



Jacques Cheminade, former POE secretary general and an associate of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, holds up the French translation of LaRouche's autobiography *The Power of Reason*.

at the Marine Corps Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia—that is, under guard by a military branch of American intelligence. Over 40,000 official documents concerning LaRouche are presently being kept secret by the American intelligence services, despite insistent demands for their release.

Mr. Monzat, you tried to break a man unjustly imprisoned for life. You have, fully intending to misinform the French public, accused this man of serving American military intelligence, when he was one of the first to expose Irangate, and courageously continues from his prison cell to expose the injustices committed against the world's down-trodden.

I am certain that history will judge you, Mr. Monzat, as being among those petty informants who exploit the human suffering that arises during the darkest hours. A modest place, to be sure, commensurate with your talents.

Jacques Cheminade is the former secretary general of France's European Labor Party (POE), which has run candidate slates in France based on the programmatic ideas of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche. A more complete treatment of the International Caucus of Labor Committees appears in the report on the ICLC conference on p. 30.

Do U.K. 'choice' schools educate?

by Margaret Sexton

A Lesson in School Reform from Great Britain

by John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe
Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1992
50 pages, paperbound, \$6.95

Brookings Institution senior fellow John E. Chubb and Stanford University Prof. Terry M. Moe have followed up their 1990 book on educational "choice," *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, with a short monograph on the effects of Britain's Education Reform Act of 1988, which set up a publicly funded choice education system in the U.K. "Choice" is usually defined as allowing parents to choose what school their child attends, and is not necessarily confined to private schools. "Vouchered" education means that parents would receive either a tax credit toward the tuition they would pay for their children to attend private schools, or a "voucher" they could use to pay that tuition.

Chubb and Moe claim that their critique is appropriate to the debate going on in the U.S., because the politics are similar in both countries. Certainly, *A Lesson in School Reform* raises issues worth debating. But Chubb and Moe don't tell us the whole story. They gloss over the deep differences between the U.S. and Britain, and the fact that "choice" as defined by the Bush administration is deeply rooted in the "free market" ideas of such conservatives as "economist" Milton Friedman (also a proponent of legalized narcotics). Adoption of Friedman's educational philosophy is a guarantee of no quality education.

President Bush has been strongly influenced by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in both his foreign and domestic policies. Mrs. Thatcher is credited (if that is the word) with helping along the "deep economic recession" in Britain, just as Bush has here. But Britain is also a "socialist" country, with socialized medicine, etc., and has centralized government control of many facets of people's daily lives, from schools to what's on television. It has a monarchy, with a titled nobility, and a parliamentary system of government—none of which the U.S. has. The British government funds British public schools far more than the U.S.

does, at least since the Reagan-Bush administrations. Still, much of the discussion by Chubb and Moe is relevant to the current debate over whether vouchered education reform would work in the U.S.

Britain's school reform legislation

Chubb and Moe describe what happened with the 1988 British comprehensive reform act. Like the U.S., many high school students are dropping out and schools are failing. (Note that the British retain their system of "public schools," the elite prep schools for the wealthy.)

Under Britain's 1988 reform, state-funded schools have school-based management; choice; and "opting-out," or taking the state's grant money, and setting up a public school outside of local education authority (LEA) control. Under the new system were also set up city technology colleges (CTCs), souped-up technical schools, with some funding from business, designed to train highly skilled industrial workers, which Chubb and Moe say are highly effective and quite popular, but also expensive (because of the equipment such schools need). There are a national curriculum and national testing.

The authors note that "educational reform arises out of politics, and politics is driven by power." In the U.S., Chubb and Moe say, opponents of choice are centered in the National Education Association, because choice "would destroy an educational system that grants the union special power and privilege." School-based management, they say, is acceptable to the NEA only because it leaves the system intact. Choice is acceptable in the form of magnet schools, or open enrollment "within the framework of the traditional top-down system."

Under the British "opting-out" system, which Chubb and Moe favor, a school receives government funding, but is accountable only to its own governing board, to the national government, and to the parents who enroll their children there—something Chubb and Moe say the Labour Party (equivalent to the Democrats in the U.S.) strongly opposes, because it undermines *their* political power.

The reader is able to make comparisons with the United States. For example, choice in Britain, as established by 1980 legislation, sounds a lot like what has happened in Arlington, Virginia in 1992. Arlington, with a diverse ethnic population, has a system to allocate students to whatever schools their parents wish to enroll them in. Chubb and Moe write of Britain: "The local authorities were free to allocate kids pretty much as they wanted. . . . They declared popular schools to be full even when additional space remained. They funneled overflow children to unpopular schools to maintain attendance levels and economic viability. They moved kids around to achieve academic or ethnic (or whatever) balances they regarded as good." Then, under the 1988 act, British local education authorities "were required to admit students to popular schools up to (and sometimes beyond) their stan-

dard numbers. . . . The LEAs are less capable of interfering, and power has clearly shifted to parents."

School-based management, which the authors praise, has had mixed results in the United States. In Chicago, it was initially a disaster, because the school managers were not able to wrestle with the schools' horrendous problems. In Prince William County, Virginia in 1992, school managers came up with many proposals, not all of them workable.

Chubb and Moe say the British parents, empowered—the current buzzword—"want order and discipline, academic achievement, and proximity" to their homes. But they don't always get what they want. Schools are closed and consolidated. The highly effective CTCs are few in number, oversubscribed, and worst of all, cost money! The fact that Chubb and Moe admit that they are the best schools in Britain, and address that country's need for highly skilled workers causes the authors to run in the other direction: "While the CTCs appear to be money well spent, the fact is that new schools can provide kids with good educations at a much lower cost. It takes teachers, books, rented (or donated) space, and not a great deal more." In short, the CTCs are too "top down" for Chubb and Moe.

Free market schools

What for the authors is the best "choice" is probably the worst: to let the "market" determine what the schools will be. "The best way to see that people get the kind of schools they really want is not to tell planners to come up with good ideas from above. It is to set up an institutional framework that allows new schools to emerge of their own accord, to allow them to decide for themselves what services they will offer and how they will be organized and staffed—and then to let parents choose among them. The schools that actually tap into the needs and interests of parents, and that do so effectively and at low cost, will succeed. The others will not, and will leave the scene."

But who will decide what schools should offer? Will it be those who want our children educated to be good citizens, contributing to society through their skills and talents? And what about the deteriorated schools in our inner cities? Will the "market" think they are worth overhauling?

Chubb and Moe describe rampant politicking in Britain's school reform efforts; the same is true here. And in Britain, as in the U.S., we have seen disastrous, politically motivated "free market" economic decisions destroy our industrial base, ruin our infrastructure, and bring us into economic depression.

Those who are considering "choice" as a way of reforming education in the U.S. had better think hard about what we wish to accomplish. Our founding fathers wanted education for an informed citizenry, capable of contributing to society. If that is what we want, then we will have to make our schools reflect that, whether from the top down, or the bottom up.