



Political Agendas for Education: From the Christian Coalition to the Green Party

Joel Spring

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This book describes and analyzes the educational agendas of major political organizations. It begins with the outrage of evangelical parents at what they perceive to be the anti-Christian curriculums of public schools. Sparked by religious zeal and working with the well-oiled machinery of the Christian Coalition, Evangelical Christians are affecting schools and American politics. Bordering the region of the religious right is the shadowy world of conservative think tanks that buy intellectuals to sell a school reform agenda of free market competition between public, private, and for-profit schools to the public and politicians.

The Republican Party is strongly affected by the demands of the religious right and the powerful influence of the conservative think tanks. The author explains that the educational programs of George Bush's presidency reflected the plans of conservatives, while the Christian Coalition dominated the 1996 National Republican Platform. Bill Clinton and the New Democrats broadened the appeal of the Democratic Party to middle class voters by promising to increase chances to attend college and to provide lifelong opportunities to upgrade job skills. Education -- the New Democrats proclaim -- is the answer for growing inequality in wealth, insecurity of employment in a world of corporate restructuring, and competition in a global marketplace.

The book continues in the splintered arena of the leftist politics. Overwhelmed by New Democrats and the political right, Jesse Jackson clings to the hope of fulfilling the liberal-educational agenda of the War on Poverty. Also feeling under siege by attacks from anti-abortionists and the political right, the National Organization for Women continues its objective of ensuring that women have an equal opportunity for admissions to schools and participation in school programs, and that school materials are free of gender bias and give women positive role models. Gaining support from progressives who are dissatisfied with Republicans and Democrats, the Green Party offers a unique educational agenda of democratic control and ideological diversity. The story concludes with the cultural politics of Indiocentricity and Afrocentricity. From the religious right to the New Democrats, politicians are condemning attempts to change the cultural foundation of U.S. schools.

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