

**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**

the "few, atypical, largely Democratic urban districts." Democratic women there can rely on such extra-party organizations as the Women's Political Caucus to support their nominations. Urban areas are also likely to have a larger pool of activist women as potential candidates. And the largest bloc of voters tends to be made up of "candidate-oblivious" Democrats who vote the party line instinctively.

As for Republican women, they tend to be nominated in the same kinds of districts, where chances of Republican victory are small. In such situations, ticket balancing—"introducing population subgroups not typically represented on the party ticket"—is irresistible. The result: Republican women are largely "throwaway" candidates.

### *An Idea Whose Time Is Past*

"The Case Against a Federal Department of Education" by Gerald E. Sroufe, in *Phi Delta Kappan* (Apr. 1977), 8th and Union, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

During the 1976 campaign, Jimmy Carter advocated creation of a federal, Cabinet-level Department of Education. The idea is not new. Cabinet rank for education, supporters contend, is necessary to "achieve rationality" in U.S. education policy by making it more amenable to "long-term planning, consolidation, and efficiency."

But creating a distinct education department, says Sroufe, director of instruction at Nova University, faces several obstacles—among them, high cost and the existing federal education bureaucracy. Reorganization is never quick, he notes. It took two years and two Presidents (Eisenhower and Kennedy) to restructure the Public Health Service, and four years and two Presidents (Kennedy and Johnson) to create the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Enormous amounts of presidential influence and energy must be brought to bear—to the detriment of other efforts. FDR spent seven years and exerted much influence enacting even a few administrative reform proposals; some were not adopted until the 1950s.

Proponents of a new department, the writer argues, also ignore the political realities that would make a Department of Education merely a symbolic affair. To lament the lack of a European-style ministry of education is to overlook the obvious: American education is peculiarly decentralized. Most responsibility rests with state and local governments. Special interest groups, e.g. vocational teachers, college presidents, inner city administrators, will fight to keep their programs from being consolidated or eliminated; numerous congressional committees dealing with education will still exert tremendous power, unimpressed by a Secretary of Education. And, within the department itself, unless more money and new policies accompany reorganization, each agency will single-mindedly respond to its narrow constituencies, as before. Let the idea rest in peace, Sroufe suggests, while Presidents and educators attend to more pressing matters.