

TRUMP SHOCK DOCTRINE FOR SCHOOLS

The Washington Post reported recently on the people Donald Trump has been talking to about schools. Advocates for community based public schools were not noticeable.

What is on its way has been called a 'democratic disconnect': the process by which services that once were managed and monitored by democratically accountable officers and elected representatives are handed over to private companies able to avoid scrutiny by citing commercial confidentiality.

In 2008 Brown and Jacobs wrote ***The Private Abuse of the Public Interest: Market Myths and Policy Muddles***. They pointed out that the urge to privatise not only meant a retreat from public values and accountability but also generated a need for additional regulations and regulators. When there are holes in the road voters still wish them to be fixed. Who makes that happen if government is small and business is big? They noted that George W's plans for smaller government increased its size. Not only do existing regulations and regulators not disappear but more regulations and regulators are needed to manage those now outside the public system. The difference is that voters cannot, for example, observe a local government education committee making the relevant decisions. Neither do their votes count as they once did.

In ***The Shock Doctrine (2007)*** Naomi Klein gave the example of how, following a hurricane, the residents of New Orleans returned to find that services such as schools were no longer public but private. A disaster creates turmoil and disorientation. Chaos provides opportunity, as Nick Boles, Michael Gove's former flatmate, once pointed out. Cameron put him in charge of planning.

Thatcher, Baker, Blair, Adonis and Gove took several years to de-stabilise and disconnect schools. With Betsy DeVos in charge in the USA the democratic disconnect may come more quickly.

Fortunately, DeVos is sixteenth in line to be President should all those in front of her fall under a series of political buses: a small mercy.

Social Fracking is a long-term process of undermining social stability. The concept of choice is used a lot by social frackers. Voters are told that they will gain the power to choose but it is those in control of commodities with that power: children and their parents have a market value.

Trump is more a sudden shocker than a gradual fracker. Despite his assertions of inheriting a mess he has not. The speed at which he is dismantling social stabilisers plus the nature of the people he is placing in authority is providing the shock to create that mess. It is not easy to predict the outcome for schools in the USA but the pressure they will come under will

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unsettle teachers, children, parents and communities. The more time Trump and DeVos have the more extensive will be the damage.

Below is, first, a letter from the President of the American Federation of Teachers and, second, a letter from the President of the National Education Association.

Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos are set to encounter resistance.

Cliff Jones, February 2017

February 14, 2017
Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I watched this morning as you and President Trump reinforced the concerns raised by millions of parents, students, educators and the broader public during your confirmation process. Ninety percent of children in America attend public school, including children whose parents voted for Donald Trump. Yet, from what we could discern the president's first meeting in the White House on education was used as a platform to denigrate—not strengthen—public schools with primarily private and home-schooling educators and parents as a backdrop.

Instead of continuing on a path of undermining public schools, we urge you—indeed challenge you—to take the more responsible path—to do the hard work that your oath of office as secretary of education requires. Demonstrate that you take seriously the responsibility that the Senate bestowed on you, not through photo ops or sound bites, but by responding in a real and thoughtful way to what parents and teachers need to strengthen our public schools for the students who attend and need them.

I invite you to see the broad diversity that is our strength, but also the challenges presented by the fact that half our children live in poverty. That is a factor that can neither be an excuse or ignored in our quest to help every single child climb up that ladder of opportunity.

I invite you to visit a public school, to spend hours in our classrooms, cafeterias, hallways, libraries, community rooms, nurses' offices or all the little crevices and corners inside and outside school buildings where educators engage, nurture and grow this generation of children.

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teachers what they need to be successful, or paraprofessionals how they spend their days. Talk to parents about supports they would like for their students, or ask them what they like about their public schools. Ask students about their educational experience. This—more than any particular ideology—will help inform every decision you make as secretary.

You are now the secretary of education for all of the students in the United States. Public school teachers and parents all over America are waiting for you to walk their walk.

Sincerely,

Randi Weingarten

President

American Federation of Teachers.

February 14, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW LBJ Education Building
Washington DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I am writing in response to your voice mail. I'm an elementary teacher from Utah. I've taught in middle-class suburbs. I've taught homeless children and hard-to-place foster kids in a residential home. I know how important it is for my students to have education leaders who understand their lives and the support they need. As president of the 3-million-member National Education Association, I look for partners to stand with us as we protect the rights of all our students.

NEA will continue to fight for students, educators, and public schools. I will make sure the voices of educators are heard and that policymakers understand that investing in public schools is an investment in the next generation of teachers, scientists, welders, and even politicians.

It's important for educators, parents, and communities to know where you stand on some of the most critical work of the federal Department of Education. I must ask you to give us the substantive answers that I did not hear you give to the senators at your hearing on issues critical to our students:

1. Do you agree that all schools receiving public dollars must be held to *the same* accountability and transparency standards?
2. Will you agree not to privatize funding for Special Education or Title I?
3. Will you stand with educators and protect our most vulnerable students from discrimination, including LGBT students, immigrant students, students of color, girls and English language learners?
4. Will you focus, as educators are focused, on the civil rights of all children, regardless of their zip code, by challenging the inequities so many face in equal access to programs, services and support?

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For us, there is a wrong answer to these questions. Privatizing and profiting from public education has not moved us toward equity, equal access, non-discrimination, and opportunity for *all* students. NEA members will never waver in our determination to create a system that works for ALL children. Educators, students, and parents deserve to know that the U.S. Secretary of Education will do the same.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Lily Eskelsen García
1989 Utah Teacher of the Year

President, National Education Association