

they thwart reformers? Let Finn count the ways.

“Would-be reformers are immediately challenged to prove that their proposal has been fully tested and evaluated, that it will have no undesirable side effects—and that it will not deflect any resources from the ‘regular’ system. In other words, nothing can be tried until it has been proven to work, but nothing can be proven until it has been tried.” And when a few charter schools fail in California and Arizona, or private management firms lose their contracts for public schools in Baltimore and Hartford, Connecticut, then defenders of the current system conclude that the innovations have been proven worthless.

Elected officials and the public, Finn contends, have little real influence over the education system. Instead, teachers, coaches, curriculum directors, guidance counselors, and others scratch one another’s backs and determine what happens. These days, local school board candidates, for instance, are “less likely...to be able, disinterested laymen [than] people beholden to education unions and other producer interests.”

Educators resist all efforts to specify what children are expected to learn and to test their performances with standardized tests, Finn says. The reason is simple: “Without reliable measures of performance in relation to precise objectives, it is impossible to hold

anyone accountable for success or failure.” This permits everyone involved “to blame someone else for whatever isn’t working well.”

The education system “channels almost all of its money into salaries, treats every change as an added cost, and has little freedom to substitute one use of funds for another.” During the 1995–96 school year, a classroom of 24 children accounted for an average total public expenditure of about \$150,000, while teacher pay and benefits averaged only one-third that amount. Where does the other two-thirds go? “Nearly all is locked up in salaries to specialists, administrators, and non-teaching personnel and kept there by collective bargaining and bureaucratic inertia.” Translation: Sorry, no money for new ideas.

“Education reformers come and go, but the permanent beneficiaries of the status quo work at their ownership every day, year in and year out,” writes Finn. Over the long haul, a reform-minded governor or outraged parents are no match for the teachers’ unions or textbook publishers.

Finn takes heart from surveys showing that more and more Americans believe that public schools are doing a poor job. Faced with the possible loss of Americans’ historic support for public education, Finn believes, the education establishment may eventually shed some of its mossback ways.

Psychic Wars of the Elites

“Conflicting Worlds of Welfare Reform” by Lawrence M. Mead, in *First Things* (Aug.–Sept. 1997), 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Liberal and conservative poverty “experts” are failing badly to address the real needs of poor people, argues Mead, a professor of politics at New York University and the author of *Beyond Entitlement* (1986). Both are hampered by their own experiences, he says. The liberals can’t look upon welfare recipients as anything but victims, while the conservatives can’t see that some of the recipients desperately need ongoing help.

Their blind spots are partly a result of their own backgrounds, Mead believes: “Contrary to what one might expect, liberals as a group are the more privileged. They generally went to better schools and hold better jobs.” Now they populate the universities, the foundations, the liberal think tanks, and advocacy

groups. They empathize with the poor but don’t identify with them, and thus wind up condescending to them. No matter what is done to help the poor support themselves, liberals continue to view them “as too victimized to take responsibility for their own condition.” With equal implausibility, Mead says, conservatives insist that all of the poor can be as self-reliant as other people, if only government requires it.

Conservative specialists—chiefly at conservative think tanks and in GOP staff positions on congressional committees—“typically came up the hard way, with less education and more twists and turns in their careers,” he says. With a real sense of how they themselves could have slipped into poverty, the

conservatives identify with the poor but don't empathize with them. These specialists moralize, expecting the poor to do what they would do in their circumstances.

Until the landmark 1996 welfare reform, Mead says, the two sides were roughly balanced, each canceling out the most unreasonable features of the other's viewpoint. But Mead thinks the 1996 legislation, which eliminated welfare as a federal entitlement and turned it into a program of fixed block

grants to the states, was unduly harsh. It included new work requirements and a five-year lifetime limit on aid. Tough work programs alone, he contends, "were enough to bring the rolls down." He is hopeful that the states will take a more balanced approach, continuing to help the neediest, as many are, while "also expecting adults to work." Eventually, Mead hopes, welfare may become a manageable problem instead of "a battleground of elite psychic warfare."

Designated Targets

"Batter Up! Moral Hazard and the Effects of the Designated Hitter Rule on Hit Batsmen"
by Brian L. Goff, William F. Shughart II, and Robert D. Tollison, in *Economic Inquiry*
(July 1997), Western Economic Assn., International Executive Office,
7400 Center Ave., Ste. 109, Huntington Beach, Calif. 92647-3039.

A quarter-century ago, the American League introduced its still-controversial designated hitter (DH) rule, letting substitutes stand

Goff, Shughart, and Rollison, of Western Kentucky University, the University of Mississippi, and George Mason University, respectively.



Brady Anderson, centerfielder for the Baltimore Orioles, was hit by pitches 19 times last season—more than any other batter in the American League.

Even so, in the late 1960s and early '70s, some 300 to 400 batters in each league got hit each year. Then the American League—but not the National League—adopted the DH rule.

In a typical season since, the economists find (after controlling for differences in at-bats between the two leagues), 44 to 50 more American League batters have had close encounters with speed-

ing pitchers at the plate. Careful research now reveals that this has had an unintended and unwelcome consequence for batters: they get struck by pitched balls more often.

Before 1973, a major league hurler who deliberately threw at a hitter had to worry that he might get the same treatment when he took his own turn at the plate, observe economists

in the American League. In other words, with American League pitchers able to throw at hitters with greater impunity, batters have suffered 10 to 15 percent more direct hits than their National League counterparts. Armed with this scholarly finding, perhaps ballplayers now should negotiate a premium for playing in the American League.

Bunk: The Sequel

"The Future of History" by Richard J. Evans, in *Prospect* (Oct. 1997),
4 Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3RA.

"History is more or less bunk," Henry Ford once declared, and today's postmodern

historians seem to agree. In their eyes, notes Evans, a professor of modern history at