

THE TROUBLED CRUSADE:
AMERICAN EDUCATION 1945-1980
Diane Ravitch/Basic Books/\$19.95

John R. Turner

Dealing with a subject as diverse as American schooling over a 35-year period requires thematic discipline. The strength of Diane Ravitch's new book, *The Troubled Crusade*, is its close adherence to the argument that public demands for equality brought state action to bear on the schools in a way never before experienced in our history. The corresponding weakness is an absence of information about what actually went on in the classroom.

Through eight dense chapters Mrs. Ravitch amply documents the governmental ingestion of the schools. A single fact alone, offered in her final pages, could well serve as a symbol for her entire story: In 1965 there were 92 federal regulations affecting education; by 1977 the number had grown to almost a thousand.

The cost of assuring educational access to everyone—aside from billions of dollars—has been intense confusion about what education is supposed to be. As Mrs. Ravitch concludes: "Lost in the new order of things was any conception of the common interest, the idea that made common schooling possible."

The author's attitude toward these developments is not as decided as the foregoing statement might suggest. Though she clearly regrets the bureaucratic invasion, and the consequent loss of coherence, she is also strongly impressed by the sheer physical growth of education. The number of buildings built, the number of teachers trained, the number of graduates certified, and the number of dollars spent since 1945 are astounding. The number of people graduating from college and going on to advanced education now exceeds the wildest predictions of 35 years ago. If one assumes, with Mrs. Ravitch, that all this represents learning, there can be no question that the schools now are better than they were at the end of the Second World War.

John R. Turner is Director of Continuing Education at St. Mary's College of Maryland and author of the column "An Idea of Freedom."

The problem with any assumption about a subject as vast as the schools of an entire nation is that it is inevitably more a product of political and historiographical stance than it is of evidence. One can find pretty much what he looks for.

Diane Ravitch is what I would call a conservative liberal—as contrasted with the progressive liberal to one side of her and the liberal conservative to the other. Her heart is with government reform, but her head tells her that the government often fouls up what it touches, and that it is particularly inept in dealing with the subtleties of education. She knows also that the government's weakness in the face of pressure groups means that political initiatives can be ruinous to genuine learning.

For these reasons, she is suspicious of sweeping governmental programs, preferring instead processes with limited and specific goals. Nor does she have much patience with those who argue that piecemeal reform is little more than patching holes in a rotten educational fabric.

Her account of the curriculum revision movement, which rose up in the anxiety following Sputnik, provides a clear example of how she thinks educational change occurs. Between 1956 and 1975, the National Science Foundation funded 53 projects designed to spruce up the teaching of mathematics and science by weaning teachers from their dependence on textbooks and memorization exercises. By the mid-seventies these efforts were generally seen as failures by the educational community. A great deal of money had been spent and ambitious claims had been made. Yet, according to the common view, not much had happened. Science and mathematics were taught pretty much as they had been before.

Not so, says Mrs. Ravitch. Though the schools had not been transformed, some changes had occurred. Particularly in the natural sciences, the NSF curricula had found wide acceptance, and were being used in 60 percent of the nation's school districts. Therefore, the author asserts, the NSF "can be judged to have achieved a

significant influence through its relatively small investment."

Well, maybe. It's hard to know what "significant" means in this case. That a school district used one of the curricula doesn't tell us how many students were affected. And certainly, it doesn't tell us what the effect was. The flaw in Mrs. Ravitch's approach to educational history is that it seldom pushes through to results that count. A history of schooling that says virtually nothing about what actually took place in the minds of students

leaves something to be desired.

She might well respond that it's impossible to know what happened in students' minds. And if one adheres to her view of valid evidence, she's right. She is a social scientific historian and places her faith in data, statistics, and "studies" based on them. She exhibits no inclination toward individual perception and so makes scarcely any use of anecdotal evidence. Consequently, not only does her book seldom penetrate to the heart of her subject, it also makes for fairly dry

Speak German like a Diplomat!

What sort of people need to learn a foreign language as quickly and effectively as possible? *Foreign service personnel, that's who.*

Now you can learn to speak German with the same materials used by the U.S. State Department—the Foreign Service Institute's *Programmed Introduction to German*.

The FSI spent thousands of dollars and many years developing these materials for use by members of the United States diplomatic corps. Today people in all walks of life who need to learn to speak a foreign language are turning to this outstanding audio program.

The FSI's German Course is by far the most effective way to learn German at your own convenience and pace. It consists of a series of cassettes, recorded by native German speakers, and accompanying textbook. You simply follow the spoken and written instructions, listening and learning. By the end of the course you'll find yourself learning and speaking entirely in German!

This course turns your cassette player into a "teaching machine." With its unique "programmed" learning method, you set your own pace—testing yourself, correcting errors, reinforcing accurate responses.

AUDIO-FORUM®

Or visit our New York sales office: 145 E. 49th St., New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 753-1783

This FSI Programmed Course comes in two volumes, each shipped in a handsome library binder. Order either, or save 10% by ordering both:

Volume I. *Programmed Introduction to German*, 10 cassettes (13 hr.), and 647-p. text, \$110.

Volume II. *Basic Course Continued*, 8 cassettes, (8 hr.), and 179-p. text, \$110.

(Conn. and N.Y. residents add sales tax.)

TO ORDER BY PHONE, PLEASE CALL
TOLL-FREE NUMBER: 1-800-243-1234.

To order by mail, clip this ad and send with your name and address, and a check or money order—or charge to your credit card (VISA, MasterCard, AmEx, Diners) by enclosing card number, expiration date, and your signature.

The Foreign Service Institute's German Course is unconditionally guaranteed. Try it for three weeks. If you're not convinced it's the fastest, easiest, most painless way to learn German, return it and we'll refund every penny you paid. Order today!

112 courses in 35 other languages also available. Write us for free catalog.

Our 12th year.

Audio-Forum
Room 268
On-the-Green
Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 453-9794



THE FEDERALIST SOCIETY

for law & public policy studies
presents

A SYMPOSIUM on LEGAL CULTURE:

Legal Education & the Spirit of Contemporary American Law

subject

There is a crisis in contemporary American legal culture. The rule of law, the importance of liberty, and the possibility of impartial legal scholarship have been called into question. The American legal system has been characterized as an instrument of oppression. Legal education has become a political issue: some would use it as a means of achieving fundamental change in American society. The symposium will critically examine these developments and the suppositions of those who call for radical transformation.

participants

The symposium will feature approximately twenty speakers drawn from all segments of the legal and academic communities, including:

Judge Robert Bork, U.S. Court of Appeals
Judge Antonin Scalia, U.S. Court of Appeals
Judge Kenneth Starr, U.S. Court of Appeals
Hon. Paul Bator, Deputy Solicitor General
Mr. Marshall Breger, Special Ass't to the Pres.
Mr. Michael Horowitz, Counsel to the Dir. Office of Management and Budget
Prof. Walter Berns, American Enterprise Inst.
Prof. Richard Epstein, Univ. of Chicago
Prof. Charles Fried, Harvard Law School
Prof. Nathan Glazer, Harvard Univ.

February 24-26

Harvard Law School

Those interested in attending the symposium should call or write:

Harvard Society for Law
and Public Policy
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-3105
Kaj Ahlburg, Vice-President
(617) 498-4813
or
Eugene Meyer, Executive Dir.
Federalist Society
(202) 822-8138



J. MADISON

The Federalist Society is a nationwide organization of conservative and libertarian lawyers and law students dedicated to the principles of limited government and a limited judiciary. The Society is represented at over 65 law schools.

Travel scholarships and lodging available for students.

Who reads The American Spectator?



Thomas W. Pauken, Director of ACTION

ALSO: Malcolm Muggeridge, Ben Wattenberg, Peregrine Worsthorne, George Roche, S.I. Hayakawa, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Henry Kissinger, Clayton Fritchery, Milton Friedman, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Midge Decter, James Q. Wilson, David Brinkley, Joseph Coors, Irving Kristol, Henry Fairlie, Alan Abelson, Charlton Heston, Senator Jake Garn, Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., Gertrude Himmelfarb, James Hitchcock, Gen. Alexander Haig, Tom Wolfe, Lewis Lehrman, James Jackson Kilpatrick, George Gilder, Jack Paar, George Will, J. Peter Grace, Maj. Gen. George S. Patton, III, Fred Iklé, Philip Crane, Tom Stoppard, William F. Buckley, Jr., Patrick Buchanan, Albert Shanker, Lewis Lapham, Rowland Evans, Robert Novak, Jude Wanniski, Jack Kemp, William Rusher, Richard M. Nixon, William E. Simon, Malcolm S. Forbes, Jr., Thomas J. Lescher, Norman Mailer, Clare Boothe Luce, Gerald R. Ford, Melvin Lasky, Nelson Polsby, Roger Milliken, Randolph Richardson, Thomas Sowell, Sidney Hook, Jim Fallows, Edith Efron, Gen. A.C. Wedemeyer, James L. Buckley, Elliott Abrams, Donald Rumsfeld, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Shmuel Moyal, Huntington Cairns, Anne Armstrong, Norman Podhoretz, Jeff MacNelly, Doris Grumbach, Ernest van den Haag, Paul McCracken, Brock Yates, Ray Price, James Glassman, John Lehman, John Roche, John Chamberlain, William Safire, Neal Kozodoy, Henry Salvatori, David Meiselman, Martin Peretz, Charles Horner, Edward Banfield, Victor Lasky, Vincent Allen, Roy Cohn, Joseph Hazan, Eugene V. Rostow, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, Hugh Kenner, Frank Shakespeare, William Proxmire, Patrick Cosgrave, Jean-François Revel, Luigi Barzini, Tom Charles Huston, Clay La Force, John Lofton, M. Stanton Evans, Peter Brimelow, Dana Andrews, Richard Whalen, Richard Lugar, Henry Regnery, Charles Peters, John Lukacs, Leonard Garment, Michael Kinsley, Tom Winter, Nathan Glazer, John O'Sullivan, Alan Reynolds, Antonio Martino, Colin Welch, Robert Bleiberg, Herb Stein, Roger Starr, Walter Goodman, Harry Jaffa, Jeffrey Hart, David Packard, Robert Nisbet, James R. Schlesinger, Thomas Murphy, Suzanne Garment, Roger Rosenblatt, Anthony Harrigan, Robert L. Bartley, David Stockman, Dixy Lee Ray, Richard Allen, Ernest Lefever, Sen. Paul Laxalt, Joseph A. Califano, Garry Trudeau, David E. Davis, P.J. O'Rourke, William M.H. Hammett, Adin K. Woodward, Robert Lekachman, Leo Rosten, Arthur Laffer, Jerome F. Donovan, Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., Steve Tesich, Charlie Kittrell, Ralph J. Lemley, George Nash, Frank Mankiewicz, Richard Grenier, Kenneth Adelman, and many others.

You're invited to join them!

The American Spectator, P.O. Box 1969, Bloomington, IN 47402

Please enter a

new

renewal subscription to

The American Spectator for one year (12 issues) for only \$21.

Payment enclosed

Bill me later

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

X4AA

reading except in those sections where she has a political story to tell. In that case she can be an interesting writer.

Her chapter entitled "From Berkeley to Kent State," for example, which recounts the campus uprisings of the sixties and seventies, is one of the more engaging sections of the book because it deals with specific acts, and because it allows the author to lay aside the mantle of historical objectivity, rise out of the mushy conclusions dictated by educational data, and say what she thinks.

In her analysis of upheavals at the University of California, Columbia, San Francisco State, Cornell, and Yale, she has little good to say about the student radicals, quoting with approval Eugene Genovese's designation of them as "pseudo-revolutionary middle class totalitarians." Yet her special scorn is reserved for weak-kneed faculty members and bumbling administrators who gave the agitators the ammunition they needed to win temporary support from student majorities who did not really agree with the radical aims. Her summary of this much reported segment of American educational history is the most sensible short account I have seen.

Just about as good is her chapter on the rise and fall of progressive education, which I suspect will receive more attention than all other parts of the book put together. In treading on religious ground she has to expect to draw the lightning.

Though Mrs. Ravitch gives the early progressive thinkers, and especially John Dewey, credit for urging a needed liberalization of teaching methods, she sees that the major role of progressive thought was to serve as the intellectual vehicle for the bureaucratization of the schools. The progressives claimed to have made a science of pedagogy, and they were successful in selling that idea to the nation. Consequently, long after their specific prescriptions had been set aside, the organizations they created continued to dominate the schools.

If Americans ever get up enough gumption to take back control of educational policy, and reintroduce the diversity that ought to characterize the schools of a free nation, it will be in part because they have understood the process by which the educational professoriate projected itself into power. And historians like Mrs. Ravitch who lifted the veil from the educational sanctum sanctorum will have made an important contribution. □

BERNARD BARUCH: THE ADVENTURES OF A WALL STREET LEGEND

James Grant/Simon and Schuster/\$19.95

Edwin M. Yoder, Jr.

The problem with legends in their own time is that they are sometimes hard reading, and none was harder than Bernard M. Baruch. Everyone of a certain age remembers him, this adviser to Presidents, very rich (though not, it turns out, as rich as people often thought), a man who preferred a sunny bench in Lafayette Park to the corridors of power.

Nearly twenty years after his death at 95 in 1965, Baruch continues to exhibit the strange opacity of those who are, as someone has wickedly put it, "famous for being famous." Not that fame was the only source of his fame. But much of him was and remains hidden, like those old-fashioned high top Sears Roebuck shoes that a photographer chanced to see Baruch

Edwin M. Yoder, Jr. is a columnist for the Washington Post and other newspapers.

wearing one day while sitting cross-legged in the park.

The Baruch legend is grounded in the tribute Americans usually pay to men of, or reputed to have, financial genius. Baruch had it. James Grant, a lively financial journalist, had the excellent idea of using Baruch's Wall Street adventures as a sort of aperture to the inner man. Grant's approach is sound, so far as it goes. But his reach is a bit limited since a genius for making money, like artier forms of genius, is often a matter not of systematic calculation but of the exercise of elusive gifts of intuition. Baruch knew this. Years after leaving the stock exchange, he would shrewdly say that the best book on the psychology of the market was an obscure historical tome, Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*.

Bernard Baruch came out of Reconstruction South Carolina, the