

CAPE OUTLOOK



Is the American Mind Closed? A View from the Schools

The Closing of the American Mind is tough going for all American minds which aren't well-versed in the history of philosophy. That it's a bestseller is something of a mystery, perhaps a tribute to our capacity for tolerant bewilderment, a generous characteristic which contemporary events have forced into a habit. It is also harsh and unremitting, breathtaking in some of its condemnations. Professor Allan Bloom has somewhat less generosity of spirit than his hero, Socrates.

Bloom tells about university education and how it got into what he considers to be its present mess, and in so doing he revisits the war between ancients and moderns. The moderns have "done in" the intellectual life of the university. "It is difficult to imagine that there is either the wherewithal or the energy within the university to constitute or reconstitute the idea of an educated human being and establish a liberal education again." (p.380)

How did they get this way? Bloom traces the origins of the present morass to the influence of the Enlightenment which brought with it the doctrine of natural rights—"the clear and certain rational teaching about justice." (p.287) And so "the philosophers switched parties from the aristocratic to the democratic." "The universities flourished because they were perceived to serve society as it wants to be served, not as Socrates served it." (p.288)

A long chapter on the events of the sixties paints a scathing portrait of self-indulgent students wrapped in a morality involving political, racial, personal and educational ideas wreaking havoc on the university weakened by its own lack of a clear purpose beyond that of service.

What has all this to do with schools? Bloom refers with contempt to all that happens to students before they get to the university. "...university officials have somehow to deal with the undeniable fact that the students who enter are uncivilized, and that the universities have some responsibility for civilizing them." (p.341)

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Keeping Pace With Our Changing Times

How can we prepare our students for the ever-changing demands of an increasingly international and technological economy in which the U.S. is losing its lead? To tackle this question Congressman James Scheuer of New York, Chairman of the Joint Economic Subcommittee on Education and Health, is sponsoring a series of eight hearings on the link between education, competitiveness and the economy. Together with the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Scheuer assembled an impressive list of speakers from industry, education, government, academia and the media to speak about improving the quality of the American workforce. Because of the central importance of this issue to all education, this month's *Outlook* begins a short series covering the hearings.

We were presented with an overview of the U.S. economy by Stephen S. Cohen, Director of the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy. "We're becoming dumb and we're sagging miserably in the competitive realm, and it is going to get worse," he began. However, Cohen's group maintains that Americans can opt to become competitive once again, and to maintain our high standard of living. We must learn to harness "two interrelated forces": (1) "the new challenge of international competition" and (2) "the technology revolution." He explained that microelectronics-based telecommunications enable industry to diffuse information immediately on new technologies, creating a constant demand for innovation. Automation is the other area in which technology is changing labor demands. Cohen faults American industry for having replaced workers with automation. Instead workers must be trained to "reconfigure" automated equipment so that manufacturing does not remain stagnant, and consequently lose out in the ever-changing competition. This is equally true in the service sector, which is inextricably linked to manufacturing. "Dynamic flexibility" is the key, and here changes in education are required. Only a "broadly well-educated, highly skillful work force" is "adaptable enough to adjust with change, and proficient enough to make optimal use of the new technologies to competitive advantage...." The old indicators of economic prosperity—prices, availability of raw materials and costs of capital—are losing their dominance in international competition, and the organization and use of technology has become the dominant factor. This technology depends on the quality of labor.

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Keeping Pace...

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Lou Harris has found that the American public is willing to finance the training necessary to adopt these changes in technology. Polls indicate that 70% of Americans would pay 2% more of their income for education if the system could improve everyone's skills, and therefore allow us to maintain our high standard of living. He found that the "haves" would pay more for the "have-nots", even in regions of the country that historically have resisted helping minorities.

A new voice for education reform with a record of successes to back him emerged at these hearings. Admiral James Watkins was in charge of Navy personnel from 1969 to 1978, a time when the Navy was suffering the burden of a demoralized and low-skilled pool of recruits. In brief, they were "at-risk" youth. Many could not read well enough to heed "BEWARE OF JET BLASTS" warnings. Watkins reports "Some ships were declared unsafe to steam because of poor leadership, morale, and inadequate numbers of qualified sailors." So, the Navy undertook a program of extensive reforms—reforms that largely replicate the list on today's national education agenda: remedial programs, day care centers, family service centers, continuing education programs, career counseling and affirmative action programs. The results after ten years show that these programs work. The Navy has become competitive with the private sector. "Seventy percent of the incoming volunteers in the 'youth at-risk' category (i.e. involved in teen crime and substance abuse, with depressed motivation, drop-outs, etc.) were being motivated, re-educated, and made healthy again so as to remain productive members of the work force. From this experience Admiral Watkins poses both questions and answers to the educational community. He asks why society bears the double burden and cost of early schooling, and remediation. He proposes that we address the needs of youth with a less fragmented approach than is now used. Instead of focusing solely on education, health, or other isolated areas, he suggests that we focus on the whole child with an integrated approach. This is especially important since the at-risk population is growing, while the total teenage population is shrinking.

Watkins therefore speaks to the issue of a competitive U.S. economy. We are facing a future shortage of qualified and motivated workers. Not only is the at-risk

population affected. Watkins concurs with Cohen, Harris, and Labor Secretary Brock that our education system does not keep pace with the changing demands of the marketplace, and that post-school remediation is costly. Watkins sees public/private partnerships as one answer, under sustained national leadership. America's youth need national objectives. Watkins sees motivation as the most important factor, and says that youth service programs serve as an excellent example, incorporating community partnerships. They work. They make schooling "relevant." Lou Harris' polls bear out this idea. When asked what their real goals are, the majority of youth answer that they want to make improvements in our society. The problem is that they don't see this goal as achievable. Admiral Watkins concludes: "If the nation can be inspired to move in this direction over the next several years...then the schooling process should gain new and exciting relevance for *all* youth; we will have laid the foundation for a caring and service-oriented society so badly needed to meet the challenges; and we will have motivated the entire work force to achieve new heights of productivity and competitiveness."

Is the American Mind Closed? (continued from page 1)

One would wish to point out to Professor Bloom that he is completely oblivious to what is going on in our best schools, private and public. What is happening there is suggested by one of Bloom's convictions made early in the book—the "conviction...that nature is the only thing that counts in education, that the human desire to know is permanent, that all it really needs is the proper nourishment, and that education is merely putting the feast on the table."(p.51)

What is happening in these schools (and is the goal of almost all private schools) is that the liberal arts tradition is alive and well. Both intellectual and moral excellence are at the heart of a curriculum which is supported by all faculty and students alike. The desire to know and the nourishment are present in abundance. It's time our university colleagues gave credit to that segment of education which has steadily held through all kinds of intellectual and cultural weather to the long western tradition of liberal education: our best private and public schools.

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A coalition of 14 national organizations serving private schools (K-12)

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Students for a Cleaner Environment

The Environmental Protection Agency wants to initiate chapter-based environmental science clubs in public and private high schools throughout the country. In early October EPA staff met with Washington, DC high school students, science teachers (including a teacher and two students from Archbishop Carroll), and education leaders to discuss their proposal. Their goal is to engage high school students in learning about and caring for a clean environment. Through environment or ecology clubs, or similar channels, young people could motivate their families and communities to join together in learning by doing. The EPA notes that "Just as our economic health requires a new generation with technical skills, our ecological health needs a new generation with an awareness and knowledge of environmental protection."

The environmental science clubs could work with existing programs in industry, government and non-profit groups to create an effective, unified environmental program.

The EPA has a Youth Program office with three focuses. It coordinates the annual Presidential Environmental Youth Awards presented to schools, classes, camps, youth groups and individuals selected by EPA's regional offices. It administers summer seminars. It issues publications such as the pamphlet *Books for Young People on Environmental Issues* with a reading list for grades 1 through 12, and lists of successful lesson plans and other teaching materials. These can include film strips, slides, cassettes, picture cards, leaflets, coloring books and bilingual materials on a variety of topics from whales and coral reefs to streams and hazardous wastes.

EPA encourages our schools to use these resources, listed with their Office of Community and Intergovernmental Relations, 401 M St., S.W., Washington, DC, 20460. CAPE serves on the EPA roundtable representing the private school interest in participating in a national school-based environmental organization.



Legislative Update

President Reagan signed a continuing resolution to fund federal programs at their fiscal 1987 levels for the first 40 days of fiscal 1988 or until Congress completes the 1988 fiscal appropriations bills. He also signed a resolution restoring the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction law's automatic budget-cutting trigger, but with reduced cuts. Half the cuts must come from defense and half from domestic programs. Education programs would be affected, and some would be cut below their 1987 funding levels. Chapter 1 programs would be cut by \$350 million; education for the handicapped by \$154 million, and math and science programs by \$7.1 million, to name a few.

Education Department FY 1988 Appropriations - On October 14 the Senate passed the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill (HR 3058) by a vote of 80 to 15. The measure provides \$21.2 billion for the Department for FY 1988.

ECIA Reauthorization - On October 15 the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee approved S373, the omnibus education bill reauthorizing major elementary and secondary programs through 1993. The bill reauthorizes and amends Chapter 1 remedial education and Chapter 2 school improvement block grants, bilingual education, magnet schools assistance, math and science education, gifted and talented programs, adult education and impact aid. It would also create new programs for secondary skills, drop-out prevention and early education for disadvantaged children and their parents called "Even Start", and provide assistance for gifted and talented programs. The bill was approved by a vote of 16-0, and now goes to the Senate floor.

Capenotes

*CAPE is pleased to announce that Dr. Al H. Senske, a founding director of CAPE, and a member of its National Advisory Board, has become the Director of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod World Relief with the Board for Social Ministry Services in St. Louis. He will be overseeing worldwide development projects.

*On October 7 the U.S. Department of Education released a 28-page booklet intended to be a "scientifically accurate and morally cogent contribution to AIDS education." For a free copy of *AIDS and the Education of Our Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* write the Consumer Information Center, Dept. Ed., Pueblo, CO, 81009.

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Capenotes

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*CAPE encourages private school families to host foreign students. Foreign exchange organizations across the country are reporting an alarming shortage of volunteer host families, and thousands of foreign high school students who had planned to study in the U.S. this fall were forced to stay home.

*Oxfam America, a development and relief agency working with Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean announces its annual Fast for a World Harvest on November 19. In order to organize a group fast and donate your food money, you can order a kit by contacting Oxfam America, 115 Broadway, Boston, MA 02116; 1-(800)225-5800.

*Grawmeyer Award in Education update: The University of Louisville School of Education announces its first annual competition for the best set of ideas or other achievement with potential for constructive impact in education in the U.S. or elsewhere presented in the last five years. Nominees may not be self-nominated, and nominations must be submitted according to instructions by January 30, 1988. Write University of Louisville, Grawmeyer Award in Education, School of Education, Louisville, KY 40929.

*The National Endowment for the Arts offers grants to schools to support projects which further the role of the arts as a basic part of education in K-12. Among eligible activities are curriculum development, training for teachers, artists and administrators, and collaborative projects between arts and educational institutions. Grants will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Applicants should send by January 4 a one-page letter indicating interest in submitting a proposal. The deadline for formal applications is March 1, 1988. Contact Arts in Education Program, Special Projects, National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. room 602, Washington, DC 20506; (202)682-5426.

*The National Endowment for the Humanities is funding a center for research on history education, how it is taught and learned in school. This is a response to Lynne Cheney's report, *American Memory*, which concluded that history and literature are not adequately taught.

*The U.S. Department of Education will sponsor the first nationwide Drug-Free School Recognition Program for the 1987-88 school year. The Program is designed to demonstrate by example that drug-free schools can be achieved and maintained by communities that strive for them, and to offer models of success. The Office of Private Education within the Department will work with private school organizations to solicit nominations. For more information contact Dr. Charles O'Malley, Office of Private Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Room 4137 FOB-6, Washington, DC, 20202; (202)732-4365.

*The U.S. Department of Education is funding 30 research grants at a maximum of \$5,000 each for projects led by public and private school teachers examining classroom and school issues which enhance learning and instruction. Contact Joseph Vaughan, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Research Application Division, room 504C, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20208; (202)357-6193.

*"A Job To Be Done" is a television documentary which aired on PBS on October 21. CAPE previewed and recommends this one-hour special, part of the Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) campaign, which discusses the new literacy programs underwritten by business and education partnerships.

*Independent Sector has published *Youth Service: A Guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs*, to promote and foster student community service. To purchase, contact Independent Sector, 1828 L St., N.W., Washington, DC, 20036; (202)223-8100. Cost is \$10 for members; \$12.50 for nonmembers.

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