

**The original documents are located in Box 10, folder “Presidential Commission on School Integration” of the Richard B. Cheney Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

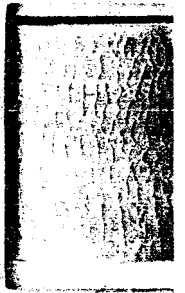
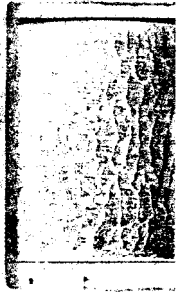
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Don R

Talk with me.

Excellent.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 15, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: DONALD RUMSFELD

FROM: ROBERT GOLDWIN



Attached is a memorandum from Ambassador Moynihan that you requested two weeks ago, near the end of our seminar on ethnicity.

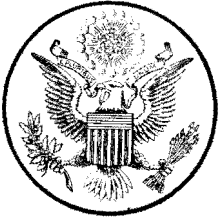
The first part of the memorandum (pages 1-14) is an instructive and persuasive debunking of claims that schools are effective in accomplishing major educational and social changes. Moynihan adds a caution: what social scientists are sure they now know, and what the public now believes to be true, are not in accord.

The next brief part of the memorandum (pages 14-17) discusses the race aspect of public education and some previous presidential attitudes toward it.

The third part of the memorandum (pages 17-22) presents the case against creating a presidential commission and the fourth part (pages 22-27) the case for.

A very brief conclusion raises the possibility of going ahead with the necessary studies but without establishing a presidential commission.

Attachment



THE REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS

October 13, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

An early American (and if my ear is any good, Middle Western) saying held that "It's not ignorance that hurts so much as knowin' all them things that ain't so." For what it's worth, that about sums up my impression of the present state of education and public policy.

In part this arises from familiar political processes. A generation ago the federal government spent practically no money on education, and had practically no policies concerning it. The period since has seen ever increasing expenditures and ever increasing Presidential, Congressional and judicial involvement in educational issues. Great court cases have been fought. Vast legislative struggles have taken place. Presidents have variously hidden from the issue, plunged into it, sidestepped it,

manipulated it, been manipulated by it. Of the three great issues of American politics in this period, education became intimately associated with two: with the Cold War in the post-Sputnik drive for "educational excellence"; and with the movement for racial equality in the quest for "equal educational opportunity." It has at various times seemed on the verge of a similar association with the third great issue of the age, that of internal violence. Each of these associations has involved on one occasion or another, or even continuously, a struggle for social legislation, and as Joseph A. Schumpeter once wrote, the "technique and atmosphere of the struggle for social legislation" is no friend of truth.

If you will consider the number of half truths and whole lies which were told you in the course of various legislative battles in a quarter century in the Congress, and consider further that education battles were not at all exempt from such tactics and techniques, you will get my meaning well enough.

In the course of the past decade, however, this otherwise normal situation has been compounded by an unusual development, unusual at least in the field of education. A succession of "discoveries" -- some deserve the term -- have been made which has quite transformed our understanding of what schools do. Some of the new findings have been near to startling, and almost all have been unwelcome. Rumsfeld, last Wednesday, described to you the furor in the educational community when he, in 1969, released an OEO study (commissioned some years earlier, under a previous administration) which seemed to suggest that Head Start wasn't working. I had tried to telegraph the punch in President Nixon's first message to Congress, which was on poverty. I knew the study was coming, and went to great length to have the President assure one and all that if at first we didn't succeed, we would try, try again. Hopeless. Against all reason and fact, it was held that the research was a politically motivated effort to destroy a splendid new social program. For what it may be worth, two

years ago HEW issued a study, Federal Programs for Young Children: Review and Recommendations. By this time, evidence of the sort Rumsfeld had issued four years earlier was overwhelming:

Title I and Follow Through. Findings from large-scale evaluations of Title I offer little evidence of a positive overall impact on eligible and participating children. ...

Effect of preschool projects. ... The effects of most preschool projects on IQ scores do not persist beyond the second and third grade.

Three principal propositions have emerged from this decade of research. The first, associated with Coleman's 1966 report, has gained general support among (most) social scientists in the field, but has as yet little "public" acceptance, which means of course that it is difficult if not impossible to use it as a basis for public policy. The second proposition, deriving from Jencks' 1972 book, is still disputed, but is gaining ground among social scientists. It has, though, virtually no public acceptance. The third (the one, alas, with which I am associated) has not really been proven in

social science terms, and in that sense remains a hypothesis. Ironically, it is the only one of the three which the public is probably prepared to believe.

FIRST PROPOSITION: Differences in existing school inputs make relatively small differences in school outputs. After a point, you do not get more for your money, and it would appear that almost all American school systems have long passed that point. The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New York, for example, spent \$430 per pupil in the 1973 school year, while the public schools spent \$1,750. Test results in the Catholic schools were somewhat better.

During the 1960s the Federal government began vast compensatory education programs, but these seem only to have increased inputs well past the point where any result was to be expected. A scholar recently summed up: "Nothing the schools could do, it seemed, made much difference to the cognitive achievement of their pupils."

SECOND PROPOSITION: School achievement has



but little bearing on economic achievement. Nor, evidently, does anything else! As the principal proponents of this view put it, "Neither family background, cognitive skill, educational attainment, nor occupational status explain much of the variation in men's incomes." As best the data show, economic success is largely the product of "luck" and peculiar competencies, as for example the ability to throw a baseball, over which government has no control. (I read the work in manuscript and suggested the authors might use "pluck" instead, but that seemed too directive to them.)

This proposition doesn't make "sense" to the average person, but it is what the data show. Life is chancy, and there's no knowing how it will turn out -- so far as making money is concerned. Years of schooling can help in the "certification" process -- some jobs require a high school degree, some a college degree -- but nothing is guaranteed. Even being born on the right side of the tracks is no guarantee. The income of brothers has only slightly less variation than that of persons wholly unrelated to one another.

This proposition first appeared in a book entitled Inequality. The researchers had been very much concerned with the uses of education to bring about more economic equality(-- much as were the sponsors of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, with its Title I provision). It was accordingly a blow to find how little education policy could contribute to that goal -- how little, in the author's words, is to be expected from the "ingenious manipulation of marginal institutions like the schools. ..." Although I stress that the public at large knows little of all this, the extent to which the findings are gaining professional acceptance can be seen in a passage by two young scholars who are slightly resistant. "In most cases," they write, "we should probably encourage students to stay in school and avoid policies that have an opposite effect." (My italics.)

THIRD PROPOSITION: Service programs, such as education, designed to decrease income inequality probably increase it. Certainly they do in the short term.

This proposition simply asserts that the household income of teachers -- for example -- is above that of the average household, such that despite the putatively progressive nature of the tax structure, the more such services are added, the more taxes are transferred from lower down in the economic hierarchy to higher up. If I may use a term of my own, this is a strategy of feeding the sparrows by feeding the horses. It is, of course, much favored by horses.

Where does this leave us?

Several things come to mind, of which the first is that it ought to leave us moderately cheerful. It turns out we are doing about as good a job as could be expected with our schools, and more than that, we've turned out a pretty attractive society in the process. The Jencks group (friends of mine -- their work grew out of a faculty seminar I began at Harvard in 1967) faced a shocking dilemma at the end of their work. There was nothing they could think to propose so far as schools were concerned. They contended, reasonably enough, that schools should be made

pleasant places on the grounds that children spend a lot of time there, but the idea of schools as places of great leverage in society was all but destroyed. In desperation of sorts, the authors concluded that if you want any social change you have to have total social change, and so threw in a concluding paragraph calling for "socialism," whatever that is. Actually, if you can conceive of such research being done by Republicans (admittedly a hard idea to grasp) they would have judged their findings to be a resounding vindication of American social arrangements. We do not have an equal society, in the sense that there is a considerable "spread" of income. But where you end up in that spread turns out to approximate what a "random draw" would produce -- which is all liberals have ever asked of society. (Until, I suppose, they got it.)

For a libertarian, there is a certain satisfaction in these findings which is as yet but rarely commented upon. It turns out people are surprisingly resistant to institutions -- government institutions

in particular, but not exclusively. Thus Coleman's findings that different schools produce pretty much the same product was anticipated by Greeley and Rossi, who in the early 1960s carried out a study of the impact of Catholic education. For a century and one half Catholics had struggled -- a fair term for a mostly working class group -- to maintain a separate Catholic school system because of the obvious fact that such schools would strengthen religious faith and practice. Which Greeley and Rossi found -- rather to their disappointment, much as Coleman was disappointed by his findings, and Jencks et al. by theirs -- not really to be so. Some effect? Maybe. Not much.

What does make a difference? Family background. (Which we knew all the time, did we not?) Take a British example, in order to avoid American comparisons. In 1972 results were published of a longitudinal study of British children born in 1958. They were compared in terms of family size, social class, sex, and region. The results are beyond almost anything we see in America.

The average difference in ... test scores between, on the one hand, English boys in /the lowest social class/ who have four and more brothers and sisters, and on the other hand, Scottish girls in /the highest social class/ who are only children, is equivalent to a gain in reading age of nearly four years.

For a President these findings certainly are a signal that the nation is already spending more than enough on education. (Perhaps twice too much? In terms, that is, of pure education return.) Certainly these would be grounds for putting a damper on the movement now underway (with much support, as I gather, in the Office of Education) to create yet another year of schooling in the form of a regular, required kindergarten year. It is grounds, alas, for keeping a stern eye on expenditure on educational innovation. Because there isn't much in prospect. A recent conference put it:

A few clues to improved schooling exist in the sociological and psychological literature. But, by and large social science can add only marginally to common sense.

You have been told, no doubt, that innovations such as Sesame Street do wonders, and certainly



they are happy events. But as with Head Start, there is no sustained impact on the cognitive abilities of poor children. (Heaven help me when this memo leaks.) There is some evidence that such programs help children who are already doing well, but.... On the other hand, cognitive achievement isn't all that important anyway.

As you see, this research has got us into a bit of a bind. In defense of social policy, let me say that to some extent at least, this knowledge has formed a basis for public policy, or at least the basis of some of the recommendations that have come forth from the Executive. I knew this research when I joined the Nixon White House (I had done some of it) and I had a fair hunch where the Jencks study would emerge. The Family Assistance Plan was one result. If you are going to redistribute income you have to do it directly; it can't be done through schools. (A fact almost all social scientists acknowledge now is that there is no longer any chance to get such legislation. When it was first proposed, there were those who saw it as a maneuver to downgrade education programs.) President Nixon's

two messages to Congress on education in March 1970 were explicitly based on these findings, especially the proposal for a National Institute of Education. I led off the House hearings on that proposal, early in 1971, saying that it was evident that the premises on which we had based the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1954 were "wrong" and that it would take a long time, a lot of patience, and even, probably a lot of money, before anything nearer to "right" would be discovered.

Along with a great vogue for a guaranteed income, these findings are also beginning to produce an interest in "family policy". The government, it is more and more being said, must do something to strengthen families. This, for example, was the theme of the principal address at the National Urban League convention this year. The problem is -- I hope my own disappointments are not too much influencing what I say here -- that there is not the least prospect that we will actually do any of these things. We could have had a guaranteed income in 1970. There is not a chance of getting one today. In five to fifteen years -- just maybe. As for



family policy, there will be much talk about it, but no action. I know. It was I who first proposed it at the Presidential level. There are other problems. For one thing there are signs that our education is softening. Since 1964 the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores (the "SAT's" your children took) have been declining. The 1975 declines were the largest yet. There are other signs of decline also; in reading achievement, for example. But the great, terrible, unresolved problem in education is that of race. For one thing, minority students score far behind the majority, and nothing has been found to close the gap. I say to you, as I said to President Johnson in 1965, that there are absolutely no grounds to think there are any genetic differences. But there is a dramatic difference in outcomes. To the extent these originate in social factors, as you and I and Rumsfeld talked about on Wednesday, there is unmistakable evidence that this has worsened in the past ten years -- in the sense that there are more terribly disadvantaged children coming along. As I read the data, and I am sorry to say I know something about the subject, we have another generation, maybe

two, of this problem. It will be worse in the 1980s than it was in the 1960s, save in the one and perhaps crucial sense that a growing middle class now exists to deal with a growing underclass.

Now of course there are many achievements to offset the disappointments. Among 18-to-19-year-old blacks, for example, school attendance is now at 38 percent. Moreover, while the "returns" to higher education appear to be declining for white males, this is not so for blacks (or women). Blacks in fact show a considerably higher return than do whites.\*

But the main problem is that of segregation. Twenty years ago the Supreme Court declared the dual school systems of the South unconstitutional. To everyone's credit, those dual systems have been abolished. But racial separation continues. Especially in the North. The Southern system was not really disestablished until the fall of 1970, but in the immediate aftermath (trusting to memory here) the schools of Mississippi were more integrated

\*How can there be a return to education if education doesn't produce returns? The answer is that years of schooling do account for 10% - 12% of variance in income. Thus there is some effect, although much less than had been understood.

than those of Michigan. In the North a de facto racial separation continues, often abetted by official acts which have led courts to judge that de jure segregation also existed. The phenomenon of "white flight," however it is interpreted, certainly continues, and there is every prospect for continued residential segregation. Another generation. Unless the nation is prepared to accept a situation which looks like segregation, something is going to have to be done about this.

So far, what mostly has been done is that courts have ordered busing. This has brought the various reactions of which you are well aware. It is not clear to me that it has brought a crisis, but it could. And it has indisputably brought about much anxiety and confusion. The case can be made that Presidential leadership is needed here.

President Nixon almost took the initiative in 1971, when the issue had assumed national prominence. Leonard Garment put together an impressive set of proposals, having called in men such as Alexander M. Bickel. (Goldwin has all the relevant documents.) But in the end, cowardice carried the day, as it almost

always did in those last Nixon years. A nicer word would be politics. It was seen that the more busing trouble there was the more Republican votes there would be. If the President did nothing there would be more busing trouble. Ergo.

Mind, had he tried to do something he would have got precious little thanks for his efforts. Any move would have been seen as directed toward "moderating" court actions -- which it would have been -- and accordingly denounced by pro-busing advocates in terms not less vehement than those of the anti-busing element. This situation has not much changed. Let me accordingly first make the case for leaving well enough alone. Primum non nocere as the doctors say. I will put this case in terms of not creating a Presidential commission or inquiry, or whatever, on school integration.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE CASE AGAINST CREATING A PRESIDENTIAL  
COMMISSION ON SCHOOL INTEGRATION

There are three points to be made here, which I compress, as this memorandum is long enough.

First. The present situation is reasonably calm, and shows no immediate prospect of worsening. Certainly nothing like the chaos predicted last summer has come about. There is fierce dislike of "forced busing" in some communities, but in the end, where authorities indicate that it is the law and will be enforced, there is general compliance.

Second. Opponents of busing are beginning to assemble their arguments in a manner which suggests they might be more successful in court, or at least not go away feeling that they weren't even heard. Although I could be quite wrong, I am of the impression that many judicial decisions in this area have relied on very weak social science. This is a practice which began with the Brown decision itself. (Which surely was a misfortune. Not a line of social science was required to hold that assigning students to schools on the basis of race was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.) For one thing, there has been an amazing amount of loose talk about the academic results of integration -- a practice which begins with Brown. If there are any results, they are quite small. How could they not be

if schools as such make so little difference in cognitive achievement? "Natural" integration "closes" about one-sixth of the black-white gap. A lot or a little, according to one's lights. But it is not at all clear that "artificial" integration would have any such effect. For another thing, community groups are beginning to use demographers to refute the near prima facie presumption some courts seem to have made that when races are separate, some active separating must be going on. Urban history just won't support that proposition. Almost every sizable new immigrant group settles in a cluster and stays that way for a very long time. In many cases, as long as time has so far run. Voluntary ethnic segregation is simply a characteristic of urban American life. A brief filed by the Boston Home and School Association against busing in that city points out, for example, that the index of separateness between two white Catholic populations, the Irish and Italians, was 51 -- and this generations after the major

immigration of either group. That between whites and blacks in Boston is higher -- 81 -- but then that for Cubans is 72.\* Whatever all this comes to, it seems likely that future court decisions will seem less arbitrary than recent ones may have done.

Third. Proponents of busing may become less enthusiastic as they begin to sense that schools don't do a lot of the things advertised for them -- the research we have been discussing -- and, further, that integrated schools aren't that different in results from racially isolated schools. I speak only in suppositions here, as I have no idea what, for example, the NAACP is really thinking in this area. And I would have the greatest respect for their judgments. But it is the fact that from Brown forward, school results have been a center of concern, and this emphasis is clearly challenged by recent research findings.

\*This is a so-called "index of dissimilarity." For the Irish and Italians it means that 50% of one or the other groups, or half of each, would have to move into the other's neighborhoods for there to be no segregation at all.

Four. The most important argument to be made against appointing a Presidential Commission is that it would be near impossible to find persons to appoint to such a body who in the first instance would be judged impartial, and in the second, would give you an impartial report. I mentioned to you Wednesday that President Johnson, toward the end of his term in office, appointed a whole series of commissions -- to get over a crisis of the moment -- only to find in the end that he would not or could not accept their reports. He refused to accept the report of the Kerner Commission. The White House even tried to conceal the fact that the Commission on Rural Poverty had made a report! The very same thing could happen here. If, for example, you were to appoint a Commission of persons with some real knowledge of the field, almost each will be seen to have a position in advance, and the creation of the Commission will be attacked. On the other hand, if you appoint a panel of good citizens who know little of the subject, they will have to choose between accepting the "hard" implications of recent research and directing our



attention away from schools, or they will succumb to the pattern of the past decade, which is to say that we should throw money at the problem. The most likely outcome is a split commission, with some members adamantly for integration at whatever cost, and the others for Gilding the Ghetto. Not much truth-telling would emerge.

On the other hand.....

\* \* \* \* \*

THE CASE FOR CREATING A PRESIDENTIAL  
COMMISSION ON SCHOOL INTEGRATION

You yourself made the most important argument for a commission when we talked Wednesday. The fact is that busing is in "trouble". The House has been against it for years. The Senate has now joined the House. The Presidency certainly has not been probusing. Nor have Presidential candidates. (As a Democrat I must report -- what most, surely have forgotten -- that the Keynote Speaker at the 1972 Democratic Convention, describing the plight of the average man, said of him, inter alia, that he "had bought a house which he couldn't afford in order to get better schools for his kids and now

they're being bussed all the way across town."  
(Reconstructed from memory.) Now, conceivably,  
the courts might lessen their support. (Although  
I have no pretense to competence in predicting  
court behavior.)

Two consequences could come of this. The  
first is that the issue of busing -- especially  
as politicians make the "most" of it -- could  
begin to turn the public at large against racial  
integration. It is that kind of issue. The  
present state of public opinion is quite explicit.  
Americans are for school integration; they are  
against busing to achieve it. (Actually 50.2  
percent of students who daily attended public schools  
in 1974-75 were bussed to school. Of these, an  
estimated 7 percent were bussed for purposes of  
court-ordered desegregation.) It would be heart-  
breaking and calamitous if busing were to be the  
one unforeseen issue that spoilt a generation-long  
transformation in racial attitudes.

A second consequence would be equally heart-  
breaking and even more calamitous. That is to say,  
if the country turns against busing, American blacks

could come to conclude that it had turned against them. They almost concluded this under President Nixon -- unjustly, I think, but then there was his flirting with the busing issue. As you said Wednesday, we owe it absolutely to the NAACP and suchlike groups to keep faith with them, as they have kept faith with American democratic and legal procedures. But they have got committed to this difficult measure.

A Presidential Commission could, as it were, start again. It could begin with the proposition that it is surely anomalous that twenty years after the courts found it was unconstitutional to assign students to schools on the basis of race, the courts were ordering school districts to do just that. A President would be fully justified in stating that inasmuch as the Federal judiciary seemed to have one view of this matter, and the Congress a quite opposite view, it was manifestly his responsibility to try to bring about some resolution of the impasse. He would say to the judiciary that it really must accept that which is desirable is not per se Constitutional, and that in any event much that is thought desirable

on closer examination turns out to be somewhat questionable. (Always excepting our desire for a society free of racial prejudice and separation.) He could say to the Congress he recognized that a remedy which worsens is no remedy, and that this may indeed be the case with busing, as Coleman and others allege. But this was a question of fact, which needed to be investigated quite independently of any political implications which the facts might have. He could say to the country that it must seek both reason and justice.

The Commission could be asked to address itself to two questions, the first normative, the second factual.

First. What are the appropriate goals of school integration, and how do these relate to the goals of education itself?

Second. What are the appropriate procedures to attain these goals?

Set forth in a fairly detailed statement which, among other things, reviewed recent research and its implications, and stated in the context of a firm assertion of adherence to the decisions of the Supreme Court and of the nation's overall goal of racial integration, the announcement of such

a Commission might have a generally calming effect. Courts might -- I don't know -- hold off decisions for a while. The various legislatures and Congress might put off enacting their absurd amendments. Even proponents and opponents might delay for a bit. If the Commission were instructed to report after the November 1976 elections, the subject might be seen as having been decently and legitimately taken out of politics for the moment.

I would not discount the possibility of once again raising the claims of Catholics and other denominational groups to public support for their schools. You have not invited my views on this subject, but I do think it is important to have any new inquiry into education emphasize the great variety of the American people, and our equally varied institutions. In the sixties we got too much into the habit of thinking black-white.

(American Negroes changed their name in part, I suppose to bring about this seeming dichotomy. It is not necessarily a good thing.) White, Black, Red, Brown, Yellow is more like it. With all the

gradations in between, plus Novak's long-suffering (and actually high achieving!) Slavs.

\* \* \* \* \*

A ROLE FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

The staff of such a commission could be provided by the National Institute of Education -- and should be. It is a chance to show what it can do, which the Institute needs. It is also a chance to break it out of the absurd commitment to funding old and useless research projects which were "inherited" from other agencies.

If you do not think the problem of Commission membership is soluble, you might consider giving the assignment to the N.I.E. itself, asking them to outline the policy choices the country must face, and present the various "facts" which should inform such choices. This might prove a genuinely creative step.

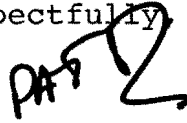
\* \* \* \* \*

E PLURIBUS UNUS

A concluding, Bicentennial note. To your image of Joseph's coat of many colors, you might want to add a reference to the national motto E PLURIBUS UNUM. The phrase is from Virgil's pastoral Moretum,

evidently well known to the founding fathers -- who took liberties with the spelling (unum as against unus) -- and which does in fact refer to the blending of colors. In this case the mixing of herbs, cheese, and garlic for the peasant's breakfast. The translation goes, "the many colours blend into one."

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DPM' followed by a stylized flourish.

Daniel P. Moynihan