

Who Owns the Public Schools?

By Ned Vare Part of the series: School Is Hell Who Owns the Public Schools? "Without a real private competitive market for education in America, all that is available is what the state education central planners choose to provide." -- Richard M. Ebeling, President, The Future of Freedom Foundation The so-called "public" school system does not belong to the public; it is owned and run by the government. Therefore, the public schools serve government needs, not the public's needs. In contrast, private schools are owned and run (and are paid for directly) by members of the public, and are accountable to their patrons. We must not make the mistake of believing that "We, the people," are our government. While politicians and other officials claim to represent us, they are an elite class who pay little attention to their constituents. Further, the school system is a world of its own that has virtually no responsibility to the public it pretends to serve. Its superintendents actually work for the state department of education. Their only connection with the town is that local residents are forced to pay their salaries. Also, we should not expect public schools to offer real education. They are intended to provide schooling only – basic concepts of literacy and numeracy, with a shallow smattering of other knowledge. However, even those basic skills are sorely neglected in today's schools. They are crowded out by political mandates, social engineering and other concerns. The result is a confusing hodgepodge of opinions, attitudes and values (often contrary to family and religious traditions) with no cohesion, no consistency and no real point other than to turn out docile group-thinkers who will be dependent on the government. "Local control" of public education simply does not exist. Local school boards do not represent the people who elect them. In my state, CT, state law says, "School boards are not agents of their towns, but are creatures of the state." In other words, the school boards are puppets of the state education bureaucracy, which also controls the state legislature on schooling issues. School board members are also members of political parties and are responsive to their pressures. They simply pretend to control the schools when in fact they decide only trivial details. More and more, what we have is a national school system controlled from distant offices by non-elected bureaucrats with unknown agendas. Even state control is giving way to a virtual federal takeover, through such bad laws as No Child Left Behind and Goals 2000. The school wars rage on because the system's goals for children are virtually the opposite of the goals that parents have for them. The government uses its schools in order to turn out masses of obedient controllable employees and soldiers; therefore, it offers an experience that conditions our children for low level jobs and/or the military. That should explain why the state-run schools offer a routine that says to children, "Sit down, be quiet, don't ask questions, we'll tell you what to think and do." To parents, it says, "We don't care what you want." Meanwhile, parents are consistently disappointed by what the government schools offer their kids, but are helpless to change them. School board meetings are charades arranged by the employees in order to prevent input from parents and the public. The entire show is controlled by state and local administrators and the employee unions in order to benefit themselves, not the public or the children. Parents should not expect the public schools to offer real education, and yet many still do. The government school system has never had the intention to offer what most parents want. Public school is a union-controlled program of coercion paid for by the force of taxation. The employees' qualifications are questionable, their "certifications" are bogus, "tenure" is a sham, and their union constantly seeks maximum pay for minimum work. It is designed to provide political and social indoctrination, with only a minimum of skills and knowledge, but not education. The result is mediocrity, secrecy, and deception with accountability to no one. Fewer and fewer people believe that government is an appropriate agency to offer "public education."

About the Author

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