

# THE TEN MOST WANTED ENEMIES OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION'S SCHOOL LEADERSHIP\*

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## 1 Introduction

It should come as no surprise to anyone close to the discourse concerning public education in the U.S. today that educational leadership is under attack from a variety of internal/external critics and agencies, not the least of which is the U.S. Government under the new Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. This paper is a response to begin to identify those enemies of educational leadership programs, their ideological agendas and their allies. The network involves outspoken individuals with elitist credentials, long time neo-liberals, right-wing think tank pundits and their conservative foundation sponsors, other foundations such as Wallace and the Broad Foundations, and quasi-government agencies such the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta. It is not an exaggeration to say as Kowalski did in 2004 that we are in a “war for the soul of school administration” (pp. 92-114). Of prime importance in understanding our enemies is that we find our collective voice in a response to their agenda because as Giroux (2004) has remarked, “There is no language here for recognizing anti-democratic forms of power, developing nonmarket values, or fighting

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against substantive injustices in a society founded on deep inequalities, particularly those based on race and class” (p. 61).

It is somewhat of an irony that some of us who now find ourselves in a position of defending public education and its leadership have been long time critics of it over many years (English, 1994; 1995; 1997; 1998; 2001; 2002; 2005; 2007; 2008a, 2008b; English & Papa, 2010) The great French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2003) also found himself saying:

### 1.1

This situation is all the more paradoxical in that one is led to defend programs or institutions that one wishes in any case to change, such as public services and the nation state, which no one could rightly want to preserve as is, or unions or even public schooling, which must be continually subjected to the most merciless critique. Thus I am sometimes suspected of conversion or accused of contradiction when I defend a public school system of which I have shown time and again that it fulfills a function of social conservatism (p. 23).

The similarity from Bourdieu’s view and my own is that the enemies cited in this paper want to take public education down a road where it will not perform any better, or even possibly worse, than it does today, and in the process substantially degrade or destroy what Bourdieu (1998) called “civic virtue” and Houston reminisced as “the spirit of the commonweal that has always been the central expectation of public education” (Houston, 2006, p. 5). It is this greater threat to the destruction of the fabric of *civic humanism* which Emery and Ohanian (2004) warn is “the hijacking of American Education” (p. 1) that prompts me and many others (Lugg, 2000, 2001; deMarrais, 2006; Kumashiro; 2008) to expose their ideas and their agendas to greater public scrutiny. I find many of my colleagues in educational leadership incredibly naïve about the extent to which attacks on their work and ideas are financed and organized by political and business interests with a very different agenda than their own. And they are unfamiliar with the intensity and commitment of these ideological forces, agents and agencies to their destruction in the university and in their influence in the public schools.

Our enemies are in the fight for the long haul and they have enjoyed increasing success, notably in the appointment of Arne Duncan as the Obama Secretary of Education. When Duncan is accompanied on the road by Newt Gingrich and William Bennett to speak to the “needs of education,” this is a telling and signature moment in the struggle over educational leadership in the nation. It is testimony to the extent to which the ideas of neo-liberalism have triumphed in the public sphere. Kumashiro (2008) comments that the success of Rightist philanthropic organizations over ones on the Left are that “the Right funds the general operations of a smaller number of organizations over longer periods of time in order to build institutional infrastructure” and consequently, “the Right has emerged as an interconnected web of organizations with aligned missions and coordinated strategies, often facilitated by shared board members” (p.11).

## 2 A Preliminary Classification of the Enemies

Any sort of classification becomes difficult because our critics often have ideological footings in many camps and draw support from a wide variety of sponsors. While most emanate from the Republican right, a few are democrats. Kumashiro (2008) delineates three forces of the political right in the United States as (1) “secular” whose agenda is to “preserve economic privilege”; (2) Christian which is to “uphold traditional notions of gender and sexuality” and (3) Xenophobic which is aimed at protecting “the privileges of certain racial groups and nations” (p. 10). I shall attempt to make these clearer in this descriptive section. My ten most wanted enemies of public education leadership are located in four categories . They are:

- elitist conservatives** such as Charles Murray, E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and William J. Bennett
- neoliberals, free marketeers and new public management gurus** such as Chester Finn, Fred Hess, Eli Broad, Arne Duncan, and Lou Gerstner
- goos goos** such as Arthur Levine
- cranks, crack pots, commie hunters** such as David Horowitz

These are my current ten most wanted enemies of public education leadership. There are, of course, many others such as Jack Welch, Chris Whittle, Dinesh D’Souza, Newt Gingrich, Lynne Cheney and Stephen and Abigail Thernstrom, to cite a few. But these names keep resurfacing again and again. While most are Republicans or fellow right wing bon vivants, there are a few democrats among them, notably Eli Broad.

## 2.1 The Elitist Conservatives

The elitist conservatives fancy themselves as holding onto the cultural icons and heritage that they believe everyone should know and which constituted some cultural apogee or “golden days.” Eatwell (1989) has called this group of individuals “the reactionary right”, though the persons I placed in this group also lap into Eatwell’s “moderate right” category. The positions adopted by persons in the “elitist conservative” group espouse a return to some “idealized past”. They are “aristocratic, religious and authoritarian” (Eatwell, 1989, p. 63). Those in the “moderate right” tend to reject four tenets of liberal philosophy, “liberalism’s individualism; its universalism; its rationalism; and its contractual and utilitarian principles” (Eatwell, 1989, p. 67).

The three “most wanted enemies” of public education school leadership in this category are *Charles Murray*, *E.D. Hirsch, Jr.* and *William J. Bennett*.

### Charles Murray

Murray is perhaps best known for his co-authored book with Richard Herrnstein in 1994 *The Bell Curve*. In this book he argued that welfare and early childhood education programs were largely a waste of time for poor and minority children because these children were genetically inferior and could not profit from such programs. According to Brock (2004) the misuse of statistics in this work got him “cut loose” from the conservative Manhattan Institute. He then retreated to the American Enterprise Institute, another right wing think tank. Brock (2004) says that “the Right had spent more than \$1 million promoting Murray alone” (p. 47). Such think tanks underwrite the development costs of promoting ideologies and perspectives that are in harmony with the right wing foundations that support them. These include “the authors’ salaries... research grants... support staff, and established marketing and public relations funds to supplement the budgets of the commercial publishers” (Brock, 2004, p. 351). Murray continues to espouse attitudes which are hostile to the poor. For example after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans he wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*:

#### 2.1.1

We already know that the programs are mismatched with the characteristics of the underclass. Job training? Unemployment in the underclass is not caused by lack of jobs or of job skills, but by the inability to get up every morning and go to work. A homesteading act? The lack of home ownership is not caused by the inability to save money from meager earnings, but because the concept of thrift is alien. You name it, we’ve tried it. It doesn’t work with the underclass (p. A18).

This *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece is filled with the same echoes of racism embodied in *The Bell Curve*.

### E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

E.D. Hirsch is a former English professor at the University of Virginia who published *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. In this book, Hirsch (1988) argues for a curriculum based on a common core which he and two other male University professors identified 5,000 items that every American had to know to be “culturally literate.” Hirsch argued that this amounted to “freezing a culture” in the same way a language is frozen at some state of development in order to become standardized. On his list of 575 famous persons, 247 were Americans and of those 75% were white males. Clearly, when culture is frozen so are the dominant and privileged social structures which define “literacy”. Cultural literacy works when the society in which it derives its privileged hierarchical status also remains frozen. Shor (1986) has identified five different kinds of literacy. They are basic literacy, functional literacy, higher order literacy, cultural literacy and computer literacy. Cultural literacy is simply the ability to communicate in the elite idiom, and

to understand the world of high culture. Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) have simply called it “the cultural arbitrary” and its imposition on everyone else constitutes a form of “symbolic violence.” In his insightful book *Distinction, a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) Bourdieu notes that culture is defined in the negative, that is, especially “high culture” by what it isn’t. Schools serve as the legitimizers of a form of cultural capital and preserve and retain the culture of the elites who are at the helm of social power.

### **William J. Bennett**

William J. Bennett was the third United States Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan. He is a fellow with the conservative Heritage Foundation. He has long espoused competency testing for teachers, merit pay, opening the teaching profession to persons not prepared in colleges of education, a national examination of all students, parental choice of schools and administrative accountability. He is an opponent of same-sex marriage and long time member of the Republican Party. He has benefitted from financial support from Empower America and the John Olin Foundation (Turchiano, 2004, p.29) one of the hard right conservative foundations. The author of the best selling *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (1993) who preached self-discipline also had a gambling addiction and may have lost as much as “\$8 million as a result of his undisciplined behavior in gambling halls” (Turchiano, 2004, p. 27). Bennett has been contemptuous of schools of education and the entire education establishment including teacher unions referring to them as “the blob”.

Whitty, Edwards, & Gewirtz (1993) indicate that some of the rightist policies “taking center stage in education...embody a tension between a neoliberal emphasis on ‘market values’ on the one hand and a neoconservative attachment to “traditional values” on the other. This amalgamation is certainly obvious in these three public enemies of public school leadership. The views they espouse are elitist. Apple (1997) calls it a “new hegemonic alliance” which combines four major groups. They are the (1) “dominant economic and political elites intent on ‘modernizing’ the economy and the institutions connected to it... (2) largely white working-class and middle-class groups that mistrust the state and are concerned with security, the family, and traditional knowledge and values and who form an increasingly active segment of what might be called ‘authoritarian populists,’ (3) economic and cultural conservatives who want a return to ‘high standards,’ discipline, and social Darwinist competition, and (4) a fraction of the new middle class...whose own professional interests and advancement depend on the expanded use of accountability, efficiency, and management procedures that are their own cultural capital” (p. 52).

These three personages are the epitome of the issue of social justice in America as captured by Brian Barry (2005):

#### **2.1.2**

In every society, the prevailing belief system has been largely created by those with the most power—typically, elderly males belonging to the majority ethnic and religious group, who also run the dominant institutions of the society. It is notable, for example, that almost all religions rationalize a subordinate position for women and explain that inequalities of fortune are to be accepted as part of God’s great (if mysterious) plan (p.27)

The views of these white males is that of preserving the status quo even as American society is undergoing profound changes in its racial and ethnic composition. Dougherty (2010) reports U.S. Census data that showed that 48.6% of the children born in the U.S. between July 2008 and July 2009 were to non-white minorities. Ten states now show minority majorities in resident populations not simply California, Arizona and New Mexico, but Maryland, Georgia and Washington, D.C.. Some experts estimate that the nation could become white minority as early as 2011. Dougherty (2010) indicates that “America’s changing face has transformed race relations from the traditional divide of black and white to a more complex mix of race, language and religion” (p. A3).

Pushing for an elite culture of curriculum and traditional values will become more and more abrasive and dysfunctional. Ideas about the “core curriculum” as advanced by Hirsch represent an attempt to retain a specific form of cultural capital that also translates into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). All three of these personages have been accused of advancing racism in their works. Murray and Bennett have long standing financial support from right wing think tanks, Murray with the Manhattan Institute and the American

Enterprise Institute. He received financial support from the conservative Bradley Foundation to support his views including his co-authorship of *The Bell Curve*.

William Bennett also works on sinecures from right wing think tanks funded by one of the four “Big Sister” foundations: *Smith Richardson; John Olin; Sarah Schafie; Lynde and Harry Bradley foundations*. According to Conason (2003) “. . .the directors of those four foundations (along with many others) have underwritten a formidable infrastructure of think tanks, magazines, publishing grants, media programming, and academic research, all of which to promote conservative ideas” (p. 36). Bennett has enjoyed support from the right wing Heritage Foundation which has been called, “the mother of all think tanks” (Brock,2005, p. 58). There are several other foundations that gave over \$100 million to far Right causes including Wal-Mart which “is the most influential foundation in promoting school vouchers and has financed nearly every ballot initiative for vouchers since 1993” and the Devos Foundation in Michigan, funded by the AmWay fortune, supports vouchers as well as organizations of the Christian Right” (Kumashiro, 2008, p. 13).

Haas (2006) summarizes aptly the viewpoints and sponsors of these three enemies of public education leadership:

### 2.1.3

In general right-wing advocates argue for the privatization of public schools, fundamentalist Christian values in schools, the preparation of students as workers, and high-stakes standardized testing based on a banking model of teaching and learning. A privatized school system is built on the capitalist business principle that competition between schools will provide the most effective education for students. . .As the means of administering education is based in business, so is the outcome (p. 879).

Furthermore, when it comes to curriculum it is:

### 2.1.4

Focused on American exceptionalism in the form of White, male, Western content that emphasizes U.S. achievements with little or no acknowledgement of U.S. failures. These school activities are based in the largely discredited ideas that intelligence is innate and unalterable, that individual learning is accurately measured by standardized tests, and that knowledge is something that is uncovered in its pure form by experts and then poured by the teacher into the minds of students (Haas, 2006, p.880).

Murray, Hirsch and Bennett certainly are the epitome of Haas’ characterizations.

## 2.2 Neoliberals , Free Marketeers and New Public Management Gurus

Neo-liberalism “is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. . .Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created by state action if necessary” (Harvey, 2009, p. 2).

In his book *The Terror of Neoliberalism* Giroux (2004) explains that:

### 2.2.1

The ascendancy of neoliberal corporate culture into every aspect of American life both consolidates economic power in the hands of the few and aggressively attempts to break the power of unions, decouple income from productivity, subordinate the needs of society to the market, and deem public services and goods an unconscionable luxury. But it does more. It thrives on a culture of cynicism, insecurity, and despair (p. 105).

The five most wanted enemies of public education in this camp are *Chester “Checker” Finn, Frederick Hess , Eli Broad, Louis Gerstner and Arne Duncan*. Finn and Hess are now working and or were supported

by right wing think tanks, Finn from the Manhattan Institute and later the Hoover Institution, and Hess at the American Enterprise Institute. Finn is the current President of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation which is supported by the Broad Foundation. Eli Broad is ranked by *Forbes* magazine as the 93<sup>rd</sup> richest person in the world with an estimated net worth of around \$5.2 billion. He and his wife Edythe have made reform in public education through their foundation a high priority. Arne Duncan is currently the ninth U.S. Secretary of Education and formerly CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. Lou Gerstner is the former CEO of IBM and his net worth as of 2002 was approximately \$630 million.

All of these white males espouse the neoliberal agenda of privatization, the use of government to create markets in the form of charter schools and school vouchers, and have opposed school boards, teacher unions and schools of education. The kind of control required to reform public education fits that of the business community which requires top down corporate control (see Anderson & Pini, 2005). According to Harvey (2009) neo-liberalism was galvanized in 1971 by a confidential memo from Lewis Powell (later appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by Richard Nixon) to the United States Chamber of Commerce in which he advocated that the Chamber “should lead an assault upon the major institutions—universities, schools, the media, publishing, the courts—in order to change how individuals think ‘about the corporation, the law, culture, and the individual’ (p. 43).

As part of this mobilization effort the Business Roundtable was organized in 1972 which spent \$900 million annually on political issues.

### 2.2.2

Think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution, the Center for the Study of American Business, and the American Enterprise Institute, were formed with corporate backing both to polemicize and, when necessary, as in the case of the National Bureau of Economic Research, to construct serious technical and empirical studies and political-philosophical arguments broadly in support of neoliberal policies. (Harvey, 2009, p. 44)

The linkage between business interests and the conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute is also the revitalized Republican party base and accounts for what Hacker and Pierson, (2005) have called “the new power brokers” (p. 32). The Business Roundtable has become a bastion of promoting neo-liberalism and among the agenda is increased testing and rewards and sanctions attached to annual yearly progress and the kind of requirements represented in the Obama Administration’s *Race to the Top*. Much of the *No Child Left Behind* initial legislation embodies the BRT’s national education agenda (see Emery & Ohanian, 2004, pp.32-76). Among the BRT’s network are included the Education Commission of the States; the Institute for Educational Leadership; Public Agenda; the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; the Public Education Network; Just for Kids; the Progressive Policy Institute; and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

#### **Chester E. Finn, Jr.**

Chester E. Finn, Jr. is long time conservative critic of public education, schools of education, educational leadership programs and teacher unions. His books and perspectives embrace the main tenets of neo-liberalism applied to education including vouchers and charter schools. He has been a fellow at the Hoover Institution and an Olin Fellow at the Manhattan Institute as well as an adjunct fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute. Finn is the President of the Broad funded Thomas B. Fordham Institute where he continues to be an advocate for the neo-liberal agenda in education (see Finn, 1991). Both he and Frederick Hess’ prose is larded with military and corporate control metaphors which are aimed at marketizing public education and the role of the university in preparing educational leaders. As Harvey (2009) has observed, the neoliberals advocate a nearly “hands off” policy of government intervention in the market place, but paradoxically government intervention to force open what they see as a non-market. This paradox can be seen in a recent interview of Chester Finn by *The Economist* (2010) in which Finn remarked about the so-called failure to reform education was “radicalizing me to want far more profound changes in the structure, governance and power relationships of that system” (p.1) but that “Presidents shouldn’t do education. They should delegate the (limited) federal role here to education secretaries like Arne Duncan and Bill Bennett.

Presidents should focus on the keeping the country strong, safe, prosperous and free” (p.2).

Herman and McChesney (1997) refer to this initiative as one which is aimed at diminishing non-commodified public places in a democratic society, namely public schools. . .noncommercial public broadcasting stations, libraries, trade unions “and voluntary institutions engaged in dialogue, education, and learning—that address the relationship of the individual to public life, foster social responsibility, and provide a robust vehicle for public participation and democratic citizenship” (Giroux,2004, p. 49). One of Finn’s recent reports issued by the Hoover Institution won a “Bunkum Award” for ignoring strong research studies and cherry picking data from weak reports to support a claim against universal preschool. The “Bunkum Award” is given for “nonsensical, confusing, and disingenuous reports produced by education think tanks” (EPIC, February 15, 2010).

#### **Frederick M. Hess**

Frederick M. Hess is director of Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Prior to assuming this role at AEI he was an instructor at the University of Virginia and a senior fellow of the Progressive Policy Institute. Emery and Ohanian (2004) note that PPI has received generous funding from the Bradley and Heritage Foundations (p. 70). The Bradley Foundation is one of the four “Big Sisters” previously noted. Its money comes from the sale of auto parts magnate Harry Bradley. The Bradley Foundation has a long history of sponsoring conservative ideologies in education and in the larger policy arena. Hess sits on the Review Board for the Broad Prize in Urban Education and on the Boards of Directors of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Hess is a frequent critic of schools of education leadership programs for failing to teach candidates “proven” business management skills (2003). He organized a national conference at AEI based on a critique of educational leadership course syllabi he acquired from the internet and other sources. He, like Chester Finn, is an advocate for “opening up” the educational pipeline to non-educators to fill principalships and superintendentcies (see Kowalski, (2004) under the banner of traditional sources of producing leaders (a) don’t really produce leaders and (b) this has resulted in a “faulty pipeline” compared to business models (see Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). Hess conveniently overlooks the fact that business leaders are selected in an even narrower search process espousing a different but more restrictive form of “licensing” (see Khurana, 2002).

Hess’ ideological work at AEI with Andrew Kelly and released by the Hoover Institution in 2005 called *The Accidental Principal*, has worked itself into the mainstream of leadership preparation. His review of 31 principal preparation programs concluded that traditional programs did not place enough emphasis on the use of data, research, technology or the evaluation of personnel. Despite numerous flaws and false assumptions Hess and Kelly made in this study including the lack of a definition of “core courses,” It was cited in “the case for redesign” of university preparation programs by the Southern Regional Education Board’s *Schools Can’t Wait*. Recently think tank research has come into criticism as of very poor quality. According to Kevin Welner, professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, “Across the nation, think tanks are churning out a steady stream of often low-quality reports that use weak research methods, offer biased analyses, and make recommendations that do not fit the data” (EPIC, 2010).

#### **Eli Broad**

Eli Broad made his fortune in real estate (KB home) and was founder of SunAmerica, now a subsidiary of AIG. He and his wife Edythe established the Broad Foundation “with the mission of advancing entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science and the arts”. The Broad Foundations have assets of \$2.1 billion. According to Wikipedia (2010) “The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation’s education work is focused on dramatically improving urban K-12 education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition. The Broad Foundation has four national flagship initiatives: (1) The \$2 million Broad Prize for Urban Education; (2) The Broad Superintendents Academy which is a ten month executive management program to train working CEOs and other top executives from business, non-profit, military, government and education backgrounds to lead urban school systems; (3) the Broad Residency in Urban Education which is a two-year management development program that trains recent graduate students, primarily with business and law degrees, who have several years of work experience and places them immediately into managerial positions in the central operations of urban school districts, and (4) The Broad Institute for School Boards which is a national training and support program for urban school district governance teams of school board

members and superintendents.

Broad has been a strong critic of schools of education, teacher unions and school boards in the U.S. (see Weinberg, 2003). All of these scorned places and groups are examples of non-commodified public spheres that represent threats to the type of corporate controlled business and military models which are so reified in the neo-liberal approach to educational “reform” as advanced by Finn, Hess, the right wing think tank pundits and the Broad Foundation. Because schools of education, teacher unions and school boards are also places where dissent and oppositional voices exist, they must be silenced, marginalized or co-opted into submission. Indeed, the bludgeoning of teacher unions exemplified in the Obama Administration’s executive agenda *Race to the Top* is an example of such silencing.

Business leaders such as Eli Broad and Lou Gerstner suffer from what Krugman (2009) has called the “great man’s disease” which “happens when a famous researcher in one field develops strong opinions about another field that he or she does not understand” (p.29). In a prescient passage Krugman writes [simply substitute the word “education” for “economics” in this quotation] :

### 2.2.3

Imagine a person who has mastered the complexities of a huge industry, who has run a multibillion-dollar enterprise. Is such a person, whose advice on economic policy may well be sought, likely to respond by deciding to spend time reviewing the kind of material that is covered in freshman economics courses? or is he or she more likely to assume that business experience is more than enough and that the unfamiliar words and concepts economists use are nothing but and that the unfamiliar words and concepts economists use are nothing but pretentious jargon? (pp. 31-32).

The Broad Foundation “was the eighth-largest U.S. family foundation by giving in 2008, the last year for which data is available, donating \$116.5 million to various causes, according to the nonprofit Foundation Center” (Lattman & Pilon, 2010). Broad’s opinions about what is wrong and how to fix public education are enjoying bountiful funding, including ten million dollars to the D.C. public schools to install a form of merit pay for teachers (Martinez, 2010, p. A8), another key plank in the neo-liberal ideology to “reform” public education. Broad is optimistic that his agenda is ripe for implementation, “We’re at a golden moment now,’ with a president and an education secretary who, he says, agree with his reform agenda” (Riley, 2009, p. A11).

#### **Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.**

Louis Gerstner is the former business executive with RJR and American Express who became CEO of IBM in 1993. He is credited with saving IBM from going out of business by, in part, by laying off over 100,000 employees. After he left IBM he received a ten year two million dollar consultancy contract and is required to work only one month out of the year (Wikipedia, p.2).

Gerstner, like Eli Broad, has strong opinions about public education. Like Broad, he has zeroed in on school boards and school districts as “the problem” and has recommended that all 15,000 school districts be abolished (Gerstner, 2008, p. A23). He sees too many “profit centers” as de-centralization of corporate control and trying to bring order to some national effort. Corporate control is authoritarian not democratic. And whereas the corporatizers in education often promise more transparency and accountability, what they produce is less of both (see Anderson and Pini, 2005, p.230).

#### **Arne Duncan**

Arne Duncan is the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of Education. A former professional basketball player with an under-graduate degree from Harvard, Duncan was Deputy Chief of Staff for Chicago Public Schools for CEO Paul Vallas, another non-educator who headed that school system. Duncan was appointed CEO of the Chicago Public Schools in 2001 and nominated to be U.S. Secretary of Education in 2008. Billed as a reformer he was endorsed by D.C. schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee and former Bush U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings (Levy, 2008.) Like Spellings, Duncan had no outstanding education credentials and even after seven years heading the Chicago Public Schools “doesn’t seem to have developed much wisdom from that experience. There is no indication of a broad or deep understanding, or at least an appreciation, of the complicated relationship between education and larger society forces. Nor was his tenure as Chicago’s



schools chief an unmitigated success in any of the popular ways politicians and presidents define success, such as increased test scores and lower dropout rates” (Chennault, 2010, p. 30).

Duncan has launched a \$4 billion dollar executive agenda called *Race to the Top* with TARP funds (McNeil & Maxwell, 2010). It contains a huge amount of the neo-liberal education agenda: charter schools; blunting the role of teacher unions; pay for raising pupil performance on tests in the form of individual “merit”; and criticizing schools of education and educators for not promoting more “rigor” in their programs (Sawchuk, 2009), as well as working to create more alternative pathways to licensing (see also Hawley, 2010, p. 28). The fact that Duncan has won the support of long-time neo-liberal pundits such as Chester Finn, William Bennett and Newt Gingrich is indicative of how deeply the neo-liberal agenda has penetrated the Democratic party. When even the party in power has no solutions except those proposed by the opposing party, it matters little who is in office. Chennault (2010) similarly noted, “President Obama’s education agenda is, broadly speaking, indistinguishable from that of his predecessor” (p.31). It is a paradoxical outcome that has Duncan’s *Race to the Top* and initiatives which work to expand charter schools, that growing evidence suggests that many of these schools are segregated by race, family income, disabilities, and English language learner status more than the public school systems in which they operate (EPIC, February 9, 2010).

### 2.3 The Goo Goos

#### Arthur Levine

The Goo Goos are the social do-gooders who want to do things right and improve things, but make them worse. To this category of the ten enemies of public education leadership I add Arthur Levine, formerly of Teachers College, Columbia University and now the sixth president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. Levine authored a report in 2005 called *Educating school leaders* which not only indicted educational leadership programs in general, but failed to follow sound research based practices in doing his national study. He subsequently ran into a buzz saw in Teachers College over it and left as Dean.

Levine’s study promised to let his “data speak for themselves” but he provided no data. He claimed that no program he examined was “exemplary” he never disclosed his sample except by saying two of the programs were acceptable at Vanderbilt and University of Wisconsin at Madison. Levine recommended the abolition of the Ed.D. but he never examined the quality of Ed.D. research directly, something which was done recently by English & Papa, 2010). His so-called “study” would fail to meet even the most minimal standard acceptable for the National Research Council’s 2002 *Scientific Research in Education*. Levine is enamored with the MBA and business schools (Maranto, Ritter, & Levine, 2010) despite the very loud criticisms of the inadequacies of the MBA and business schools in the literature (see Khurana 2007) and especially with the large number of CEOs, COOs, and CFOs in jail, indicted, or on their way to jail for financial improprieties. Business school reputations have been severely tarnished and a host of new deans is trying to change the “win at all costs culture” of them (Middleton, 2010). Judith Samuelson, the executive director of the Business and Society Program at the Aspen Institute says, “The old message of business schools was that ethics and values was an add-on. That’s the antithesis of what we need now, and these new deans understand that.”

### 2.4 Cranks, Crack pots, and Commie hunters

#### David Horowitz

This category of public enemy is reserved for David Horowitz, a former leftist Vietnam War protestor, editor of *Ramparts* a radical leftist newspaper, and member of the Black Panther Party who did a 180 degree turn and now, because he was wrong, believes he is permanently right. At some point Horowitz underwent a convergence and wrote a book on his own generation and how they were to blame for the social ills of the day. He wrote speeches for Senator Bob Dole and finally, “by 2000, [was ushered] into the circle of Bush advisor Karl Rove” (Brock, 2004, p.101). He established the Center for the Study of Popular Culture in Los Angeles with funds from the Bradley and Scaife Foundations where he runs several right wing web pages,

among them *FrontPage*, an instrument “for smearing leading Democrats” (Brock, 2004, p. 102) and liberal professors whose views he finds anti-American or anti-George Bush.

But Horowitz’ attack on professors in higher education he finds too liberal or named Communists is part of his claims that there is a bias in higher education that can only be put right via state intervention. As a result he has sponsored an “Academic Bill of Rights” initiative that would guarantee that students with conservative views would not be discriminated against (Kronholz, 2005) there is no evidence that such is the case. Horowitz founded an internet web site called *RateMyProfessors.com* where students can complain about professors who are too liberal. He also has been involved in creating such an outlet for students in elementary and secondary schools (Cavanagh, 2006). Horowitz had worked with the American Enterprise Institute to do a “study” of university faculty that were liberal and that study reported that “the Left dominated university faculties by a factor of eleven to one” (Brock, 2004, p. 370). What Horowitz neglected to say was that, “the survey...examined only social science faculties, leaving out more conservative schools of medicine, law, business, and engineering” (Brock, 2004, p. 370).

English (2008c) has analyzed Horowitz’ 2006 book *The Professors: the 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*. Forty-five percent of the “dangerous” professors resided in the humanities; 33% in the social sciences and 22% in other fields such as journalism, communication, music, law, education, criminal justice and engineering (p. 256). None were in the hard sciences. The views that Horowitz found “dangerous” were that 31% of his “dangerous” professors were anti-Iraq war; 28% were either Marxist in orientation or advocated or shared Marxist perspectives; 28% were anti-Israel or opposed to Israeli treatment of the Palestinians; 19% were Anti-American or anti-American policies; 19% were anti George Bush; 18% embraced feminist/lesbian programs, critical race theory, queer theory or homosexuality; 9% were anti-capitalistic; 7% were generally against war; 5% were pro Cuba and another 5% were anti Vietnam War (English, 2008c, p. 256). Among the “dangerous” minds Horowitz rails against were three former presidents of the Middle East Studies Association; former presidents of the National Ethnic Studies Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Historical Association and the American Philosophical Association. It also included the past chairman of the US Civil Rights Commission. Also on Horowitz’ list were sixteen directors of university centers or programs for peace studies, global studies, conflict studies, women’s studies, American and Jewish studies, human rights studies, and Mexican-American studies.

Horowitz’ attacks are an example of what Eatwell (1989) has called “the extreme right” which “has tended more to produce propagandists, interested in telling people what to think rather than how to think, and lacking in originality” (p. 71). And within Horowitz’ “dangerous professors” one can clearly see the outline of conspiracy theory, a hallmark of the extreme right. Conspiracy theory, notes Eatwell (1989) is a form of political myth and “in its extreme right-wing form involves a particular set of views: these center mainly around nationalism and racism, which can involve mobilizing, integrating and simpliste-explicatory myths” (p. 72).

Lazere (2004) perhaps summarized Horowitz’ impact on the conservatism found on most university campuses in the continuing vocationalization of higher education and the declining impact of the humanities:

#### 2.4.1

I have little doubt that, beneath the pious avowals of conservatives of Horowitz’ ilk that they are concerned to preserve academic freedom for liberals and conservatives alike, lies the cynical intent to unleash the most ignorant forces of the right in hounding liberal academics to death (p. B16).

### 2.5 The Penetration of Public Spaces by Corporate Interests

The most disturbing trend is the growing interconnectivity between private and public funds, when for example, the Broad Foundation formed a partnership with the U.S. Department of Education in 2003 (Emery and Ohanian, 2004, p. 94). Recently the U.S. Department of Education announced that it was joining with private philanthropies who will add “\$506 million in 2010 to ‘leverage’ the federal i3 fund, making more than \$1 billion available to help expand promising innovations” (Robelen and McNeil, 2010, p. 1). If the

mental models lodged in neo-liberalism and corporate makeovers of public school leadership run parallel, then “innovation” will advance the neo-liberal agenda. What constitutes “innovation” will also be confined to the status quo despite all of the rhetoric regarding reform, a classic case of what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has dubbed “misrecognition”.

## 2.6 The Final Ranking of the Ten Most Wanted Enemies of Public Education Leadership

Here is my final ranking and commentary on the top ten enemies of public educational leaders and leadership programs in the U.S. Whether they are democrats or republicans makes little difference since they are all neo-liberal advocates or fellow travelers. In the words of Giroux (2004):

### 2.6.1

Similarly, neoliberal warriors argue that democratic values be subordinated to economic considerations, social issues be translated as private dilemmas, part-time labor replace full-time work, trade unions be weakened, and everybody be treated as a customer. Within this market-driven perspective, the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, the making of socially responsible citizens, and the building of democratic communities (p. 61).

The persons on my ten most wanted list of enemies of public education leadership embrace most if not all of the neo-liberal ideology.

1. **Eli Broad-** Eli Broad’s millions are going towards a top-down corporate takeover of urban school systems. His promoted non-educators have no historical awareness of the field in which they work, are beholden to efficiency management tactics and simplistic economic models, discourage innovation and privatize formerly non-commodified public spheres while failing to bring about the dramatic improvements they advertise. The Broad approach proffers nothing new on all fronts because it assumes that everything that is necessary to be known to improve schools is already known, if not in education than in business. Broad’s superintendent and school board academies have never released their curriculum, never indicated what in traditional preparation programs is not necessary to know or who their “experts” are. Whereas most public university curricula is in fact public, available on their web pages in course syllabi and reading lists, the Broad approach eschews any such disclosures. Broad CEOs are called “gunslingers” and their record of success is spotty at best in urban settings (see Eisinger and Hula, 2008). Broad money is sloshed behind the scenes to elect or select candidates who “buy” the Broad corporate agenda in education (see Emery and Ohanian, 2004, pp.89-94). Broad’s enemies are teacher unions, school boards, and schools of education. What all three have in common is that they eschew corporate, top-down control required in the Broad business model.
2. **Arne Duncan-** Arne Duncan, the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of Education, has shown he is a captive of the neo-liberal “boxed” thinking about school improvement. He has proffered no new bold reforms. He is not an innovator but an orthodox administrator that has accepted the diagnosis and the solutions proffered by the Republican, right wing think tank pundits. He is busily implementing their agenda in *Race to the Top* which has found protests coming from the missing parent voice “. . .from the top down, often draconian policies put forward by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (Haimson & Woestehoff, 2010, p. 34). He has an advocate for more mayoral control of urban school systems which means the loss of the elected or appointed school board, a long time agenda of the neo-liberals (Hechinger & Sataline, 2009, p. A12).
3. **Chester E. Finn, Jr.-** Chester “Checker” Finn continues to push his long time neo-liberal ideology as President of the Thomas Fordham Institute supported by the Broad Foundation. He is fond of using corporate metaphors in his writing (Saltman, 2005, p.37). He has been a leading advocate of the privatization of education and was “co-founder of the education management organization Edison Project” (Kumashiro, 2008, p.21). The Edison Project “currently manages schools and school districts in 19 states and the District of Columbia” (Kumashiro, 2008, p.18). He is long time critic of schools of education and the “liberal” policies embraced in them (see Finn, 1991).

4. **William J. Bennett-** Bill Bennett is a Republican party stalwart with very deep ties to the neo-liberal education agenda. Bennett is a former board member of the Bradley Foundation which has been a long time opponent of affirmative action and welfare (Kumashiro, 2008, p. 12). He has been supported by the Heritage Foundation, the “mother” of all right-wing think tanks. He also co-owns a private company, K12, Inc. which “according to the federal Government Accountability Office, has improperly received millions of federal grant dollars from the U.S. Department of Education” (Kumashiro, 2008, p. 18).
5. **Frederick M. Hess-** Currently the Director of Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, Hess proffers the tried and true neo-liberal ideology in education: privatization, vouchers, non-educators in leadership roles; run schools like business or the military; alternative certification; anti teacher unions and schools of education. He is one of the reputed anonymous authors of the Thomas B. Fordham and Broad Foundation’s political broadside against educational leadership programs *Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto* (2003).
6. **Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.-** Lou Gerstner believes public education can be improved by the way he ran IBM. Gerstner wants to abolish all of the school districts in the nation which remain one of the few arenas where Americans exercise local control of anything. The abolition or marginalization of local school boards has also been advocated by Eli Broad and Chester Finn.
7. **Charles Murray-** A eugenics elitist, Murray has helped propagate the dogma of racial superiority in education and to weaken the commitment of public opinion for the advancement of the poor and most vulnerable classes in the larger society. As Conason (2003) noted, “Speaking from the commanding heights of the American right, they informed the nation that blacks are destined to fail, that racial discrimination is logically and morally defensible as well as natural, and that the government should stop trying to enforce civil rights and help the black underclass” (p. 138). Murray’s work is an example “the new racism” within what Ansell (1997) has termed “the New Right worldview” where “the disproportionate failure of people of color to achieve social mobility speaks nothing of the justice of present social arrangements...but rather reflects the lack of merit or ability of people of color themselves” (p.111). Murray’s work is the epitome of the New Right worldview.
8. **David Horowitz-** Horowitz is the only one on my list of the top ten enemies that I would call a member of the extreme right. He is a populist demagogue. Billig (1989) comments that, “extreme right groups attempt to play upon fears which indigenous members of the population might have about foreigners and immigrants” (p. 151). Extreme right groups also are fond of conspiracy theories and with Horowitz he proffers that it is a group of “dangerous professors”. A close examination of the actual views of those he identifies show they have espoused a wide range of views and that most often they represent perspectives which call into question current political views and actions of the Bush Administration.
9. **Arthur Levine-**Arthur Levine portrays himself as a reformer but his “reforms” proffer nothing new and are a rehash of much of the internal change agenda within educational leadership that was already in the literature. The damage his report caused is simply to further detract from the legitimacy of leadership preparation at the university level and to offer encouragement for market based privatization outside of the university. Levine was in attendance at the 2002 Strategic Planning Retreat sponsored by the Broad Foundation (Emery and Ohanian, 2004, p.92). Levine is a fellow traveler on the neo-liberal road. His recommendation to abandon the Ed.D. in favor of an MBA ignores the long standing criticisms of the MBA and business school curricula as “a vague, shifting, rather formless subject” (*The Economist*, 2004, p. 62). And the criticism that some of those taking educational leadership courses will never become school leaders is akin to a criticism of MBA courses by Pfeffer and Fong of the Academy of Management Learning and Education “that there was little evidence that getting an MBA had much effect on a graduate’s salary or career” (*The Economist*, 2004, p. 63).
10. **E.D. Hirsch, Jr.-** A linguist whose efforts to capture the “core curriculum” are futile efforts to preserve white privilege in a burgeoning multi-racial and multi-cultural society. Hirsch’s “core curriculum” is a prime example of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2000) “cultural arbitrary” being imposed by political power on the rest of a specific society. The school serves as the legitimizing agent of this form of “symbolic

violence.”

In summarizing the agendas of the political right and left in America, Brian Barry (2005) saw tremendous success of the right because there is “a network of lavishly financed foundations, and the books and journals that they promote at enormous expense, have rationalized all the most mean-spirited impulses of affluent American whites” (p.233). Further he added, that “. . .the only honest case that can be made for the agenda of the right is that it suits the people who benefit from it nicely” (p. 234). The ideological agenda of the right as embodied in neo-liberalism continues its assault on American public education, its democratic institutions and its leaders and in programs that call their values and simplistic business models of schooling into question. The purpose of this paper was to identify the most significant figures and forces that are involved in that assault. Unfortunately, while the Obama administration has made noises about “breaking the mold” the agenda they are pursuing is the same old same old approach pursued by neo-liberals who have dominated Republican educational positions in the government and continue to do so through their think tanks and foundations (see Feulner & Needham, 2010).

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