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were prescribed.

But do prescriptions improve health? Peltzman, an economist at the University of Chicago, thinks not: "Enforcement of prescription-only regulation does not significantly improve the health of drug consumers."

To test how prescriptions have affected health, Peltzman examined U.S. death rates from accidental poisonings attributed to swallowing solids and liquids other than food. These rates fell from 29 per million in 1900 to 10 per million in 1940, but *rose* to 15 per million in 1980. Peltzman suggests that this "long cycle" rise in accidental-poisoning fatalities (during a period of strict drug regulation) shows that prescriptions did not reduce drug fatalities. Indeed, the regulations might have increased such deaths, because of a trend toward prescribing more potent drugs.

Peltzman then compared death rates from disease in countries that mandate extensive prescription use (such as Sweden, Canada, and Japan) with countries that allow most drugs to be bought without prescriptions (Greece, Brazil, India). He found that while countries with a greater number of doctors, higher per capita income, and less disparity between rich and poor had lower death rates, there was no direct correlation between a country's prescription policies and its mortality rate.

Prescriptions, Peltzman contends, may, by forcing more recourse to doctors, have an *indirect* effect in reducing illness, but patients with complex ailments will see a physician regardless of whether a prescription is required. "Consumers," he notes, "are able to understand the value of a doctor's advice even if they are not required to seek it."

Schools and Work

"Business-Led School Reform: The Second Wave" by Denis P. Doyle, in *Across the Board* (Nov. 1987), The Conference Board, 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Even before educator Horace Mann sold the idea of tax-supported public schools to Massachusetts businessmen in the 1830s, corporate America was interested in how and what students were taught. And teachers have always been quick to take cues from industry. But have schools learned the wrong lessons from business? Doyle, a senior research fellow at the Hudson Institute, suggests that they have.

With the Industrial Revolution came the assembly line, from which schools learned to "dumb down" students' roles, "socializing" pupils to the demands of an industrial economy rather than educating them. Modeling itself on the assembly-line factory, the expanding school system adopted such trends as vocational education and "scientific management." The latter phenomenon, which featured self-guiding curriculums and textbook selection by central authorities, left nothing to teachers' imaginations or discretion. Thus, schools were essentially "teacher-proofed." Doyle contends that under these policies, teachers, once considered "artisans and masters," in many respects became "no more than blue-collar workers."

After World War II, public school enrollment rapidly increased and school districts were consolidated to spawn vast bureaucracies. Compared with well over 100,000 school districts serving more than 20 million stu-

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dents before 1940, 15,500 districts serve 40 million students today. Schools, says Doyle, “began to look more and more like protected monopolies from which most consumers could not escape.”

Today’s graduates of these education factories are ill-equipped to succeed in industry, which “requires knowledge and sophistication greater than the unskilled jobs of yesteryear.” Doyle advocates abandoning the schools’ outmoded factory model in favor of a new “partnership” with modern business.

From successful “people-oriented” firms such as L.L. Bean, IBM, and the 3M Company, writes Doyle, public school authorities can learn to be competitive in the educational marketplace, to set and achieve goals, and to maintain high morale. Heeding these lessons will help public schools reduce “white flight” and “bright flight” to private schools. Ignoring “business’s most important lesson—that markets and competition work—is a fool’s paradise” that is bound to result in continued failure.

Roman Banquets

“De Gustibus” by Lowell Edmunds, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Dec. 1987), 203 Whitehead Hall, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. 21218.

The dinner party, says Edmunds, a classics professor at Johns Hopkins University, “was a prime form of self-expression” for the Roman aristocracy. But what did hosts want their banquets to say about themselves? The answer, Edmunds believes, is that meals were a means to transmit and preserve traditional virtues.

Hosts usually invited nine men to dinner; guests reclined on three couches around a table. Dinner was served in three courses. The first course (*gustatio* or *gustus*) consisted of such hors d’oeuvres as leeks, olives, or eggs, accompanied by *mulsum*—wine sweetened with honey. This was followed by a main course of various meat dishes ranging from ham to hare to the occasional whole boar. Dessert was commonly “a selection of chickpeas, chestnuts, raisins, and various fruits—apples, pears, figs.” Meals were eaten with a spoon and the fingers; bones and other detritus were thrown on the floor. After dinner, a host would provide entertainment: poetry readings, recitations, and, for the licentious, “a troupe of the notorious dancing girls from Cadiz.”

Roman banquets were designed to show the host’s moderation and refinement. The offerings were meant to duplicate “the old-time . . . simplicity” of meals of an earlier, more heroic age. Hosts were obliged to practice “smart poverty,” serving such simple staples as greens and ham instead of more luxuriant fare. From 181 B.C. onward, “sumptuary laws” imposed restrictions on extravagance, limiting the amount that could be spent on a banquet, the number of guests invited, and the consumption of dormice and other delicacies.

The second goal of a banquet—to express refinement—frequently conflicted with the first. How could a host show sophistication and moderation at the same time? Some altered the meal for different classes of guests; author Pliny the Younger (circa A.D. 61–113) once attended a din-