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Book Reviews

Michael Engel, *The Struggle for the Control of Public Education, Market Ideology vs. Democratic Values*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000. \$54.50 hardcover, \$19.95 papercover.

Michael Engel is a political science professor in Massachusetts, president of his faculty union, and the author of an earlier text on state and local politics. This book is about his observations of trends in American public education, based on his service as a school board member in a small-town New England school system. Engel's book is a defense of public education and democracy as well as a caution against market-based ideologies which, in his opinion, are rapidly taking over education throughout the United States.

But it is even more than that. The book is deceptively complex. Although the theme is education, some of the concepts apply to every element of public services in the modern era. It appears to have great significance for social services, which are affected by some of the same trends that Engel observes about education.

In the book's 223 pages, the author reminds the reader of the precepts of progressive education, traces some of the great ideological disputes in education in American history, and comments perceptively on the implications of advances in technology as a part of education. Engel is a strong defender of government and the essential nature of local governmental bodies of which the school board is most pervasive and, perhaps, the most important.

He notes that Americans as they become more isolated, become least involved in public spirit, public governance, and politics. As many others have noted, participation and elections by Americans has been on the decline for years. Many Americans seem alienated from government and although they may be pleased with their private lives, they do not seem as concerned as they might be about public issues. If one examines current American social, political, and economic trends, many of which are discussed by Engel, those concerned about civic interests and participation find some disheartening trends. For example, human interactions are often fewer with other humans than with the Internet; children play video games more commonly than sports

and games with other children; the increasing popularity of home schooling; and the growing emphasis on corporate operations of schools. It is not difficult to think about and see the conflicts and likely consequences that Engel illuminates.

Engel's ideas are so complicated and his arguments so diverse, that it is difficult to report on all that he believes in a single book review. However, his one major point is that the effort to provide students and their families with school choice and education vouchers is ultimately a great threat to democratic values and the future of public education, which has, perhaps, been the most democratizing institution in American life. He points out that market ideology, which is inherent in school choice, is a step in the direction of privatizing schools and the corporate control of education. He thinks that school reform must fundamentally reject market ideology as a basis for improving education.

Engel argues that progressive educators such as John Dewey worked to build a egalitarian and democratic society and that the schools were the basis for achieving that goal. However, as Engel points out, the market approach and ideology would remove democratic control from schools and undercut the basic values of public education. Instead, he argues, schools would focus strictly on skills, especially skills that can be taught and eventually used by graduates in the market place. He finds the school choice proponents suggest that schools ought to focus on the basic skills and not be diverted from those pursuits into areas such as the teaching of democracy and social responsibility. Teaching citizenship and the like has little place in an educational system that would be geared to preparing people for specific jobs.

He notes that the approach is nothing new. The social efficiency movement of the 1920s also advocated educational programs that would prepare young people for their specific roles as adults in the social order.

Engel points out that free choice in selecting schools would mean that the more affluent families would choose and use the better schools while neighborhood schools, that may involve a range of socio-economic classes, would suffer under such arrangements. He includes the charter school movement, which is some ten years old, in the equation because those specific kinds of schools are authorized in the laws of most states in ways that

would attract and benefit the most affluent and most talented while neglecting everyone else.

Engel's well researched and clearly stated arguments for democracy and against the encroachment of the market ideology in schools has broader applications than simply public education. One notes that social agencies, both public and private, are increasingly involved in highly specific contracting for services and programs with decreasing emphasis on social reform and citizen involvement.

Many economic approaches would suggest that competition has no place in essential services that are not profitable but that can make all the difference in the quality of a civilization, such as education and social welfare. The increasing trends toward the corporatization of social welfare and the concomitant corporatization of public education suggest the potential for profits and profit motives in both. And, as Engel demonstrates, the long-term outcome is likely to be enhancement of the market and profits to the detriment of democratic processes and values.

Leon Ginsberg

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Joseph C. Kiger, *Philanthropic Foundations in the Twentieth Century*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000. \$55.00 hardcover.

Originating mainly in the latter half of the 19th century, philanthropic foundations became a major influence in American life in the 20th. Although historically foundations are among the oldest social institutions, the last fifty years of the twentieth century constituted a takeoff period in the US for the use of private, tax exempt funds for public purposes. Described more elegantly by Martin Bulmer as "the institutionalization of knowledge-based social engineering," there was a ten-fold increase in their number—from 4000 to over 40,000—and a growth in their assets from \$3 billion to over \$300 billion. While the modern American foundation as a social invention is thus barely a century old, substantial scholarly work did not appear until the late 1950s, with notable books by F. Emerson Andrews, Robert Bremner, Waldemar Nielson, Barry Karl and Stanley Katz, among others. The opening of the Rockefeller Archives gave a further impetus