the brave new industrial state. Yet Snedden was unable to convince his fellow progressives to set up separate vocational schools[15] or to jettison history completely from the secondary curriculum.[16] One of John Dewey's most powerful social visions was that of the school replacing the role of the family disintegrating before the forces of industrialization and becoming a "fundamental lever" for "social reform" through political action.[17] But Ravitch does acknowledge, however, that Dewey was not completely "hostile to subject matter" and that his "activities" and "occupations" were a spirited means to the organized bodies of knowledge.[18] Unlike the teachers at Dewey's school in Chicago, James Heard Kilpatrick, a disciple of Dewey and an exceptionally popular professor at Columbia Teachers College, bore a "hostility toward subject matter"and initiated "the project method" based on children's interests that he believed was better "suited to democracy" in the emerging society.[19] Despite their differences, Ravitch saw their common denominator as the goal "to dethrone the academic curriculum" [20]

Why these reformers, many with backgrounds in a classical or disciplinary tradition, abandoned their roots to pursue such a goal is not seriously pursued except to note the impact of Thorndike's psychology. In another context, Ravitch wrote approvingly of "the Bailyn-Cremin critique" that advocated viewing educational history as part of a broader historical and cultural context.[21] *Left Back*, however, cuts the reformers little slack for being part of the greater history about them, namely, the all encompassing industrialization, accelerating social change, intensive urbanization, later the most debilitating economic crisis in our history, and all of this with the intriguing hopes and dreams of scientific reform swirling about them.

In *Left Back*, however, the reformers are the "dragon's teeth," bent on destroying liberal education and in the process depriving the underprivileged of a decent academic education. They control, as professional school educators and administrators, the restructured National Education Association that organized in 1916 the Commission to Reorganize Secondary Education that produced the Seven Cardinal Principles of Education in 1918, foreshadowing the modern comprehensive public high school. They are worth repeating here: l. health, 2. command of fundamental processes, 3. worthy home membership, 4. vocation, 5. citizenship, 6. worthy use of leisure, 7. ethical character.[22] Ravitch paraphrases their philosophy

by putting these pungent and provocative words in the mouths of its authors—almost literally with the use of quotations:

> We have a lot of dumb kids coming into high school who don't need to learn algebra and chemistry and we want to hold on to them for as long as possible before they quit to go to work. The schools should train youngsters to be effective workers for the nation's factories or to be good clerks or capable housewives. If some nevertheless insist on studying college preparatory subjects, that is their right.[23]

That Ravitch resorts to caricature as an instrument of historical persuasion is disappointing. Along the way, she dismisses the long-standing interpretation of the late Lawrence A. Cremin, arguably the most productive historian of American education of the twentieth century, that progressivism was part of an evolving democratic ethos in education that began with the common school movement. There is no denying that Cremin, whose dissertation was on the origins of the common school, was part of the progressive tradition at Teachers College. He was, however, hardly unappreciative of the humanities or serious scholarship—try his three-volume *The History of American Education*. His most celebrated work is *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957*, a classic and at times critical study of progressivism for four decades. Ravitch has often praised Cremin profusely, but in *Left Back* she has labeled *The Transformation of the School* as a paradigm for "the heroic advance of progressive education" and makes it very clear this "is not the story" she is going to tell.[24] Summative comments on progressivism from the *Transformation of the School* fill in riveting detail and provide a window on the tangled history of progressive America that comes alive for readers:

> Once under way, the [progressive] movement manifested itself in a remarkable diversity of pedagogical protest and innovation; from its beginning it was pluralistic, often self-contradictory, and always closely related to broader currents of social and political progressivism. In the universities, it emerged as part of a spirited revolt against formalism in philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences. . .[25]

> [It produced] a cacophony of voices . . . demanding educational reforms of every sort and variety. Businessmen and labor unions were insisting that the school assume classical functions of apprenticeship. Settlement workers and municipal reformer were vigorously urging instruction in hygiene, domestic science, manual arts, and child care. Patriots of every stripe were calling for Americanization programs. And agrarian publicists were pressing for a new sort of training life that would give youngsters a sense of the joys and possibilities of farming . . . [with] the common implication running throughout these proposals:

> educational functions traditionally carried on by family, neighborhood, or shop are no longer being performed; like it or not, the school must do it.[26]

Cremin's references to "Americanization," "apprenticeship," "manual arts," and "joys and possibilities of farming" indicate that he was not unaware of nonintellectual and maybe even undemocratic forces at work within the reform movement, but as a historian he was thinking 1910, not 1960. He saw in progressivism the hope that the high school would make "the American dream" more accessible, but at the same time he was hardly Pollyannish about the process. He recognized the problems of keeping "bigger, stronger, and more resourceful" youngsters in school and concluded soberly but realistically that "the dreams of democratic idealists resided in compulsory attendance laws, but so did the makings of the blackboard jungle."[27] My copy of the *Transformation of the School* is turning brown, but its realism, penetrating analyses, detail, and evenhandedness still make it valuable. When he lectured to his classes and raised his favorite question "could culture be democratized without being vulgarized?"[28] and gently encouraged New York City teachers not to leave "for Scarsdale," we knew what he was saying, thinking, and hoping. It was not to create an elitist society for the best and brightest under a veil of democratic rhetoric.

Hofstadter, however, in another important book, *Anti-Intellectualism in America,* does support *Left Back* when he concludes that "[T]he anti-intellectualism movement within professional education is one of the striking feature*s* of American thought."[29] He supported this position vigorously by his interpretations of Thorndike's abuse of social science that supported tracking, the intellectual shortcomings of the life-adjustment movement, and the pretentiousness of educationist jargon.[30] But interestingly and instructively, when analyzing the Commission to Reorganize Secondary Education and the authors of the *Seven Cardinal Principles*, Hofstadter's talent for dealing perceptively with ideas and ambiguity[31] enabled him to identify an authentic democratic thrust in what he considered to be an expression of the Wilsonian version of progressivism at high tide:

> The rhetoric of the commission's report made it clear that the members thought of themselves as recommending not an educational retreat but rather an advance toward the realization of democratic ideals. The report is breathless with the idealism of the Progressive Era and the war—with the hope of making the educational world safe for democracy and bringing a full measure of opportunity to every child. . . . While trying to develop the distinctive excellencies of individuals and various groups, the high school "must be equally zealous to develop those common ideas, common ideals, and command modes of thought, feeling and action, whereby America, through a rich unified, common

> life may render her truest service for democracy among men and nations."[32]

In his general appraisal of the American high school, Hofstadter, who graduated from a public high school in Buffalo where he was exposed to a strong academic curriculum in the early 1930s,[33] was again astute and perceptive enough to recognize mixed results from the history of American high schools in this remarkable observation:

> Whatever may be said about the qualitative performance of the American high school, which varies widely from place to place, no one is likely to deny that the free secondary education of youth was a signal accomplishment in the history of education, a remarkable token of our desire to make schooling an instrument of mass opportunity and social mobility. Since I shall have much to say about the high school's curricular problems, it seems important here to stress the positive value of this achievement and to note that, in its *democratic features,* if not in its educational standards the American high school has been to some degree emulated by European in thelast generation.[34] (italics added)

What is intriguing here is that this dramatic explosion of the American high school undoubtedly encouraged and supported by the report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education was also acknowledged by Ravitch in a previous work, *The Troubled Crusade* (1983), where she observed, "*Progressive concepts proved to be particularly appropriate in easing the transition to mass secondary education*"[35] (italics added), but unfortunately this sentence fits neither the thesis nor the tone of *Left Back.*

As captivating as the progressive educators of all types may be they are not the whole story. Exciting and trendy ideologies and philosophies from prolific but secluded professors of education and mellifluous statements from central boards of education may be great stuff for a seminar paper but a curriculum they do not make nor implement in the real world of the classroom. Her sources on these matters are not reassuring. Ravitch's "primary sources" by her own admission are "in the education literature,"[36] but, as erudite as they may be, I can say with some confidence that "the literature" or even a curriculum guide does not tell you what is going on in the classroom. Only seven of her primary sources are directly related to "what was happening in the classroom," and they are a very mixed and specialized group.[37] There are no monographs written by teachers or interviews with active or formerly active principals, teachers, or curriculum coordinators, the very people who participated in the reforms she analyzes that include the post-World War II period. It is a deficiency that future historians might probe. By the end of World War II, Ravitch avers that

"progressivism was the reigning ideology of American education."[38] Few would challenge this statement from "the literature," but, again, translating ideology into practice down to the classroom is another loose end of *Left Back*.

At this point in time, I become a participant-observer of twentieth century history. If progressivism as Ravitch defines it was as dominant, anti-academic, and destructive of democratic mores in the classroom as *Left Back* suggests, I should have encountered large doses as a student in public schools in two states from 1933 to 1946, some of its alleged peak years. There were indeed gym classes, assemblies, nurses, home economics, and some obligatory shop classes in junior high—the bane of my student days—but at no time did I encounter its more glamorous and criticized versions, such as socialized learning, the project method, or the activities curriculum, in the grammar schools, nor did I encounter anything that resembled core curriculum, occupations, common learnings, reconstructionism, or life adjustment in the high school. What I do recall from both grammar schools in two different states are those memorable multiplication tables, scads of problems in short and long division, and countless hours of phonics and parsing. And, although in the second grammar school I attended there was a grade 6–1 and a grade 6–2, students kept shifting back and forth every year. I was in 7–2 but was promoted to 8–1. The curriculum was identical in all sections.

On the high school level, Ravitch has accurately identified the three options offered to us: Academic (read: general), College Entrance, and Business. But we were not placed in any track by guidance counselors—we had none full-time—using social class or scores. I was hardly the top student, but I opted immediately and verbally for "college entrance" and was told by the one part-time counselor, an English teacher, that I should take at least two years of a foreign language and three years of math. And that was it! In 1942, only a handful of us could culturally or practically even consider college as a goal. We were all well aware of the financial strains of the lingering depression that excluded college, and most of us, by choice, selected the academic option. (This could be another reason for the decrease in the numbers taking academic courses during the thirties that *Left Back* records.) I took two years of Latin that was taught so well that I taught some myself later at the high school level after adding a couple of college courses.

Yet in that working class high school built by the WPA, you could elect three years of a foreign language, three and one half years of math, and everyone was required to take four years of English and social studies. Outside of math and foreign language, everyone shared the same classes and homerooms, and, although our desks were no longer attached to the floors, we sat in neat rows *every day*, with the teacher firmly entrenched at its helm. Perhaps in larger high schools and selected districts elsewhere

there were more "bureaucracy" and rigorous "tracking," but I did not experience it, and I have always been struck that I never heard terms like "the project method," "social living," or life adjustment" from any of my peers in the family, in college, or in the military service.

It could be more significant that, after the reorganization of the high school, the population of the high school continued to double every decade.[39] My guess is that if there was no football or basketball competition in my high school, and no electives like "shop" and automotive mechanics, half the boys would have dropped out with the approval, if not the enthusiasm, of their parents. But, make no mistake, my high school was not a Boston Latin or a Loyola Prep. A student's status was hardly enhanced by professedly pursuing high grades or a better college but the basics were there, and well over 50 percent of us "stayed" long enough to graduate, marking an important milestone in the social ascent of the second generation immigrant. I know this, *testa experientia*, but there is considerable confirmation from Herbert M. Kliebard in his influential book, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958*, who reached this provocative conclusion about the impact of progressivism on curriculum:

> The one fortress that proved impregnable [to progressives] was the school subject. The subject as the basic unit in the curriculum successfully resisted more ambitious efforts to replace it with anything like functional areas of living or projects arising from student interest.If the success of the 65-year attempt to reform the American curriculum is to be judged by the extent to which English, mathematics, science, history, geography and the like simply survived the assault must be counted a failure.[40]

In Kliebard's mind then, educational progressivism, like political progressivism, cannot be defined with specificity. Instead, he sees a "struggle" not simply between traditional and progressive camps but between "the humanists" who were "the guardians" of the intellectual tradition and three different types of reform movements, "the child study movement," "the social efficiency movement," and the "social melioristic movement."[41] The result has been, according to Kliebard, "a struggle" between all four types for dominance of the curriculum in the twentieth century, without anyone gaining "absolute supremacy." The influence of each shift depends "on the times and local conditions," but the final result has been an amalgam of all four, or in Kliebard's own words, a "hybridization" of the curriculum from the four sources.[42] As a curriculum coordinator and teacher in the schools during the reform decades of the 1960s to the 1980s, I observed firsthand how a curriculum of "eclecticism" evolves, namely, much as Kliebard described it.[43]

Kliebard's study about the varied types of progressivism and the sinuous path of reform in the 1920s and 1930s is confirmed by Larry Cuban's study *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms l890–1980.* It is also cited but sparingly in *Left Back* and is arguably the most extensive history of instructional and curricular practice. (Ravitch does recognize in a footnote some disagreement about course titles,[44] but Cuban's work is still the most closely documented source on classroom practice and matches my own experience.) Cuban identifies, like Ravitch, districts that heralded the introduction of a "core of progressive teaching practices" in their elementary schools but concludes that "no more than one-fourth of the classrooms" in such districts "systematically tried to put such practices into effect."[45] On the high school level Cuban reports and seems to lament that there were "even fewer progressive practices [that] modified teacher-centered instruction."[46]

In 1946 I was a seventeen-year-old college freshman caught up in culture shock amidst a battalion of World War II veterans. Most of the veterans I befriended ranged in age from twenty to forty and were overwhelmingly from public schools, many of whom had never considered college before the GI Bill. They became, however, the stars of campuses academically duly noted by Ravitch in *The Troubled Crusade.*[47] It reinforces my point, I submit, that something else was going on in many schools during the heady days of progressivism besides tracking, classes on dating, and reconstructionism. Ravitch cites approvingly the persistent support of Robert Hutchins, the president of the University of Chicago, for a traditional liberal curriculum, but he opposed the GI bill, fearing it would become a substitute for welfare and an "educational hobo jungle."[48] Hutchins was wrong on the impact of the veterans on higher education and perhaps about what public schools were achieving academically during the putative dominance of progressivism. The GI Bill continued the social revolution started by the expansion of the high school in the 1930s and 1940s, and I was there as well. My conclusion: The "hybridization" of academic basics and progressive practices may not have created a plethora of Boston Latin Schools and Loyola Preps, but I suggest it worked exceptionally well for most of us and also served the national interest well.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE SECOND HALF

In the final chapter of *The Transformation of the School*, Cremin, who had traced the origins of progressivism earlier in his book, was not reluctant to identify and analyze forthrightly the reasons for its "collapsing" in the 1950s, summing up that it had failed "to keep pace with the continuing transformation of American society."[49] This transformation was keenly noted by James B. MacDonald, who, studying schools in terms of "social systems"

in 1971, identified the "cultural and intellectual ethos" of "technical rationality" that had emerged from World War II. He pointed to the later emergence of giant theorists, such as Ralph Tyler, Benjamin Bloom, and Jerome Bruner, as representative of this trend.[50]

This could help explain why the passion and pages of *Left Back* are spent on the period before World War II, some seventy-five percent of the text. It runs thin after the war, where its historical flow shares time with selected topics but gives scant attention to a new generation of reforms that demonstrates the growing popular momentum for a more distinctly academic-centered curriculum to support "technical rationality." Here I pick up the story as a teacher and later K-l2 teacher/supervisor in suburban New Jersey schools from 1959 to 1989. Ravitch did address these reforms in *The Troubled Crusade* but fails in my estimation to give them the attention they deserve in *Left Back* that is devoted specifically to reforms.

The new "cultural and intellectual ethos" explains why, even before *Sputnik*, academic reforms were already observable in the schools, some originating with groups of teachers themselves.[51] The works of critics of progressivism understandably received a wide audience like Mortimer Smith's *And Madly Teach: A Layman Looks at Public School Education*[52] and Arthur E. Bestor Jr.'s *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools*. I was pleasantly surprised, as I soon as I walked into a classroom in 1959, by the new and positive attitude so many students manifested toward academics compared to my own high school days. It was quite palpable; everyone, it seemed, now wanted to go to college. Advanced placement exams were put in place in many high schools, making available to ambitious high school students the opportunity to earn college credit. Language labs were being constructed in many schools, and a major revision of the mathematics curriculum was underway by scholars at the University of Illinois as early as 1951, which *Left Back* duly reports.

This is not to say that progressives were departing quietly; instead, they were trying to build a momentum of their own drawing on the experience of the 1930s "and the predicament of out-of-school youth"[53] supporting both Cremin—and Ravitch as well—that the progressives were slow in perceiving change. At Columbia Teachers College in the postwar days, the "wave of the future" was considered to be "core curriculum," a version of progressivism in which students and teachers developed a "core" of relevant topics of their own to investigate and study.[54] The most ballyhooed version was the life adjustment movement that called for a "life adjustment" program to meet the needs of sixty percent of the of school population who would not go to college or vocational schools. Cremin noted that it "flared up" and then "quickly disappeared."[55]

From my vantage point, during this struggle for the curriculum in the postwar era, there was little doubt who was emerging the winner in the real

world of the schools. Plans were being made as early as 1956 for the opening of the high school in suburban New Jersey where I would teach and later supervise for almost three decades. When I arrived in 1961, I inquired about the origin of the high school curriculum and learned that it was "adopted from a neighboring school that had a good track record for getting college acceptances."[56] There is no evidence in board minutes or anywhere else that anything resembling core curriculum or life adjustment was ever considered by the board of education. As part of a graduate school assignment, I once asked the entire faculty, about half of whom had started teaching in the 1940s or before, whether they had ever encountered a "core curriculum" or "life adjustment" curriculum. Most looked at me with glazed eyes, but finally the supervisor of guidance who had begun teaching in 1950 spoke up: "There was an elementary school principal who talked like that in Union (NJ) when I was there but then he lost his job."

Left Back labels the "1950s a horrible decade for progressives" and dismisses it in a sparse four and a half pages under the aegis of "The Brief *Sputnik* Era."[57] It may have been brief in time, but significant educational history was unfolding that would last far beyond the 1950s. I recall with some vividness that October morning in 1957 when the *Sputnik* launching threw America into a frenzy. Americans who justifiably had taken pride in the nation's technological and productive prowess in World War II were close to denial. In the uneasy atmosphere of the Cold War, with some philosophical support from traditionalists and media, the onus immediately was placed on "the schools" for not "keeping up with the Russians." "Boy did we get it [from speakers]" is the way my superintendent described the first meeting of state superintendents of New Jersey after *Sputnik*.[58] *Life* magazine even took Johnny High School to task for doing the "rockin' cha" at the YMCA four nights a week while his counterpart, Ivan, struggles with higher math in his drab Moscow apartment."[59]

It was against this explosive and frenetic national reaction that James B. Conant, a former president of Harvard, after a study of fifty-five high schools, concluded that American high schools could meet academic challenges posed by *Sputnik* by establishing larger high schools and grouping students by subject matter so that specialized courses—sometimes called honors—could be offered especially in math and science. Grouping would be disallowed in social studies. *The Troubled Crusade* treats the Conant Report of 1959 with historical respect;[60] in *Left Back* it is dismissed summarily as a "whitewash" of the public schools.[61] There are now showcase courses in advanced placement and honors classes in high school classes, courses such as physics, calculus, American history, European history, and American government, the modern languages, and language arts that have been standard in most high schools in New Jersey for close to forty years, a testimony to their effectiveness and the highly qualified personnel who

teach them. I have observed these classes and taught some myself. These courses or "reforms," if you will, are ignored in *Left Back.* I will offer two possible reasons: l. They are examples of a reform designed to face the changes of the twentieth century that have not failed; 2. It demonstrates that "curriculum differentiation," if administered with sensitivity, can serve a wide variety of students and society well. Both reasons challenge the central thesis of *Left Back.*

And the 1950s were not yet over. In 1959, the National Academy of the Sciences, still in the shadow of *Sputnik,* convened a meeting at Woods Hole on Cape Code of scholars, mainly scientists, who apparently shared Bestor's view that the problems of American education were attributable to a "directorate of American educationists" who had detached themselves from scholarly knowledge.[62] The meeting started with a review of federally funded science projects but ended up by issuing a report of blockbuster proportions written by Harvard psychologist Jerome Bruner, later published as his influential book *The Process of Education* (1960).[63] Bruner proposed nothing less than a "revolutionary" new theory of curriculum and instruction. All curricula would be organized around a "structure" of concepts culled from the individual disciplines by appropriate scholars and supported by materials tailored for "inductive" and "discovery" learning. Regurgitation of "pre-cooked" generalizations from boring textbooks would be replaced by the "cognitive processes" of students creating their own generalizations from specially prepared source materials. In an electrifying statement that would reverberate in the halls of curriculum conferences throughout the nation and in leading educational journals, Bruner declared, "We *begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development"*(italics added).[64] A seismic shift was taking place that moved leadership in curriculum making at least temporarily from schools of education to disciplinary scholars, but *Left Back* fails, once more, to give even these events that were academically inspired, if you will, their historical moment in the history of reform in the twentieth century. The following detail is provided from a case study of my own district.[65]

These reforms were designed to affect the school curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Textbooks and "chalk and talk" were out; primary data and cognitive processes were in. My school district and certainly many others throbbed with anticipation of what Bruner had assured us would be "a renaissance."[66] With principals looking on in dismay, K-12 curriculum coordinators in all the disciplines were established in my district and given responsibility for developing curriculum. Excited parents jammed our high school auditorium in the fall of 1964 to hear the virtues of the new math, and within a year a new math curriculum had been put in place. The mood was nationally pervasive. Even the National Education

Association published a report in 1962 urging that "fundamental ideas" and "methods of inquiry" be the cornerstone of instruction.[67] As the new social studies supervisor, my assignment was eased by *Social Education,* the leading professional journal of social studies with strong progressive roots, that featured articles from 1962 to 1967 promoting the adoption of a disciplinary-based "new social studies." Some districts in New Jersey changed the name "department of social studies" to "the department of history and social science." From a lonely little office shared with multiple textbooks, I thought I was envisioning a brand new future for the social studies, but I failed to see the rocky road of curriculum reform just ahead.

The first signs of trouble came in mathematics, the bellwether discipline for these reforms. Despite in-service training and the strong support of the supervisor of mathematics, the administration, and the community, elementary teachers bristled with indignation, complaining that many students still needed traditional memorization and drill.[68] A veteran administrator had warned us about imposing curricula from "outside" experts, but we were not listening. In the social studies area, problems surfaced that were both theoretical and practical. At meetings of social studies professionals, speakers and audiences were still attempting to define and clarify terms like "structure" and even "concept."[69] Social studies projects housed at various universities, now financed by the National Defense Education Act with leadership from university personnel, struggled with preparing curricula and materials for K through 12 and delayed for frustratingly long periods of time. A ninth-grade science program was implemented that was totally laboratory oriented so students could learn "inductively," but teachers now complained that students lacked the math skills to work effectively with these new materials in lab situations. Deduction? Induction? These terms seemed egregiously esoteric at the time to many teachers in the real world of the schools.

History, of course, is never kind to "failure," but history also provides different perspectives—noticeably absent in *Left Back*—and sometimes a different interpretation. My colleagues in mathematics assure me that the new math had an important role in modernizing the curriculum and textbooks, even if the methodology did not catch fire. Researcher David Jenness of the National Science Foundation concluded that "the best of the [social studies] projects produced valid, superbly interesting materials [that] have had a long, if subterranean, effect."[70] I concur; they were the best collection of social studies materials I have ever encountered.[71] A ninth-grade social studies course was introduced in my department that was organized around a structure of social science concepts using only primary sources identified and developed at Carnegie-Mellon University. It lasted fifteen years until a state requirement had to be put in place.[72] In the middle school, seventh graders made inferences after examination of arti-

facts from "The Greek House" in their unit on classical civilization. Most history classes today use more primary sources and textbooks and have more "analytical questions" with more attention to concepts and methodology.[73] An observer of the "new" science reached similar conclusions when he noted that, while "overwhelming adoption" never occurred, "it affected for the better standard materials."[74]

Overall, the disciplinary-centered movement was a fascinating but admittedly frustrating piece of history in which a massive school system stretched itself to reform curriculum to meet the challenges of a changing society but left us with many issues unresolved and unanswered questions. It did put a focus on academic achievement and did bring in leading scholars to lend their expertise to curriculum development. How advantageous was this? Cremin saw it, interestingly, as the "rehumanizing, resynthesizing and reorganizing of knowledge" that was "continuous with the attempt of progressives to popularize knowledge."[75] There is also a lingering and tantalizing question about how and in what form these materials and teaching strategies would have evolved if they had gone through another generation or two of revisions, but that would not happen.

And a last question rarely heard today about the academic reforms of the post-World War II era: How legitimate was the complaint of some high school students and their parents that schools were putting too much pressure on students for college entrance and mastering sophisticated but abstruse disciplinary concepts? At our first evaluation, the Middle States Association did ask, "What are you doing for the non-college bound youngster?" Despite the strong academic thrust generally of these programs and the important issues they raised, *Left Back* as history barely scratches the surface of these reforms by failing to make the movement, the curricula, and the materials part of the overall history of curriculum development in the twentieth century.

Left Back contains some forty pages on the 1960s, unlike the section on the 1950s. The final demise of the "disciplinary-centered movement" as the dominant trend is more consonant with my own sentiments, except I observed it ending later in the second half of the sixties, actually after 1967, when it was unceremoniously swamped by a new "cultural and intellectual ethos" in the form of the counterculture phenomenon. Eventually it reached down into my environment and even into my own department, affording me the opportunity to observe it up close. In this situation, younger members of the faculty, identifying emotionally and intellectually with the movement, demonstrated by dress and behavior their commitment to its ideology and to some degree, its lifestyle, challenging along the way long-established mores by creating peer relationships with students and challenging authority figures.

One of them, ironically a brilliant teacher from my own department, recruited by me because of his strong liberal arts background, formed a

study group of teachers with the permission of "the establishment" to discuss Neil Postman's and Charles W. Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. It is described on its jacket as "a no-holds-barred attack on outdated teaching," charging that the curriculum is replete with "pretentious trivia" and "crap." Inductive learning, a favorite of the early sixties was mocked as "inventing your own pendulum." Finally, the authors called for a curriculum based on "relevance," and "social problems."[76] My happy little high school eventually became a micros of the greater society, with students questioning school authority and faculty demanding change and a greater role in decision making. School administrators scrambled breathlessly to deal with these issues as the social mores and dynamics of the school were being disrupted and changed.

Ravitch does her best to interpret this movement in terms of a progressivism that had "sprang back to life."[77] While there were characteristics of progressivism with its talk of "open classrooms," "social needs," and "relevance," all were laced with democratic rhetoric. But it was not that simple. Psychologist Kenneth Kenniston goes into an in-depth psychological analysis of students caught up in "the movement" seeing them as the first postmodern youth in a limbo between adolescence and adulthood.[78] John Patrick Diggins, an astute observer of reformist ideology, also identifies the movement in terms of "the alienation of the young" but notices as well its rejection of "the values of the industrial way of life, the work ethic, rationality and mastery of the environment,"[79]a repudiation as much as a confirmation of some of the core values of progressivism. Recall that social efficiency progressives like Snedden and Bobbitt wanted to teach students to *conform* to the needs of the new industrial order with a scientifically inspired curriculum. And then there was the tragic and seemingly endless war in Southeast Asia that raised questions about the legitimacy and credibility of every institution in the land. During the national malaise over the war, radical reformers directed considerable rage toward the schools, "whose increased expenditures escalated their destructiveness at home and abroad."[80] Cremin immediately defended the democratic origins of public education and denounced reforms of the counterculture as "notoriously atheoretical" and "ahistorical" and far more "radical" in its objectives than the progressive movement.[81]

I can say with some confidence here that this was more than a resurgence of a latent progressivism that moved my district as an institution to "reform" once more. We were frightened and on the defensive as cultural forces overtook us, something I am not sure *Left Back* fully appreciates. An "open campus" was announced by the administration and departments hardly missed a step in moving into a new movement. Encouraged by the superintendent, we transformed the social studies curriculum into electives of minicourses of semester length, designed by each teacher, but unlike

some schools we maintained academic substance (American ideas, constitutional law, American colonial history, foreign policy decisions), using materials from the "new social studies" finally available commercially.[82] After a year or so, the language arts department did the same, putting more emphasis on modern literature. Again, the historical context is important. I had to assure each year the superintendent and the board of education that the social studies department was indeed in a constant "innovating" mode.

Yet even this historical episode has another perspective and deserves some divergent probing. Some of the counterculture reforms were indeed innovative as teachers assumed much of the responsibility for creating diverse and engaging strategies and materials for an "alienated" population. Group work, learning centers in classrooms, contract learning, and researching both arcane and traditional topics became part of the instructional mix. It worked in some cases; in other cases, it bombed egregiously.[83] My sense supported by other observers like Jenness is that it prepared the way for the much better organized cooperative learning that I observe today being used successfully on the middle school level. (Incidentally, the middle school concept with daily meetings of instructional "teams" introduced in the middle of 1970s is another reform that has "taken" and should be considered a "success.") Closely monitored individual instruction along with learning and reading centers where students may browse independently in some of today's elementary schools are also very impressive. Once again Kliebard's "hybridization" and "eclecticism" seems to be at work here. *Left Back* seems oblivious of much of this.

Eventually, it became all too apparent to the school and the community that the overall permissiveness in behavior and disorder in the schools and curriculum especially on the high school level could not be tolerated as Ravitch rightly observes. Meanwhile, as their "reforms" were being challenged, the gurus of "free schools" and alike announced that they had given up on piecemeal "reform" of the educational "establishment" and would have nothing less than complete "deschooling," where formal education would be replaced by "learning webs."[84] The year 1974 is usually pinpointed as the point when the counterculture version of educational reform ran out of steam and a cultural and curricular thermidor began to take shape. In school district after school district, a tightening up of "dress and behavior codes" began and minimovements appeared, like "Back to Basics" and "behavioral objectives," to ensure the integrity of the teaching process.[85] This early part of the back-to-basics story that started in the schools almost a decade before *A Nation at Risk* gets little coverage in *Left Back*, but again it is covered more respectfully in *The Troubled Crusade*.

All of this was part of a broader cultural and intellectual ethos that was evolving in reaction to the excesses of "the sixties" and a faltering economy. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education, earmarked earlier for extinc-

tion, published its assessment of high schools in its report *A Nation at Risk.* It was a scathing report, laced with chilling metaphors like "a rising tide of mediocrity" and "unilateral educational disarmament" and condemning "the cafeteria-style curriculum."[86] The authors, writing as though they had been on Mars during the sixties and early seventies, seemed to be totally nescient of the cultural upheavals of those decades. Its driving spirit was patently economic, hardly intrinsic of the love of learning and the humanities, and the onus for the sharp economic downturn was clearly laid on the schools. It ended up recommending "five new basics" really the old basics cum computers that should be taught to everyone, a characteristic that immediately gets *Left Back's* approval.

Surprisingly, and sadly as well, I found *A Nation at Risk's* strident and negative tone toward American high schools analogous to that of the counterculture critics and almost as troubling. I knew all too well what the gurus of the counterculture and their disciples were up to and I had been hoping for a respite from the pressure of reform to provide time for serious and careful evaluation of the materials and teaching strategies of the previous quarter century. I was stunned that for all our efforts to improve curriculum—amidst an avalanche of acerbic criticism—and to keep schools functioning, we were now getting the back of the hand from yet another host of critics with yet another ideological slant and obviously with little or no workaday knowledge of the schools. The report lists and describes courses that all students should know, but there is nary a word about how they should be organized and taught—a central concern of the schools for a century. "You mean," a veteran observer of school reform asked, "that after decades of innovation and experimentation need we only have raised standards [and] toughened requirements . . . ?"[87] Course titles and content by themselves, authors of *A Nation at Risk* and *Left Back* should be reminded, do not themselves teach. Ask any teacher.

Over the years the debate has continued and perhaps grown even more acerbic. Cremin in the English and Burton Lectures given at Harvard in 1989 and published as *Popular Education and Its Discontents,* responded with consternation to what he called "the flawed" policy literature of the 1980s that was "at best foolish and at worst a crass effort" to "direct attention away from those truly responsible" for the failure of competitiveness.[88] One of the most rigorous analyses in the new war of educational statistics introduced in *A Nation at Risk* came from a study by Sandia National Laboratories, a research agency of the U.S. Department of Energy, that had been commissioned for the first time by the Bush administration in 1990 to evaluate secondary education. They reported, "To our surprise, on nearly every measure, we found steady or slightly improving trends" and they also found "little credible data on international comparisons of education."[89] Gerald W. Bracey, a statistical researcher, using

much of the data from Sandia as well as his own research, reached much the same conclusion in the 1990s in the pages of *Phi Delta Kappan*, adding that among other things the advanced placement scores stayed almost steady despite a quadrupling of those taking the tests and that scores on the Graduate Record Exam were increasing.[90] The most complete critique of *A Nation at Risk* was published in *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud and the Attack on America's Schools* by two professors with backgrounds in statistical research, David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle. Their major point: Traditional test takers have been "holding their own," while scores for all minority groups have been improving dramatically.[91]None of these studies or commentaries that challenge the basic assumptions of *Left Back* are even reported as part of the historical record of the twentieth century.

Despite these rebuttals and America's remarkable economic recovery, for which some have demanded an apology from critics who blamed the schools, the attacks on the schools continued even beyond economics, so we learned not only why Johnny couldn't read but suddenly why he "didn't know right from wrong." In 1994, a Boston College professor of education even accused public school teachers of being "ashamed of their culture" and abandoning ethical norms.[92]While *Left Back* concentrates largely on academic matters, James Davison Hunter, the insightful writer on the "culture wars," has noted these wars are "intensified" by the secular argument about "quality in education" and "the criticism that public education is a failing institution."[93] The political connection was there for the taking and political commentator Michael Lind in his 1996 book *Up From Conservatism*, seized it, noting that conservatives who once saw education as the preserve of the states now "discovered" in the educational "crisis" an opportunity to use "school choices as a wedge to split the Democratic coalition along racial and religious lines."[94] In so doing, educators become the "shock troops" of the "the new class" of "amoral elites" where they join "politicians, journalists, lawyers, theologians, and entertainers."[95] This "new class" theory of politics parallels too closely *Left Back*'s theory of the educational elitists like the progressives who spread their educational dogma about reform that is "harmful" to minorities and common folk. In a flip-flop that would have fascinated political historians like Hofstadter, the right had now replaced the left as the leading critic of public schooling!

Now I realize that Ravitch has always resisted political and cultural labels. I respect that, but I wish her work was as detached as she claims. In 1972, she authored *The Revisionists Revisited; A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools*, a tightly argued essay in which she vigorously and ironically *defends* "the democratic-liberal tradition" of public schools against the historical revisionism of the left.[96] Revisionist historians like Colin Greer during the heyday of counterculture sentiment attacked the schools and the progressive legacy from the left by challenging the "myths" of its "rosy origins" and

arguing that the middle class promoted public schools to protect its own economic interests while rejecting "radical social change."[97] Ravitch repudiates with particular verve the "central motif" of the revisionist left that "the schools did not foster social and economic mobility," drawing carefully from both historical and sociological sources.[98] Amazingly, this argument so cogently developed in *The Revisionists Revisited* directly contradicts her position in *Left Back,* where she argues that the "anti-democratic" bias of the same progressive legacy—what else but the democratic-liberal tradition—has failed the underclass! What has changed, history or the political and cultural landscape?

On September 11th, 2000, on C-Span, I watched and heard William J. Bennett, the former secretary of education, never known for his shyness about his ideological and political views, discuss *Left Back* at a panel discussion from the Brookings Institute. He offered a few general observations, made some cranky remarks about the schools, but, in the end, heaps praise on *Left Back* and gives it his imprimatur: "It is a very interesting and important piece of work and please write a follow up on the 90s."[99] Wittingly or unwittingly, *Left Back* is part of the cultural wars and its offspring political effects. Will any reform or any set of scores be enough to satisfy school critics of the right, or, like the left of the early seventies, will they only be satisfied when they have public schools that are ideologically correct, politically enfeebled, or overwhelmingly privatized?

Some of my present work at state universities includes visiting schools with student teachers, and I have visited close to a hundred in both suburban and urban communities over the past decade. In the middle of Newark, I tingle with pride when I observe in the *same building and same classrooms* where Italian and Polish immigrants were educated nearly *a century and a quarter ago,* another wave of immigrants, predominantly in this case Latino, being educated. The school is rickety and earmarked for razing, but the no-nonsense principal, a graduate of the school, tells me he is preparing his students to compete academically and in the economic world about them, and he means it. His school was recently awarded the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education. In another urban high school in a poorer community, the loudspeaker blares that the board of education will pay for anyone who wants to take the SATs coming up on next Saturday. None of this is intended to obscure the stark and tragic differences between suburban schools and urban schools that are all too real in New Jersey but to highlight that, if the truth be known, most public educators celebrate kids from disadvantaged backgrounds, no matter where they are, who make it academically. Almost daily, I see people working very hard in schools from Newark Bay to the Delaware River, not always under the best of conditions. I doubt very much if timely garbage collection is on their minds.

Left Behind makes antidemocratic bias a key concept in the philosophical underpinning of public school education and expresses concern for those who do not receive what is basically a liberal education. What I observe in the community colleges and state universities today is an extraordinary effort, including scads of remedial assistance, to extend educational opportunities and democratic access to those who may have slipped through the cracks in high school for whatever reason or have had a poor initial experience on the college level. I recognize so well those bodies that barely breathed in high school now in my required general education courses, Western Civilization 101 and 102, where some of them older and more mature are beginning to manifest observable signs of life. It is still a partial custodial function and, if the courses were not required, maybe only ten percent or less would be there. Surprisingly, many now do quite well and maybe one or two will now confide to me each year how they now surprisingly "like" general education courses, even occasionally "Western Civ." Students over thirty years old are great in a college history class; they have a stronger sense of the temporal and motivate younger students in the class. I try and recruit the best for a history minor but most are absorbed understandably by narrower vocational goals. Concededly, a significant number will not make the baccalaureate on the first try, but this does not mean they will be banished to some kind of Hades. Some already have advanced computer skills or are even accomplished musicians who see no benefit, to my great dismay, in comparing and contrasting Platonic and Aristotelian epistemologies. Some will come back and give it another shot, bully for them and bully for the system that will give them a second and even a third chance. It's an imperfect, complicated, and mercurial planet that we inhabit, where *Left Back* would like to place a universal curriculum in a seemingly hermetically sealed package devoted to "the transmission of knowledge," policed by grade-by-grade standards, and where "society's problems" and "students' immediate experiences" do not seem to rank high.[100]

I hope I am not shocking anyone when I report from a lifetime in the classroom that students mature at different rates, have different needs and interests at different times of their lives, learn in diverse ways, and are well served many times by "curricular differentiation." For all their romanticism and rhapsodic hype, the reformers that *Left Back* eschews, in this regard, may have been on to something and many of us should be just a little bit grateful. A nuanced and balanced history of reform would help us understand the historical background of the complexities, problems, and achievements of public schooling in a century that was fraught with changes of enormous proportions. Regrettably, *Left Back* does not provide it.

Notes

1 Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). p. 15.

2 Ibid., p. 461. See also fn. 5, p. 527. This incident from a meeting of the Princeton Board of Education was covered on the front page of the *New York Times* (Neil MacFaguar, "Public, but Independent Schools Are Inspiring Hope and Hostility," *The New York Times*, December 27, 1996, pp. A1, B5.) The objection of the board member to the charter school proposal reads in its entirety: "So it seems that members of this school have only two choices, which is an academic specialty or a professional career. Now I want to ask you, 'Who's going to collect your garbage.' " The author of *Left Back* interprets this as an example of how public schools continue to deny an academically strong education to students to insure workers for menial tasks. That the board member's statement is taken literally and granted such universal credibility and application is amusing. What is closer, I sense, to the board member's mind is that there are a wide range of students even in Princeton schools and the board has a responsibility to educate all students with the limited resources of the community, and the Princeton schools that already produce some of the highest scores in the state would lose funds to the charter school. The *Times* article, moreover, identifies the advocates of the proposal as the parents of "the highest achieving students" who would be already the beneficiary of an academically oriented school system. *Left Back* may very well be identifying the wrong elitists.

3 Ibid., p. 50.

4 Ravitch, p. 163.

5 Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press) pp. 199–200. Glazer wrote the chapter on the Italians.

6 Otis L. Graham, Jr., *An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford, 1967). p. 9.

7 Ibid., pp. 195–204.

8 Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, (New York, Vintage, 1955), p. 308.

9 Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1998), p. 185.

10 Ibid., p. l86.

11 Ravitch, pp. 65–66.

12 Foner, p. 190.

13 Ibid., pp. 190, 187.

14 Ibid., pp. 129,153–154, 181, 192.

15 Ravitch, pp. 81–86.

16 Krug even notes that the Committee on the Social Studies of the Commission to Reorganize Secondary Education may have saved history from anti-history zealots like Snedden. Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) V. I p. 357.

17 Ravitch, p. 58.

18 Ibid., p. 171.

19 Ibid., p. 182.

20 Ibid., p. 61.

21 Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 27.

22 Ravitch, *Left Back*, p. 124.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 16.

25 Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York: Vintage Edition, 1964) p. 22.

26 Ibid., pp. 116–117.

27 Ibid., p. 128.

28 Cremin, ix.

29 Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in America* (New York: Vintage, 1962), p. 322. It should be mentioned, even in passing, that Hofstadter's influential but negative interpretation of Dewey has been recently challenged sharply by Robert B. Westbrook in *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 100 n25, 104, 558.

30 Ibid., see chapters 8 and 9.

31 Alan Brinkley, "Hofstadter's The Age of Reform Reconsidered," in *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1998) pp. 134–135, 145–146.

32 Hofstadter, p. 336.

33 Susan Stout Baker, *Radical Beginnings: Richard Hofstadter and the 1930s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), p. 12.

34 Hofstadter, pp. 325–326.

35 Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945–1980 (New York: Basic)* p. 45.

36 Ravitch, *Left Back*, p. 529.

37 Ibid., p. 530.

38 Ibid., p. 322.

39 Robert Hampel, *The Last Little Citadel*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986) pp. 15–16..

40 Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) p. 269.

41 Ibid., pp. 27–29.

42 Ibid., Chapter 8, p. 209.

43 Ibid., p. 29. See also William W. Goetz, "The Memoir of a Teacher of the New Social Studies," *The Social Studies*, 85:3, pp. 103–104, and Hazel Whitman Hertzberg, *Social Studies Reform; 1880–1980* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium, 1981), p. 131.

44 Ravitch, *Left Back*, fn.6, p. 527.

45 Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms l890–1980* (New York: Longman, 1984), p. 135.

46 Ibid.

47 Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, p. 14.

48 Cited in David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995) Exhibit 2.11, p. 37.

49 Cremin, pp. 350–351.

50 James B. MacDonald, "Curricular Development in Relation to Social and Intellectual Systems." In Robert M. McClure, ed., *The Curriculum: Retrospect and Prospect*, (Chicago: The University Press, 1971), pp. 102–112,

51 Professor Hazel Whitman Hertzberg of Columbia Teachers College and Columbia University, one of my advisors and a curriculum specialist in social studies and history, noted to me in a personal conference that academic reforms were already starting in the early 1950s by "groups of teachers" who realized that the curriculum needed academic upgrading.

52 Mortimer Smith, *And Madly Teach: A Layman Looks at Public School Education,* (New York: Henry Regenery, 1949).

53 Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, p. 324.

54 Comments of Professor Arno Bellack during seminar, "Development of the Curriculum Field," Teachers College, Columbia University. Spring, 1978.

55 Cremin, Ibid., p. 337, 338. Kliebard, pp. 240–270.

56 Notes from interviews in possession of author.

57 Ravitch, *Left Back*, p. 361. The "Brief *Sputnik* Era" runs from page 361 to 365.

58 Notes from interview in possession of author.

59 "The Crisis of American Education," *Life,* March 24, 1958. pp. 25–37.

60 Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, p. 230.

61 Ravitch, *Left Back*, p. 363.

62 Peter B. Dow, *Schoolhouse Politics: Lessons from the Sputnik Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 18.

63 *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960*)* See also William W. Goetz, "The Rise and Fall of MACOS: A Blip on the Historical Screen?" *Theory and Research in Social Education*, XXII, 4, pp. 515–516.

64 Bruner, p. 33.

65 Goetz, "The New Social Studies: The Memoir of a Practitioner." Much of this is taken from William W. Goetz, *Curriculum-Making in a Suburban New Jersey High School from 1957 to 1972: An Historical Perspective*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University. 1981.

66 Ibid., p. 100.

67 The Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools, *The Scholars Look at the Schools: A Report of the Disciplines Seminar* (Washington: National Education Association, 1962), pp. 1–2.

68 Goetz, "The New Social Studies: The Memoir of a Practitioner," p. 104.See also Hertzberg, pp. 116–118.

69 William W. Goetz, "The New Social Studies; Boon or Bust?" *The Clearing House 45,* 1970), pp. 404–406.

70 David Jenness, *Making Sense of Social Studies*, (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 139.

71 Goetz, "The New Social Studies: The Memoir of a Practitioner," pp. 101–103.

72 Ibid., p. 101. Fenton, E., A.N. Penna, and M. Schultz, *Comparative Political Systems: An Inquiry Approach* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967).

73 Jenness, p. 143. Goetz, "The Rise and Fall of MACOS: A Blip on the Historical Screen?" pp. 520–521.

74 James A. Rutledge, "What Has Happened to the "New" Science Curricula?" *Educational Leadership*, April 1973, pp. 600–603.

75 Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Genius of American Education* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965), pp. 54–55.

76 Neil Postman and Charles W. Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Delacorte, 1969) pp. 15, 49, 53.

77 Ravitch, *Left Back*, p. 16.

78 /Kenneth Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace& World, 1968), pp. 259–264, 268.

79 John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1971) p. 247.

80 Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harrow edition, 1974), p. 13.

81 Lawrence A. Cremin, "The Free School Movement—A Perspective." *Today's Education,* September-October *1974,* pp. 71–74. Two years later, in *Public Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) Cremin, the consummate scholar, does apologize that he did not give attention to an "anarchist strain" in progressivism thus linking it with the then contemporary counter-culture but quickly qualifies it somewhat by noting that two of the most articulate anarchists "were themselves committed to schooling and actually conducted schools" (p. 20 fn.20).

82 Goetz, "The New Social Studies: The Memoir of a Practitioner," p. 103.

83 Ibid., p. 269.

84 Ivan Illich, Chapter 6, pp. 103–113.

85 See, for example, "Nostalgia's Child: Back to the Basics, pp. 521, 552;" Ben Brodinsky, "Back to Basics: The Movement and Its Meaning,"pp. 522–527 and James K. Wellington, "America's Education: Its Failure and Future," pp. 527–530. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 58, March, 1977.

86 National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), In Beatrice and Ronald Gross, eds, *The Great School Debate: Which Way for American Education?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985) pp. 23–49.

87 A. Harry Passow. Cited in William W. Goetz, "The Year of Reports: A Review of Passow's Reviews" *Focus on Education,* New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Vol. 30, No. 1, Winter, 1984, p. 8.

88 Lawrence A. Cremin, *Popular Education and Its Discontents* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), pp. 92, 103.

89 C.C. Carson, R.M. Huelskamp, and T.D. Woodall. "Perspectives on Education in America: An Annotated Briefing, April 1992," *The Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 86, 1993, pp. 259, 288. See also comments on pp. 267 and 272 addressing SAT scores and the charge that the present generation was less educationally prepared than previous generations.

90 Gerald W. Bracey, "Why Can't They Be More Like We Were?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 1991, pp. 104–117.

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92 William K. Kilpatrick, "Blackboard Jungle," *Boston College Magazine*, Fall 1992. Kilpatrick would later publish *Why Johnny Doesn't Know Right from Wrong.*

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95 Ibid., pp. 142, 146.

96 Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1978). Chapter I, pp. 3–19. In a brilliant insight in my judgment, she notes that the radical revisionists have abused "the Bailyn-Cremin critique" directed at simplistic historical causes by using it to promote "their distinct ideology and politics." See p. 30.

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98 Ravitch, *Revisionists Revisited*, pp. 100–107.

99 C-Span transcript ("A Brookings Book Discussion and Reception"), September 11, 2000, p. 8.

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