An Analysis of the Educational Philosophy of Arthur E. Bestor, Jr.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
OF ARTHUR E. BESTOR, JR.

By

Yale L. Mandel

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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Preface

The purpose of this thesis is to synthesize, analyze, and critically react to the many faceted educational philosophy of Arthur E. Bestor, Jr. He has presented his educational philosophy in two major books and several lesser articles. His philosophy, though contiguous, is not cohesive. This paper will coalesce his thought into a cohesive, cogent, whole, in order to analyze and critically react to it.

Although he is a noted historian and scholar, Arthur Bestor's publication of *Educational Wastelands* in 1953 marked his first attempt to deal with the philosophy of education. This book gives evidence of both the more concrete evidential realm of history and the more speculative and abstract dimension of philosophy. At times, however, the speculative and the evidential become intertwined and the results are less than clear. The author of this thesis seeks to systematically outline the basic premises of Bestor's educational philosophy and to clarify certain aspects of it which seem diffuse. This commentary will involve a number of critical reactions by the author to Bestor's views on educational theory and practice.

Bestor is a significant figure in the recent history of American education because of his contribution to the climate
of educational criticism during the early 1950's. It was this climate which led to a major rethinking of the purposes and strategies of American education. In his published works, Bestor attempted to point out what he considered to be errors in our contemporary educational system and to offer a number of alternative suggestions. The major task of this study is to clarify Bestor's criticisms and to examine the alternatives presented as means of accomplishing his goal of restoring learning in the American school.

The author's approach to this study is based on the logical processes of analysis and synthesis and on the rather subjective process of critical reaction.

The author believes that Bestor has tried, but failed, to present his philosophy in a cohesively cogent system. Bestor often appears to draw conclusions from totally irrelevant compiled evidence and uses overgeneralized implications.

The author's analysis will depend to a large extent on his synthesis of Bestor's thesis. However, where total understanding is by virtue of the content impossible, specific points or proposals will be considered. This technique is defensible on the basis of Bestor's following statements:

Each proposal, it seems to me, must stand on its own bottom. At the very least, the burden of proof must rest upon those who assert that a proposal which is patently
ridiculous when it stands alone ceases to be so when taken in conjunction with others. 1

Having synthesized Bestor's educational ideas, analysis will necessarily be a related but separate part of this thesis. Once analysis is completed, critical reactions will be presented. 2 Educational reforms as presented will be dealt with as an integral part of Bestor's philosophy only when he incorporates them as such. Often they are implied rather than stated as specific proposals; these proposals are included in his philosophy implicitly as alternatives to extant educational patterns. In that context they will be left as implicit, and commented upon only when those reforms are a crucial part of the concept under discussion.


2 One's personal reactions, indeed one's perceptions of anything whether critical or not, are a result of his perceptual screen, that is his background and bias. Accordingly, an overview of my background and upbringing is in order:

I am the offspring of eastern European middle class Jewish parents. Though my parents have not been fortunate enough to attain high school educations, they are extremely well read, highly intelligent, and indeed intellectual.

Upon graduation from a large mid-western state university, I taught eighth grade social-studies in a culturally deprived, all Negro, inner-city school. My formal training in educational philosophy has been overseen primarily by Drs. Bernard Mehl and Gerald Gutek of Ohio State and Loyola Universities respectively, both of whom I perceive as social and educational liberals.

My personal philosophy, or philosophies, of education, are somewhat confused at this stage, but are probably a combination of Dewey's pragmatism and Stanley's reconstructionism. I am politically a liberal, left-wing moderate is more accurate. Socially I believe in the Judeo-Christian tenet that all men are created equal and hence ought to have equality of opportunity, under the law, in the social strata, and up the educational ladder.
In terms of other related studies on Destor's educational works, the author could find no published commentaries in book form which deal exclusively with his educational theory. Nor are there unpublished dissertations, theses, or monographs which deal with this matter.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In attempting to comprehend an individual's philosophy, an awareness of the determinants of that philosophy is imperative, i.e.: his background, biases, and beliefs. These three phenomena are integral, causative agents in one's perceptual screen. Since one's philosophy is in part determined by his perceptual screen, it is necessary to study the constituents of that screen.

Bestor received his secondary education at the Lincoln High School of Columbia Teachers College. He accomplished his undergraduate and graduate work at Yale University where he received his Bachelor of Philosophy degree, majoring in English, graduating with honors and being elected to Phi Beta Kappa. After holding the Douglas Elbridge Fellowship twice at Yale, he received his Doctor of Philosophy in history in 1938. Bestor's doctoral dissertation was entitled "American Halanxes: A Study of Fourierist Socialism in the United States." 3

Bestor held three fellowships in the period between the granting of his degree and the publishing of The Restoration of

Learning in 1956, including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship for research and writing (1953-1954). He has served on the faculties of Stanford University, Teachers College, Columbia University, and the University of Illinois; he is currently on the faculty of the University of Washington, Seattle. He has held the Harold V. Harmsworth Chair in American History at The Oxford University (1956) where he was awarded an honorary Master of Arts degree by decree. 4

Besides having authored the two polemical books under study in this thesis, Educational Wastelands and The Restoration of Learning in 1953 and 1956, respectively, Bestor has also written Chautauqua Publications (1934), David Jacks of Monterey (1945), Education and Reform at New Harmony (1948), Backwoods Utopias (1950), and Three Presidents and Their Letters (1955). He has also published extensively in scholarly journals including The American Scholar, The New Republic, The Scientific Monthly, and the American Association of University Professors Bulletin. 5

4 Ibid., p. 40.

5 Ibid. Of Bestor's other works than the two under study in this thesis only four are particularly relevant to education. Education and Reform at New Harmony is the edited and annotated version of the correspondence of William Maclure and Madame Marie Fretageot relative to social and educational events at New Harmony, Indiana during the Owenite experiment. It was published by the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1948. Backwoods Utopias is an examination of the Owenite social experiments. Certain sections of this work contain comments on communitarianism and the introduction of Pestalozzian educational theory into the Owenite experiment. It was published by the
Bestor is a member of the Unitarian faith and a democrat. The democratic party is traditionally the more politically progressive and liberal of the two existing parties. The Unitarian faith is generally considered most acceptable to many intellectuals because of its doctrine that reason should interpret religious doctrine to guide one's moral conduct.

Having described the background of Bestor, this introduction would be incomplete without an illumination of his biases, beliefs, and the historical context in which his philosophical writings appeared.

Bestor quite frankly states his own biases and beliefs:

I consider myself fortunate to have received my high school training from 1921 to 1926, in one of the most progressive schools in the country, the Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia University... They, (the faculty) knew that the advanced work of the secondary school must intermesh with the advanced works carried on by scholars and scientists. Adequate preparation for college was not a separate goal; it was the natural

University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1950. Three Presidents and Their Letters is an annotated version of selected correspondence of three presidents. The section on Thomas Jefferson was contributed by Bestor. Some of this correspondence deals with Jefferson's views on education. It was published by the University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, in 1955. Chautauqua Publications is an annotated bibliographical pamphlet of the publications issued by the Chautauqua Society. It was published by the Chautauqua Press, Chautauqua, New York, in 1934.

6 Ibid.
It is interesting to note that though Bestor received an admittedly progressive education, his later work is devoted to sharp criticism of the progressive movement. Lawrence Cremin states:

Bestor pointedly attempted to distinguish between the progressive education Dewey espoused, and that he himself had received at the Lincoln School, and the life adjustment program he so sharply criticized; but there is no denying that his attack was ultimately on the whole progressive movement and the profession that had come to support it.8

Bestor is very explicit in his stated beliefs:

I am a firm believer in the principle of universal, public democratic education.... I believe that publicly financed education from the nursery school through the highest levels of graduate and professional instruction is essential to American democracy as we know and value it.... In extending educational opportunity, however, we are honor bound not to lower its quality, for if we do we are defrauding the common man of the very intellectual and cultural privileges we have promised, at long last, to open to him.9

Bestor's philosophical criticism of American education appeared in the early and middle sections of the fifth decade of this twentieth century. Progressive education had reached its peak somewhat earlier. Lawrence Cremin states in Transformation of the Schools:

All evidence considered, the progressive education movement probably reached its high-water mark during the years immediately preceding World War II. Within the profession, progressive ideas enjoyed widespread support. And a 1940 Gallup poll revealed that the public, too, was generally favorable to what was going on in the schools.

As Cremin has said earlier, Bestor was reacting against progressivism as a whole as well as "life-adjustment" programs, which reached their height after the war. Much of Bestor's thought, and hence much of this paper, is devoted to his reaction against "progressivism" and "life-adjustment." These phenomena are discussed at great length throughout this paper. It would be beneficial at this point, however, to recall that progressivism grew out of the reaction against earlier formalism, and "life-adjustment" later developed as an adjunct to progressivism. Cremin holds:

10 Lawrence T. Cremin, op. cit., p. 324.

11 See page 4, footnote 8.
In the life-adjustment movement, which flourished in the late 1940's and the early 1950's with the encouragement of the United States Office of Education, there occurred an effort to mobilize the public secondary-school energies of the country to gear the educational system more closely to the needs of children who were held in some sense to be uneducable.12

By the time of Bestor's critique of American education, progressive education as a movement had already been weakened by internal divisions between those who favored a socially-oriented emphasis and those who were more concerned with the interests and needs of the individual child. This internal conflict and the searching re-examination of public education after World War II eroded much of the optimism of the early progressive educators. The dissatisfaction of the intellectuals, one of whom was Bestor, contributed to the demise of progressive education as a particular movement. However, numerous pedagogical reforms inaugurated under the auspices of such progressives as John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, Boyd Bode, and others found their way into the schools.

Frank Jennings, writing in The Saturday Review, states:

The intellectuals and the scholars, the academicians who had divorced themselves from the concerns of the schoolmarms when education turned professional, now turned vehemently upon "progressive education" as

the primary cause of all our classroom ills. The painfully remembered shortages of trained and trainable manpower during the war was seen, they declared, again in embryo. The distressingly high percentages of illiterate and "under-educated" in the induction centers were building up again to the next disgrace.13

Social phenomena concomitant to the war more directly concerned with education brought post-war American education into public view. According to Cremin:

There were, to begin, the prosaic problems of buildings, budgets, and enrollments created by the war: few schools had been built since 1941; teachers had deserted the profession in droves; inflation was rampant; and the first of a flood of "war babies" began to enter the elementary grades as early as 1946. Then too, there were the multifarious difficulties associated with deepening public concern over communist expansion at home and abroad.14

Bestor was not the first academician to criticize American education. Nor was he the first to criticize it so vehemently. Merle Curti states:

At least as early as the 1930's Robert M. Hutchins argued that the intellectual content of the curriculum had been dangerously watered down...15


14Lawrence Cremin, op. cit., p. 335.

Frank Jennings also states:

As early as 1947, Benjamin Fine, educator turned education editor of the New York Times, published a book reporting that Our Children Are Cheated. Its subtitle announced that there was a "crisis in American Education." 16

The year 1953 which saw the publishing of Bestor's Educational Wastelands, was also graced with Albert Lynd's Quackery in the Public Schools, and Paul Woodring's Let's Talk Sense About our Schools. All were vehemently critical of progressive education.

Paul Woodring's book, Let's Talk Sense About our Schools, appeared the same year as Bestor's Educational Wastelands. Woodring agrees in kind, but not in degree with basic criticisms put forth by Bestor. Woodring's main point is the lack of a directing philosophy of education for the public schools. Both he and Bestor suggest progressivism is not correctly oriented. Woodring, however, does not propose a philosophy of his own. Bestor and Woodring both discuss teacher training and teacher training institutions. Woodring devotes only a few paragraphs while Bestor devotes entire chapters.

Woodring is much less dogmatic than Bestor, indeed his stated purpose is much more gentle in scope and tone than is Bestor's. Woodring states his purpose:

16 Frank Jennings, op. cit.
"This is not a book of answers but a book for those who seek to find their own answers.... It is for those who can agree with the author that despite all the current debate there is no real conflict of interests between the teachers and the parents. That which appears as conflict is but the confusion which precedes decision.  

Quackery In The Public Schools by Albert Lynd is a contemporary of Bestor's Educational Wastelands in many respects. Lynd attacks progressive education as vehemently, and dogmatically as does Bestor. The points of criticism are very similar since both attack teacher training and the basic progressive philosophy. Lynd also comments heavily on what Bestor termed the "interlocking directorate of educationists," but calls professional educators "superprofessional" and says further:

Quackery in the public schools is not directly related to any particular theory or technique of education; it is a product of Educational-lsm itself as a self-aggrandizing enterprise.  

Lynd attacks the basic philosophy of progressive education in two major chapters, one devoted to John Dewey, the other to William Heard Kilpatrick. Unlike Bestor, Lynd does not offer broad reform proposals to educational evils. His main proposal to lure prospective teachers is to double their pay. Lynd's


comment on relative teacher intelligence gives an indication of the degree to which he criticizes education in the early 1950's. Lynd says:

...it is a simple datum -- a brute fact -- that organized Educationalism does not attract, in comparison, with other professions, a higher proportion of first-rate minds.19

Of the precursors to Bestor's works Robert Maynard Hutchins' *The Higher Learning in America* was the most scholarly. Hutchins was most bothered, as is Bestor, by the lack of intellectual disciplines in the curriculum. They both oppose the "residual" or social service function of the school.

Their main area of agreement lies in the area of intellectual disciplines as related to the school's purpose. Bestor and Hutchins contend the school's purpose is to teach how to think through the use of intellectual disciplines. Hutchins says in this regard:

> If education is rightly understood, it will be understood as the cultivation of the intellect.20

It was Bestor, however, whose attacks were to exert the heaviest impact on progressivism.21 Indeed, Cremin states,

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19 Ibid.
"his writings constituted by far the most serious, searching, and influential criticisms of progressive education to appear during the fifties." 22

22 Ibid., p. 344.
CHAPTER II

BESTOR'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The following paragraphs will briefly state Arthur E. Bestor's educational philosophy relative to: the purposes of education, including democratic training and the function of the school, and intellectual disciplines including "faculty training" and "life adjustment training," which are the major areas of his thought under discussion in this thesis.

This section is intended as a reference to Bestor's thought and as an example of the order this author has made of that thought. No attempt to trace Bestor's evolving thought processes, that is, his rationale or justifications, will be offered (that being a major portion of this academic undertaking, offered in following chapters). 23

An integral part of any philosophy must certainly be the philosopher's method of inquiry. This is true since one's approach is often a product of his philosophy as well as a determiner of his philosophy. A discussion of Bestor's method

23 In an attempt to avoid extensive quoting I will paraphrase heavily from the two primary sources most relied upon in this paper, both authored by Dr. Bestor, Educational Wastelands and Restoration of Learning.
thus becomes necessary because this will aid in understanding the philosophy of which it is a part.

Jestor's method of inquiry is both critical and philosophic.

The present volume (Restoration of Learning) should be read as an essay in the philosophy of education. It is a criticism of the schools themselves only to the extent that they are actually carrying into effect the tenets of the anti-intellectual philosophy that is currently preached by educationists. 24

He continues on the same page with the statement his work is to be investigatory:

It (Restoration of Learning) is a report on the product of these (public) schools, and more particularly, an examination of the educational blueprints that lie behind both the product and the school that turns it out. 25

The educational philosophy of Arthur E. Bestor contends that the purpose of education, and the function of the school is to train young people how to think and that the only reliable way to accomplish this is with thorough training in the "intellectual disciplines."

He also contends that the maintenance of a democratic way of life is dependent upon the constituent's ability to think and decide, hence education in the "intellectual disciplines" and democracy are perfectly compatible.

24 Ibid., p. 6. For full development of this point, see Chapter II, "Intellectual Disciplines."
25 Ibid.
Liestor obviously agrees with Jefferson's contention that an educated constituency would make the wisest voting choice. His contention of compatibility follows logically from the premise that knowledge of the intellectual disciplines gives one the ability to think. If democracy is dependent upon the electorate's ability to think, hence choose, they are compatible.

Continuing on the same trend of thought, Liestor argues, if the school's function is to train young people how to think, and hence face or overcome adult problems, the many ancillary tasks of the school ought to be taken over or accomplished by outside agencies in society. Writing in The Higher Learning in America, Robert Maynard Hutchins has the same idea. He argues "that a college or university should do nothing that another agency can do as well." 26

Intellectual disciplines, which Liestor defines as synonymous with liberal education, are the only disciplines which comprise fundamental thought processes, and are therefore most adaptable for use in teaching how to think. Liestor holds in regard to the fundamental thought processes thusly:

An indispensable function of education, at every level, is to provide sound training in the fundamental ways of thinking represented by history, science, mathematics,

literature, language, art, and the other disciplines evolved in the course of mankind's long quest for usable knowledge, cultural understanding, and intellectual power.\textsuperscript{27}

Arthur Bestor also suggests the intellectual disciplines can be used to demonstrate different ways of thinking, and should be the means to solving and analyzing adult life problems. "Life-adjustment" or "vocational training" is thus frivolous and wasteful since a plumber could solve a problem with thought processes based on intellectual disciplines.

The preceding paragraphs have avoided critical reactions with the intent of concisely, cogently, synthesizing Dr. Bestor's basic tenets. The following chapters will synthesize in detail these relevant tenets and attempt to analyze them. Often the writer's reactions will be incorporated into the analysis.

\textsuperscript{27}Bestor, \textit{The Restoration of Learning}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.
CHAPTER III

PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Bestor is uniquely specific and precise in expounding his beliefs on the necessary relationship between liberal education, i.e., educational training in the intellectual disciplines, and democracy:

Education is vital to American democracy for reasons that can be clearly specified. In the first place, a Republican system of government requires citizens who are highly literate, accurately informed, and rigorously trained in the processes of rational and critical thought. 28

Continuing in the same paragraph, Bestor, by implication, seeks to establish the school's responsibility:

If the schools fail to raise up a nation of men and women equipped with these qualities of mind, then self-government is in danger of collapse through the sheer inability of its electorate to grapple intelligently with the complex problems in science, economics, politics, and international relations which constantly come up for public decision. 29


29 Ibid.
Bestor has idealized democracy; not since the Greek city states have "the complex problems" in "science," "economics," or "international relations" come up for public decision. Today these complex problems are dealt with by executive order and congressional resolution. Only very recently has any faint glimmer of democratic participation taken form such as the Viet Nam referendum of San Francisco, California. Though this phenomenon is as much a criticism of democracy as Bestor's idealism, it is nevertheless the case.

Bestor seems convinced that modern life depends upon intellectual skills, which the schools must teach, for our society to remain intact. The teaching, acquiring, learning and use of intellectual disciplines and skills, a main theme throughout, is for him of paramount importance in a democracy:

The economic, political, and spiritual health of a democratic state depends upon how successfully its educational system keeps pace with the increasingly heavy intellectual demands of modern life. Our civilization requires of every man and woman a variety of complex skills that rest upon sound knowledge of science, history, economics, philosophy, and other fundamental disciplines.... The student bound for college must have them, of course. But so must the high school student who does not intend to enter college.30

30 Ibid., p. 27.
Bestor continually ignores throughout what has been termed the "knowledge explosion." That is the ever increasing and complex store of data and facts which has necessitated the specialization and quantification of nearly every general field of knowledge. Bestor's assuming "every man and woman" having "a variety of complex skills that rest upon sound knowledge of science, history, economics, and philosophy" is to completely disregard the complexity of these areas due to the recent "knowledge explosion."

Bestor's training apparently requires him to justify his educational tenets on historical precedent. In attempting to do so he continually refers to "our founding fathers." He neglects however, to make explicit whether he is referring to our political founders or our educational "founding fathers," and he apparently feels the distinction unnecessary because the single "founding father" he quotes directly is Jefferson, completely ignoring Mann and Barnard, undoubtedly feeling them inimical to his argument.

Bestor apparently finds Mann's theory of property and its relevance to education injurious to his purpose. Mann did not advocate education to teach how to think or to improve man's rational nature. Mann wrote in 1841, "education has a market value."31

If Bestor cannot include Mann as a founding father, Barnard's utilitarian and practical purposes of education must certainly exclude him. The major reform he advocated was an "increasing emphasis upon utilitarian disciplines in the curriculum." He also believed "education was to serve the actual needs of the community." An idea closely akin to the "life-adjustment" philosophy Bestor is so avidly against.

There are many reasons why Bestor should include Jefferson, indeed, give him prominence, as a founding father. Bestor co-authored *Three Presidents and Their Letters*, in which he wrote on Jefferson's correspondence. He is, therefore, obviously familiar with Jefferson. More importantly, Jefferson's Bill of 1779, his curriculum, and his deep belief that general education would guarantee the democracy, make him especially attractive to Bestor. Jefferson's proposed legislation to the Virginia House of Burgesses for The More General Diffusion of Knowledge in 1779 illustrates the point. The bill provides for free schooling in the three R's for three years, the best of these students then went on in Latin, Greek, English grammar and higher arithmetic, the best of these students then went on for four more years and finally to the University of Virginia.

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32 Ibid., p. 159.

One can hardly fail to note the similarity between Jefferson's curriculum and Bestor's.

Bestor first defines his terms (the following quote), then goes on to establish precedent:

"we must remember, at all times, that education is concerned with improvement. It undertakes to change a man or a woman from what he or she is to what he or she might be and ought to be. Educational policy in a democracy is directed toward raising the intellectual standards of the people, just as economic policy is directed toward raising their standard of living. Poverty and ignorance were the lot of the common man in the past. The elimination, not the perpetuation, of poverty and ignorance is the mission of democracy." 

He then quotes Jefferson as a "founding father" in an attempt to establish precedent of intent for "intellectual disciplines."

The founders of our nation and of our school system betrayed no confusion of purpose. 'If a nation expects to be ignorant and free', wrote Thomas Jefferson, '...it expects what never was and never will be.' Jefferson intended his words to be taken literally. He knew, moreover, what he meant by education. It is first of all the opposite of ignorance. Its positive meaning is indicated by the synonyms which Jefferson employs in his letters. The kind of schooling that is vital to a democratic society is the kind that reflects in the 'spread of information;' the kinds that regard 'science...more important in a republic than in any other government;' the kind

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 90.\]
that recognizes that the general mind must be 'strengthened by education;' the kind that aims to make the people 'enlightened' and 'to inform their discretion.'

Having quoted Jefferson, Bestor, in an illuminating example of drawing ill-founded conclusions, concludes from Jefferson's statement the following:

These are the ends which the school must serve if a free people is to remain free. These, be it noted are intellectual ends. Genuine education, in short, is intellectual training.

In a widely abstract sense Jefferson could indeed have meant "intellectual training" by the "synonyms," "spread of information," "diffusion of knowledge," "enlightened." But it is doubtful that he did indeed intend that meaning which Bestor presents.

To elaborate still further on the issue of the intent of the "founding fathers," a summary of some major points concerning Horace Mann, made by Merle Curti in his book The Social Ideas of American Educators, is particularly illuminating. Curti explains Mann's task for education "was to right man's grievances," that further, "education was to take the form of character training." Using phrenology, Mann sought to inculcate

35 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 2.
36 Ibid.
children with temperance, benevolence, honesty, frugality, and
uprightness, while curbing the tendencies to avarice, self-
esteem, and acquisitiveness. This is a far cry from Bestor's
interpretation of the "founding fathers'" intent. Indeed much
of the early effort for the American common school was towards
developing the good American and instilling democratic virtues,
not towards intellectual excellence. In fact, the entire his-
tory of American education preceding the common school movement
was intended to instill certain virtues, generally religious
ones.

Mann and Barnard, both considered fathers of the American
common school, saw the common school movement as ways to incul-
cate social and religious values. They also saw free public
schooling as ways to spread wealth and decrease class conscious-
ness in America. In short, Bestor's argument for intellectual
disciplines can only look to the Latin Grammar School for his-
torical precedent. Even this concession is not totally valid,
however, because the Latin Grammar School was a stepping stone
by the very wealthy into a few select professions, mainly the
clergy.

Bestor contends the American educational system has several
functions, among those he considers most important will obviously
be the teaching of how to think (intellectual disciplines are to

37Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (New
be the means), and very narrow social purposes, excluding meeting the needs of the child.

Bestor thus contends: "...that schools exist to teach something, and that this something is the power to think." 38

Bestor suggests thinking is the act of applying one's intellectual powers to the solution of a problem. There are, according to Bestor, three major areas involved in thinking. The first is thorough command of the essential tools, i.e., reading. The second major area is dependent upon a store of reliable information. The third area presupposes long continued practice in the systematic ways of thinking developed within the basic fields of scholarly and scientific investigation. Thinking takes place, according to Bestor, when these areas culminate in the solution of a problem. He apparently wants to equivocate his original tenet. In the following statement he proceeds to change slightly from the purpose of teaching how to think, to teaching or providing training in the intellectual disciplines:

The purpose of public school education today is what it has always been: to raise the intellectual level of the American people as a whole. 39

And again:

The disciplined mind is what education at every level should strive to produce. 40

38 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 10.
40 Ibid.
Bestor continually attempts to justify the fundamental intellectual disciplines as the primary material in the educative process. Hence he continually justifies, all through his work, here again, relative to the function of the school, the use of intellectual disciplines:

A citizen today needs an education not a headful of helpful hints. The problems of modern life are so complicated that a vast fund of knowledge and a developed skill in the use of the intellectual processes are required to handle them.  

He continues in the same vein, adding an attempt to establish precedent:

The American public school was created to build a new social order, a social order in which intellectual training would be offered without discrimination to every citizen.

In concluding his argument on the function of the school, Bestor finally devolves into: first, the nation's dependence on the school, and second, his own psychological interpretation of the school and the intellectual disciplines. First, according to the author:

The nation depends upon its schools and colleges to furnish this intellectual training to its citizens as a whole. Society has no other institutions upon which it can rely in

41 Ibid., p. 57.
42 Ibid., p. 83.
the matter. If schools and colleges do not emphasize rigorous intellectual training, there will be none. 43

Second:

In a disordered world, the school can provide the student with something he may find nowhere else, a nucleus of ordered thinking about which can develop those intellectual powers that are his only enduring safeguards against frustration and helplessness. 44

Thus far Bestor's argument is dependent upon the popular consensus of "intellectual disciplines" as absolute necessities for the American democracy. The following chapter will discuss intellectual disciplines at great length; suffice it to say at this time that the consensus Bestor assumes is non-existent. Bestor, once having presented a positive hypothesis, suggests a null hypothesis. Once, stating what the school should do, as a major tenet, he states what it should not do:

It is not the job -- it cannot possibly be the job -- of the school to meet the common 45 and the specific individual needs of youth. 46

Bestor takes this position in the belief that the school's attempt to meet those aforementioned needs can "wreck the educational system." 46

43 Ibid., p. 28.
44 Ibid., p. 135.
45 Bestor, Educational wastelands, op. cit., p. 75.
46 Ibid.
When education becomes completely enmeshed in the petty, surface details of a student's everyday life, it loses the opportunity of equipping him with the intellectual powers that lie beneath the surface. By frittering time away upon the 'felt needs' of adolescents, the school runs the risk of leaving its students helpless in the presence of the real 'real life' needs that will come later and that will put to test all the resources of a mature and disciplined intelligence.47

The previous quotes present and clarify Bestor's opposition to the residual or life adjustment function of the school. The residual theory of the function of the school maintains it is the function of the school to perform or supply those social functions or experiences not supplied by other social agencies or institutions.

The life-adjustment movement grew out of an educational conference in 1945 and was intended to meet the real-life felt needs of youth by providing training in vocations and present social or personal problems.48 Bestor strenuously opposes both these school functions. He contends the school is only one institution of society along with churches, hospitals, and certain governmental welfare agencies. The school has an educative function in society and as such cannot possibly undertake any function out of its realm of competence. It is illogical for the school to assume social functions other than those for

47 Ibid., p. 76.
48 Ibid., pp. 116-118.
which it was intended. 49 Bestor maintains further that the failure of other agencies to perform their functions is perhaps a national calamity, but no reason for the school to adopt new functions.

Professor Bestor has forgotten, as opposed to never learned, a basic principle known to every successful teacher. Unless very basic individual and specific needs of pupils are met, even the simplest forms of learning cannot take place. A child cannot, or will not, learn if he is hungry, in pain, cold or uncomfortable. In certain age groups, primarily adolescents, basic questions relative to sex and maturity are basic concerns and constant sources of inter-personal class discussion.

While it is true that the school cannot fulfill every need of the child, certain needs must be sublimated for learning to take place. If society cannot fill certain needs necessary before learning can take place, it becomes mandatory for the school to fill them in order to perform its primary function.

49 Ibid., p. 119.
CHAPTER IV

INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLINES

It was stated earlier that Bestor's main thesis has been that intellectual disciplines are uniquely capable of training men and women to live and accomplish in a democratic society, that secondly, the ability to think can only be taught by intellectual disciplines, and thirdly, the maintenance of our democratic ways of life depend upon our intellectual ability to solve problems and think. The following section will explore Bestor's tenets in several major areas consisting of: 1) his definition of intellectual disciplines, which he uses synonymously with the term liberal education; 2) his explanation of the function or purpose of intellectual disciplines; 3) his theory of the relationship between what he terms "life-adjustment" education, vocational training, and intellectual disciplines.

Bestor gives a functional, pragmatic, and theoretical definition to "intellectual disciplines." These kinds of definitions allow him to defend his definitions in their various realms:
The great intellectual disciplines are not mere collections of facts and formulas, but ways of thinking with organized structures of their own.  

Bestor further contends that each discipline has ordered relationships as well as methods of investigation that are employed within each of the basic fields of knowledge. This is similar to the theory of structure proposed by Jerome S. Bruner in his work The Process of Education.  

Bestor's theory implies a unique contribution of thinking technique embodied in each discipline. A technique or methodology which Bestor obviously feels is capable of being understood for future transfer by any individual.  

Arthur Bestor, having laid the general foundations, proceeds to a functional definition equating "intellectual disciplines" with power.  

Liberal education, in other words, is essentially the communication of intellectual power.  

Bestor continues at length to justify this tenet and define what he means by power.  

The disciplines represent the various ways man has discovered for achieving intellectual mastery and hence practical power  

51 Ibid., p. 35.
over the various problems that confront him.52

He maintains the intellectual disciplines arose and are arising to meet "man's imperious need for that wide ranging yet accurate comprehension which means power, power over himself and over all things else."53

Bestor seems to imply power for the sake of power is the purpose of studying the intellectual disciplines. He does not suggest intellectual power to seek truth, to create the good life, or the good man. His concept of power is totally outside the usual realm of purposes of education.

Before entering Bestor's theoretical definition, a brief discussion of Bestor's precedent for discipline is presented thusly:

The men who drafted our Constitution were not trained for the task by 'field trips' to the mayor's office and the county jail. They were endowed with the requisite for founding a new nation by liberal education, that is to say, by an education that was general rather than specific, intellectual rather than 'practical,' indirect rather than (in the vocational sense) direct.54

52 Ibid.

53 Bestor, The Restoration of Learning, op. cit., p. 35.

54 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 64.
Bester has neglected two salient facts. The "founding fathers" had little choice in the type of education they received; it was either very little, as in Franklin's case, or in the classical disciplines, as in Jefferson's. For the most part the men involved were self-educated or educated as lawyers. Bester's sweeping statement regarding their education is, hence, not totally accurate. Bester combines his connotations and his bias in an attempt to theoretically define "intellectual disciplines."

Intellectual training may seem a formidable phrase. But it means nothing more than deliberate cultivation of the ability to think. It implies no unnatural distinction between the mind and the emotions, for men can think about emotional and aesthetic problems, and can be taught to think more clearly about them. It implies no opposition to the thinking process itself, and rationality is a constituent of every valid ethical system. Morality enters the classroom and the study as it enters all the chambers of life. It assumes special form as intellectual honesty and as that species of affectiveness which converts a mere taboo into an ethical imperative.55

Having given his interpretation of the complex meanings of "intellectual disciplines" he explains, but fails to validate, the tenuous connection between "intellectual power" and freedom:

It is not by accident that the fundamental intellectual disciplines possess this unique power of liberating men and keeping

55 Ibid., p. 28.
them free....The disciplines, after all, are simply the methods men have perfected for securing their freedom by bringing their intellectual powers most effectively into action.\textsuperscript{56}

And again:

...liberal education is the education worthy of a free man. More than that, it is the education by which a man achieves freedom.... To make himself truly free, a man must break the intellectual chains that keep him a serf by binding him to his narrow workaday tasks, by binding him to accept the authority of those placed above him in matters temporal and spiritual. A liberal education frees a man by enlarging and disciplining his powers.\textsuperscript{57}

If we conditionally grant that liberal education "enlarges and disciplines powers," we must then logically say that "enlarging and disciplining" leads to intellectual freedom, and that intellectual freedom hence leads to freedom. By extrapolation, implication, and analogy, Bestor's meaning becomes somewhat more lucid. He contends that an education in the intellectual disciplines will give men the power to think. This power will enable them to "break the intellectual chains" which are "binding him to accept the authority of those placed above him in matters temporal and spiritual."\textsuperscript{58} Thinking allows a man to choose

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p. 421.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.
alternative solutions to his problems. One of those problems apparently is how to secure and maintain freedom. We cannot avoid a long and tedious semantic argument on Bestor's use of the term freedom. He does not bother to narrow or qualify the term, but since he cannot in any sense mean political or economic freedom, he can only mean intellectual freedom. If by freedom, Bestor means that intellectual freedom achieved by "enlarging and disciplining powers," this possibility is acceptable to the author. The point, however, is a moot one at best since "intellectual freedom" cannot exist without political or economic freedom in which to operate.

Bestor has indirectly made a valid point. Where intellectual freedom abounds, political freedom, that is, the ability to choose or have viable alternatives, is likely to follow. It seems apparent intellectual freedom could not exist in a totalitarian state in which alternatives arrived at could not be manifested or acted upon. According to Bestor, therefore, intellectual freedom is not merely logically making a choice, a necessary ingredient is being able to act on the choice made.

Bestor again attempts to justify his "power" thesis, this time incorporating an equivocation of the term discipline.

The sheer power of disciplined thought is revealed in practically all the great intellectual and technological advances which the human race has made. The ability of the man of disciplined mind to direct this power effectively upon problems for which
he was not specifically trained is proved by instance without number.\textsuperscript{59}

That discipline, whether in thought or physical, is an admirable characteristic, and even a characteristic necessary for intellectual thought, for the long and strenuous research mandatory for scientific and technological advancement is conceded. However, Bestor has equivocated training in intellectual disciplines to be synonymous with the denotation of the word discipline. The great men of today responsible for the great "intellectual and technological advancements," generally lack what Bestor has called "liberal education." Their fields are so complex and so specific that there is little or no time for diversification. The fields of medicine, psychology, physics, and chemistry are but a few pertinent examples.

The schools, says Bestor, are "to teach how to think." He also maintains the intellectual disciplines are best suited to curricula with that objective. Although Bestor does not specifically state his theory or psychology of learning, he obviously believes one learns automatically upon being given the proper tools, i.e., intellectual disciplines. Bestor has often stated the purpose of the school is to teach how to think. Therefore, if one learns anything in school, that one thing he or she should have learned is how to think. Bestor feels

\textsuperscript{59}Bestor, \textit{Educational Wastelands}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 59.
thinking will be the natural and automatic result of training in the intellectual disciplines, because they are structured ways of thinking.

The following quote states Bestor's view of thinking. Notice his lack of continuity in the final "culminating act of applying this aggregate." If one somehow fails to solve the problem, apparently one has not been able to make the kind of transfer Bestor suggests is automatic.

Now effective thinking, I would suggest, involves at least four things. In the first place, it requires a thorough command of the essential intellectual tools... In the second place, effective thinking depends upon a store of reliable information, which the mind can draw upon... In the third place, effective intellectual effort presupposes long continued practice in the systematic ways of thinking developed within the various basic fields of scholarly and scientific investigation... Finally, but only finally, comes the culminating act of applying this aggregate of intellectual powers to the solution of a problem. In a sense, perhaps, this is the only step which can properly be called thinking.

But Bestor is not content with just a mention of problem solving, and carries it a bit further, committing an error of logic:

Consider for a moment the process by which a man actually solves a complicated problem.... The first imperative step is analysis. He cannot solve the problem by simply wallowing

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60 Bestor, The Restoration of Learning, op. cit., p. 60.
in it. He must stand off from it and separate it into its elements. Having done so, he must take inventory of his existing knowledge and intellectual skills to determine whether these will suffice to deal effectively with the various constituent problems he has recognized as crucial.61

Bestor has erred in making analysis the "first imperative step" in problem solving. The first step should be synthesis or, the definition of the problem. Bestor has apparently presupposed this step by assuming the "various constituent problems he has recognized as crucial," have indeed been recognized. If they have not, which is often the case, the first necessary step is defining or outlining the problem, putting it together, synthesizing it, in order to analyze it.

Although the above point may seem trivial, it is not. A basic criticism of Bestor throughout this paper has been what was originally termed his "drawing conclusions from widely abstract implications as opposed to logical thought processes."

Arthur Bestor carries on his crusade for "intellectual disciplines" in the area of "vocational," "life-adjustment," and "professional education." He apparently feels "intellectual disciplines" are the only valid basis for these three types of contemporary education. He builds his argument by establishing the relationship between occupation and disciplines, and then

61 Ibid., p. 59.
goes on to delineate his concept of the necessary basis for earning a livelihood.

To deny that liberal education in the basic disciplines is a preparation for life is to deny the testimony of those who have accomplished the most in life, practical as well as intellectual. That liberal education must often be supplemented by specialized professional training or vocational training is obvious... But the notion that vocational training can take the place of thorough study of the fundamental intellectual disciplines as a preparation for successful accomplishment and for mature citizenship is a fallacy so thoroughly exploded that anyone who propounds it thereby confesses his invincible ignorance of human experience.62

Professor Bester maintains his line of thought on a parallel but slightly different course:

Society needs thoughtful citizens and cultivated men, whether by profession they be butchers or television announcers or civil engineers. They ought to receive sound and extensive education, regardless of their profession. The point is that the schooling which will make them intelligent men is liberal education, not courses in meat-handling or script-writing or strength of materials.63

He finally makes the relationship previously discussed as firm as his evidence allows:

62Ibid., p. 83.
63Ibid., p. 82.
Throughout history these intellectual disciplines have rightly been considered fundamental in education for practical life and for citizenship, as well as in training for the professions. The modern world has made them more vital than ever. Every vocation has grown more complicated. The artisan of an earlier century might make his way in the world even though illiterate and all but unlearned in elementary arithmetic. Today even the simplest trades require much more. 64

Bestor is quite correct in stating "even the simplest trades require much more," much more than basic literacy at any rate. The fact is that trades today have become so complicated that training in other than that trade is a detriment. Automobile mechanics will serve as an example. A rapid check of any metropolitan telephone directory will show automobile mechanics divided into at least the following areas: carburator repair, ignition service, transmission specialists, radio repair, diagnostic centers, springs and shock absorber repair or replacement, differential and rear end service, to name just one trade.

Bestor is not satisfied to create a positive hypotheses; he must also create a null hypotheses in juxtaposition and justification. First in juxtaposition:

Liberal education has always been conceived as a preparation for life. This means that it can properly include preparation for the making of a livelihood. But education ceases

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64 Ibid., p. 27.
to be liberal if it is directed exclusively to that end, because then it produces not free citizens but men enslaved by their occupations.65

Second in justification:

Liberal education is designed to produce self-reliance. It expects a man or woman to use his general intelligence to solve particular problems. Vocational and 'life-adjustment' programs, on the other hand, breed servile dependence.66

Having established another tenet of his philosophy Bestor draws yet another distinction between liberal education and professional vocational training. He qualifies his discussion in this realm with the modifiers, "true" and "genuine," and seems to imply, erroneously, that professional education is equal to, in a strict sense, vocational training.

The most obvious difference between liberal and professional or vocational education is that the former (liberal) is concerned with fundamental knowledge whereas the latter (professional and vocational) is concerned with the application of knowledge to specific practical problems and specific occupations.67

Bestor has classified professional and vocational education as being "concerned with the application of knowledge" to

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65Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 61.
66Ibid., p. 65.
67Bestor, The Restoration of Learning, op. cit., p. 66.
specifics. It seems he would have been on more valid grounds had he qualified "knowledge" as to its type; did he intend us to believe he was talking about "fundamental" knowledge, "general" knowledge, or "specific" knowledge? His ambiguity has destroyed whatever point he intended to make.

Bestor adds to the present confusion in this area by an apparent contradiction. A contradiction, which, by its nature and relevance to the preceding quote makes any comment I might make unnecessary:

What differentiates a profession from a skilled occupation is the fact that the former presupposes and draws upon a vast reservoir of organized knowledge, theoretical reasoning, and developed intellectual power, which each member of the profession individually must command.68

The discussion of liberal-education versus vocational education is significant because Dr. Bestor has made their contrast a major part of his philosophy. In questioning the value of vocational education, Bestor is carrying on an argument in existence at least since the Platonic age of ancient Greece. This same discussion was the essence of the controversy between Plato and the Sophists. Plato and Bestor both hold if a man has a liberal education he will be able to meet any task or problem. Both men have assumed the ability to transfer concepts and ideas are inherent.

68 Ibid., p. 271.
The logical conclusion is that if a liberal education was had by every man as Bestor suggests, every man could be and do all things. That proposition would seem to negate the necessity of a medical, law, or mechanics school. He attempts to firmly establish liberal education as a basis for vocational study by negating vocational study:

Liberal education differs from both professional and vocational education in treating the student first of all as a member of the human race rather than as a potential member of some particular profession or craft.69

Bestor continues to negate, and by implication, contrast:

The shortcomings of a purely vocational approach to education are easy to understand. In any vocational school, including a school that provides training in pedagogy, students are rarely called upon to think of knowledge as the fruit of original inquiry. Knowledge is simply fact, "subject matter," a body of established data, stubborn, inert, and unquestioned. It is raw material fed in from the outside to be worked up and packaged for the ultimate consumer. The important thing, in a vocational school, is to learn the techniques of processing and packaging, while taking for granted that the raw material will always be forthcoming.70

Bestor's blanket statement of the vocational school's concept is a bit naive, because it automatically eliminates all prospects of material or product progress. If data were

69Ibid., p. 75.

70Ibid., p. 82.
"inert, stubborn, unquestioned," no progress could possibly be made since progress results from the opposite of his concept. Bestor feels, however, that all is not lost if only his criteria are used. We can still produce intellectual graduates of vocational schools if only we meet certain requirements. I do not mean to suggest that such graduates would not be a desirable, even admirable objective. I do suggest, however, that such a goal based upon Bestor's definitions would be a practical impossibility. Bestor makes his point as follows:

What counts in making an intelligent and reflective man is the effort he expends on the generalized intellectual and cultural disciplines. A rough measure is the total time he has spent in study, minus the time that has been wasted on sheer trivialities.71

Dr. Bestor finally concedes a small point, but again, seems to argue for a paradox:

A man's vocational or professional training is necessarily specialized. The liberal education upon which it is based need not be, but if it is, the specialization that is considered part of his liberal education can only be in one of the intellectual disciplines.72

It is difficult to comprehend the two points of view expressed above. In the first quote Bestor is suggesting a long term basic intellectual program; it has been the writer's

71 Ibid., p. 82.
72 Ibid., p. 398.
contention throughout this chapter that current complexities make this a practical impossibility. In the second quote he suggests a necessary specialization of liberal education. The writer contends that this is paradoxical; if a liberal education is specialized, it therefore, by virtue of its definition, cannot be liberal.
CHAPTER V

CURRICULUM

Part I: Specific Proposals

Bestor's ideas on the proper curriculum for education flow logically from his purpose for education. If education is to train one to think, by training him thoroughly in the intellectual disciplines, the intellectual disciplines must logically constitute the curriculum. In The Restoration of Learning, Bestor proposes the following curriculum: Disciplined study in five great areas, English, mathematics, sciences, history and systematic study of at least one foreign language.73

Professor Bestor also delineates the emphasis and grade placement for the study of these disciplines. English should begin, says Bestor, with the basics of reading and writing, proceeding to a 'systematic' study of grammar and continuing with the reading and analysis of increasingly difficult examples of literature and including incessant practice in writing. Mathematics was to commence with the simple process

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73 The author has paraphrased in an effort to maintain clarity from The Restoration of Learning, op. cit., pp. 49-51.
of counting, and proceed through the ensuing years to the abstract reasoning represented by algebra, geometry, and where possible, calculus. Sciences are to be studied at first rather diffusely, then as organized into the systematic branches of biology, chemistry, and physics. History is, according to Bestor, to be studied continuously beginning with scattered narratives, but continuing into methodical study of its great chronological and geographical divisions, and especially of the political and constitutional aspects. To complete his curriculum, Bestor suggests at least one foreign language begun early enough to ensure real mastery before the end of secondary schooling.

Bestor, having outlined his curriculum, divides it among a typical six, three, three plan: (Elementary 1 - 6, Jr. High 7 - 9, Sr. High 10 - 12). The elementary school is charged with endowing the three basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The Junior High School is to mark the beginning of organized methodical study and to instill, by the time the student leaves, the ability to pursue a subject methodically and to use abstract reasoning. The work in the Senior High School is designed to build a sound and extensive foundation of knowledge and intellectual power in the five great areas already specified. Where time permits in the high school one may commence work normally started in college, such as economics. A regular series of electives in music and art, as well as
continuing works in physical education, is of course accepted as part of the standard program. There is a place for purely vocational work, preferably without academic credit. 74

Bestor very clearly lays the groundwork for his future arguments in a cursory rationale for his curriculum:

Certainly intellectual disciplines are fundamental in the public school curriculum because they are fundamental in modern life . . . . Science, mathematics, history, English, and foreign languages are essentials of the secondary-school curriculum because contemporary intellectual life has been built upon a foundation of these particular disciplines. 75

After presenting his curriculum in some detail Bestor seeks to justify the program:

Science is clearly one of mankind's central interests today, even more than in the 19th century. Mathematics underlies not only science but also the increasing host of other modern activities that make use of quantitative data. History is a discipline peculiarly relevant to a changing world, for the nature of change is one of its primary concerns. Moreover, most of the world problems we have to face can be understood only in terms of their historical matrix. Command of his own language and its literature is one of the indisputable marks of the educated man. And among nations that must hang together if they are not to hang

74 Ibid., pp. 49-51.

75 Ibid., p. 40.
separately, knowledge of more than a single language is prerequisite to really effective citizenship.\textsuperscript{76}

Bestor feels very strongly that the curriculum ought, indeed must, be protected, and hence has proposed legislation to safeguard it. He contends a law is necessary because:

Most school laws were drafted at a time when it was taken for granted that the fundamental intellectual disciplines would be the central core of all school instruction. It seemed unnecessary to enact the obvious, hence the clauses of the law pertaining to the curriculum were usually brief and general.\textsuperscript{77}

Bestor presented his curriculum proposal to the Illinois General Assembly in keeping with his stated beliefs. It is his most specific declaration of what the proper curriculum should consist. The proposal, in effect, is Bestor's statement to formally legalize his educational philosophy. One can hardly ignore that though he allows for vocational training it is to be of minor, almost insignificant, importance. That fact is consistent with his desire to instill intellectual discipline as the heart of education.

His legislative proposal, suggested to the Commission to Study School Problems of the State of Illinois,\textsuperscript{78} is presented below as Bestor's definitive statement.

\textsuperscript{76} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{77} Bestor, \textit{Educational Wastelands}, op. \textit{cit.}, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{78} Ib\textit{id.}, p. 267.
Every school established under this Act shall provide instruction, at the appropriate levels, in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, and English composition; in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and such higher branches of mathematics as shall be feasible; in English and American literature, classical and modern; in at least two foreign languages (with at least two years of work to be offered in each); in the natural sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology; in the history of the United States, of Europe from antiquity to the present, and of the modern world; in the principles of representative, constitutional government; in the fine arts, including music; in physical education; in industrial arts or agriculture; and in such other branches as the school board or the voters of the district at the annual election of school board members may prescribe; provided that such additional subjects shall not be introduced unless the instruction in the branches prescribed in this section shall be deemed adequate; and provided, further, that such additional subjects shall not replace those prescribed in this section.79

Part II: Curriculum for the Slow Learner

A modern educator can scarcely be unaware of the particular problems involved in educating the large group of students referred to as "slow learners," "culturally deprived," or more recently in vogue "culturally disadvantaged." The problems presented by this group of students are not recent, though new emphasis has recently been placed on them. Bestor devotes much discussion to the problem of "slow learners" in and for the modern educational system. He bases his philosophy on three

79 Ibid.
premises; the first is the ever present necessity for intellectual disciplines, the second is that "slow learners" can learn, but at a slower rate than normal, and the third is that the school must be grouped and graded homogenously. Bestor holds intellectual disciplines should be taught to the slow learner in order to give him the same intellectual power as any other individual. Regarding the second premise he maintains that tests show slow learners are capable of learning. Low intelligence quotients or cultural deprivation does not mean one is incapable of learning. They simply mean one learns less rapidly than normal. The third premise is the natural result of the first two. If Bestor's suggestion for teaching slow learners intellectual disciplines is instituted, it is only logical to group these slow learners homogenously so as not to retard the learning pace of average learners.

Bestor introduces his discussion on the slow learner by stating the problem at hand and again attempting to establish the need and place of intellectual disciplines.

The downward shift in average or median intellectual capacity calls for thoughtful action, not hysteria. Our job is to apply the pedagogical skills we have developed particularly in the realm of remedial instruction. We must have the courage to reconstruct the grade system of our schools if necessary, so that the fundamental disciplines can be taught to all students, each being allowed to proceed at his own pace.80
Bestor continues his original line of thought:

If a man does not believe that thorough intellectual training is valuable and appropriate for every citizen, then he ought not to masquerade as a democratic educator, for he is in effect admitting that the opponents of democracy were right when they said that the masses of men were uneducable in the ordinary sense of the word and ought only to be 'adjusted' to the mindless kind of life they were bound to lead.\footnote{Ibid., p. 22.}

Bestor has taken a rather polemical position in the foregoing quote. He seems to be taking a "for me or against me" stand. What he has apparently failed to realize is that there are many kinds of education suitable in and for a democracy. He also fails to realize that one kind of education, i.e., intellectual disciplines, would disregard freedom of choice, a necessary ingredient for democracy.

The point Bestor makes seems to be a basic tenet of current learning theory. He is saying that if we are going to give fundamental intellectual training to every student we must take cognizance of the varying abilities of these students.\footnote{Ibid., p. 114.} We must, in short, go to the ability level of each student and work upward from there.

In order to establish his second premise and justify intellectual disciplines for the slow learner Bestor clarifies...
some points on the use of intelligence tests. Although the following quotes do not mention the test used, Bestor has previously made clear it is the form of the Stanford-Binet I.Q. test developed in 1939. Bestor's premise is one which can hardly be disagreed with in light of current findings. He contends it is a grave error to confuse and equate lack of intellectual and cultural background with the absence of innate mental ability.

An intelligence test does not distinguish between individuals on any other basis than their intellectual maturity relative to their chronological age. To read into an intelligence test any qualitative meaning broader than this is to go beyond the evidence and to misrepresent it in a dangerously misleading fashion. To say that a given child (unless mentally defective in a pathological degree) can never handle abstractions of a certain sort or can never comprehend a subject that is normally covered in a school program is a vicious and irresponsible perversion of psychological findings.

Bestor's main thesis deals with reform of our current graded system. He wants to eliminate grading based on chronological age and institute homogenous grouping for academic courses. Bestor defines and clarifies homogenous grouping as follows:

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83 Ibid., p. 112.

84 Ibid., p. 114.
Students are not grouped according to ability; they are grouped according to the point they have reached in their educational development. This is really a system of strictly enforced prerequisites. Students representing the whole range of intellectual aptitude mingle in the same class, but none is permitted to enter the class until he is demonstrably prepared to do its work successfully.  

Bestor carries on his clarification of homogenous grouping by setting three conditions for its constituents. First:

all the students must have reached a certain level of intellectual maturity, so as to be able to handle with equal comprehension the reasoning on which the works of the class depends.  

secondly:

all students must have acquired, prior to commencing any given course, a usable command of definite bodies of knowledge. They must, in other words, possess in common a certain minimum amount of information and a certain minimum skill in various intellectual processes.  

thirdly:

some degree of individualized instruction is obviously called for.  

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85 Ibid., pp. 303-304.
86 Ibid., p. 302.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
Granting Bestor's definition of homogenous grouping, one is still left with his rationale for homogenous grouping and an intellectually graded program. He takes a very different tact in his contentions for grading. For the first and only time in his long and polemical argument, Bestor argues for grading on purely administrative grounds, though it should be noted he does not elaborate or explain these grounds. He does, however, continue to justify and expect us to accept grading on his personal testimonial. He seems to be saying once we have accepted grading we need only to accept his proposals for it.

Bestor presents his testimonial for a "graded" system as follows:

If universal schooling is to produce universal enlightenment, then the fundamental intellectual disciplines must somehow be offered to slow learners in steady, systematic sequence throughout the years of school attendance ... Moreover, if universal education is to be feasible, this task must be carried out through the grades and classes of a single unified school system, with as little duplication of instruction as possible.89

In the following quote Bestor again testifies to his contention for a graded system. One cannot help but notice his careful use of the word could in reference to the proper use of intelligence tests. His emphasis, however, clearly indicates his intention that the word should was meant:

89Ibid., p. 311.
The very fact, however, that variations in intellectual ability and achievement can now be measured with sufficient reliability to show what the situation is, means that we could employ these same measuring instruments to create a system that would be truly and effectively graded.90

Bestor's argument for graded schools on the basis of their administration is a strange twist for him to take for several reasons. His previous arguments have always been based on some conception of intellectual disciplines, regardless of the professional educator's or public's point of view, and resided in purely speculative fields. For him to assume the role of an administrator is, to say the least, incongruent. Nevertheless, Bestor contends graded and homogenous groupings are the only feasible way to educate the slow learner because of administrative practicality:

In point of fact, only homogenous groupings can really enable the teacher to deal sympathetically and skillfully with the problems of individual students, for it is the only system which brings such problems within limits really manageable for the teacher.91

and further:

A meticulously graded school is not merely desirable, it is virtually indispensable to orderly, systematic, sequential instruction in a large-scale educational system.92

90 Ibid., p. 299.
91 Ibid., p. 292.
92 Ibid., p. 298.
In accepting Bestor's curriculum *in toto*, one is forced to accept intellectual disciplines *in toto*. It has been continuously contended in this thesis that to do so is frankly impossible.\(^93\)

The slow learner, once having gained basic minimum knowledge in the intellectual disciplines is faced with the problem of being as facile with this knowledge as the average or higher mentally adept students. One cannot help but wonder if in our employment oriented society the slow learner would not have been better served by acquiring a useful skill. The previous argument on the difference between having and using knowledge seems to hold more poignantly with the slow learner.

The current trend in education of the slow learner seems to be along the lines suggested by Bestor. Chicago Public Schools as well as the School City of Gary, Indiana, have for the past several years been using ability groupings referred to respectively as classes for the Educably Mentally Handicapped and Special Student. It is interesting to note that while public school systems often use ability groupings for instruction, none have adopted a grade or level structure based on chronological age, instead of ability, as Bestor suggests.

Bestor's claim for the administrative practicality of grouped classes seems rather obviously valid. The problem is

\(^93\)See Chapter II, Part II and the conclusion for comprehensive discussions on this point.
of large proportion and therefore necessarily requires proper administration within the current educational system. Bestor's point, being clearly evident, was superfluous.

Bestor's curriculum is completely consistent with his desire that intellectual disciplines be the mainstay of education. He has stated the five basic areas which compose the fundamental disciplines as English, mathematics, science, history, and at least one foreign language. Instruction in these disciplines, according to Bestor, is to begin in elementary school and progress in depth throughout the entire academic life of a student.

The slow learner, according to Bestor, must also be taught intellectual disciplines. To accomplish this, he has suggested homogenous intellectual ability grouping. Grading or school level is to be arranged by chronological age with differing certificates awarded at termination to certify the intellectual level attained.
CHAPTER VI

BESTOR'S VIEW OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

The conflict expressed in this chapter by Bestor is essentially the same conflict that has existed between liberal arts professors and professional educators since the time of Plato. Bestor assumes the part of Plato in this controversy and assigns the part of all the sophists to professional educators.

The basic controversy, then as now, revolves upon varying positions taken as to the purpose of education and the role of the teacher in that education. According to Bestor and Plato, intellectual excellence is the only justification for education. Education is intended to develop those speculative, truth seeking aspects of mind which make man most in accordance with his nature, which is rational. The Sophists and, in general, most professional educators maintain the purpose of education is to develop the pragmatic man, who with proper methodology, can do anything he is trained to do. Though Bestor does not address himself specifically to this controversy it is doubtless the basic cause of his antagonism and is implied throughout his discussion.

Bestor contends throughout his book that professional educators, whom he calls professional educationists, are
directly responsible for current education problems in America. He does not define the term "educationist" or "professional educationist." It becomes obvious, however, that he uses the term in a negative or derogatory sense. When he is about to make a critical statement it is generally prefaced with the term "professional educationists" used in reference to the criticism. Bestor first used the term without prior definition in *Educational Wastelands*. He states that "professional educationists, in their policy making role, have lowered the aims of the American public school." 

He rarely uses the term educator. When he does use the term it is to signify a professor of some discipline, not a part of the faculty of the college of education. Bestor claims an interlocking directorate of professional educationists exists to stifle criticism, control curriculum for teacher training and high school, and set teacher certification requirements. He furthermore claims that professional educators are blatantly anti-intellectual. Much time and space is devoted here to Bestor's discussion on the interlocking directorates' control of teacher training and influence of curriculum because he obviously considers them paramount in the downfall of American education.

**Part I: The Interlocking Directorate of Educationists**

According to Bestor the directorate consists primarily of professional educationists in the University. It is further

\footnote{**Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 7.**}
aided by state bureaucrats in the state department of education, and acquiesced in by the public school teachers and even the Parent Teacher Association.

Bestor contends:

The state enforced requirement in pedagogy is the taproot of the great educationist upas tree. The one inescapable prerequisite to a career in public-school teaching and administration is course work in a department of education. Consequently, this is the one department in which every student must enroll who wishes to teach or to be eligible to teach. The typical department of education knows very well how to extort every possible advantage from this strategic position. In most institutions it has managed to seize effective control over the placement of teachers. It frequently undertakes to plan all teachers' programs for them, regardless of their academic interests. It institutes programs of its own leading to a major or even a separate degree in education. It encourages its students to pile up course work in pedagogy far beyond the legal minimum. It frequently creates among its students the impression that they will be suitably rewarded for strict adherence in class to the educationist party line, and that too-vocal dissent will hurt their chances of future employment.\(^9\)

Bestor carries his bitter indictment endlessly on; enough has been said here, however, to show the trend he follows. The following parts will build on this indictment.

As for the directorate itself, its members and purpose, he continues:

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 167.
...to sustain such a top-heavy system, professors of education require powerful support from outside the universities. By propaganda and coercion they have endeavored to create what can be described as an interlocking directorate of professional educationists.

Bestor includes in his conspiracy state bureaucrats of the department of education; unlike the classroom teachers and the Parent Teacher Associations, however, they are active participants.

They (educationists) have been almost completely successful in bringing the bureaucrats of state departments of education into full partnership in such a directorate. The personnel of such agencies is selected almost exclusively from those thoroughly indoctrinated in the politics of pedagogy. This has constituted the most strategic victory of all for the professors of education, for it ensues the enforcement of certification requirements as they wish them to be enforced, and it gives them control over the official channels of communication between the authorities of the state and the local school administrators.

As regards the classroom teacher's position in this directorate, Bestor states:

...their position has become one of such dependence that the educational directorate feels safe in disregarding any possible danger from that direction. The ceaseless

96 Ibid., p. 168.
97 Ibid., p. 169
indoctrination that takes place in the required courses in pedagogy is expected to secure the half-hypnotized acquiescence of a majority of teachers.98

The sin of the Parent Teacher Associations in this conspiracy is apparently also one of acquiescence. Bestor feels the Parent Teacher Associations should take a stronger role in directing school policy as an integral part of the concerned community. The Parent Teacher Associations have, however, according to Bestor, relinquished their role with the passage of the following by-law:

Even in Parent Teacher Associations — admirable bodies in many respects — free discussion of the basic educational philosophy of the public schools is tightly controlled in certain communities through strict interpretation of a national bylaw which provides that the organization 'shall not seek to direct the administrative activities of the schools or to control their policies.'99

Bestor, having incriminated professional educators, draws some rather perverse conclusions on the final implications of the directorate. He maintains one of these implications is the resistance to and complete disregard of criticism against education and educators.

This monolithic resistance to criticism reveals the existence and influence of what

98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., p. 181.
can only be described as an educational party line - a party line that protects the structure of power which professional educationists have created for their own aggrandizement.100

Bestor also maintains professors of pedagogy command a politically powerful combination of forces which makes them able to treat with contempt the educational views of their academic colleagues on other university faculties.101 These same forces allow them to reject any ideas on education by the public at large.102

Bestor is not content, however, with external implications and actions. He reduces his argument to name calling and finally destroys any point he may have made by ascribing to educators' purely monetary motives.

One could not help but notice the implication when Bestor referred to "a party line;" he becomes even more vituperative in the following statement:

The paean of praise that greets every novel educational program, the hushing up of criticism within, the closing of ranks that occurs whenever a word of criticism is spoken from outside -- these attitudes belong not to a company of independent scholars, but to a bureaucracy, a party, a pressure group united in defense of a vested interest.103

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., p. 169.
102 Ibid., p. 173.
103 Ibid., p. 181.
The final statement in this section is Bestor's self-defeating climax. By attributing to professors of education the desire to fill their classrooms and maintain their jobs he suggests a motive patently ridiculous on its face.

The program which a prospective teacher must follow is governed by the requirements that state legislatures and state educational officials lay down for the certification of teachers. These universally include substantial course work in pedagogy. The beneficiaries are the professors of education, who are thus assured of a steady flow of students through their courses, regardless of the merit or usefulness of the content provided.\footnote{Ibid., p. 164.}

Part II: Teacher Training and Certification

Bestor's view of current teacher training and certification requirements is negative. He argues for a return to intellectual disciplines for teacher training and proposes several certification reforms. Bestor again indicts professional educators for their powerful role in curriculum development and certification requirements.

Bestor devotes two chapters of his book \textit{The Restoration of Learning} to training and certification. For practical purposes those chapters are here discussed as a single theme because they are inter-dependent. They are, furthermore, important to this study as a whole because Bestor considers reform in this area as vital to his philosophy.
Bestor opens his discussion with the two part contention that the university as a whole should be responsible for teacher training, which he considers one of its most important functions, and that teacher training ought to consist primarily of training in the intellectual disciplines. 105 Ironically, Bestor condemns scholars and scientists who failed to take their roles seriously for creating a vacuum into which educationists have moved. According to Bestor, the faculties of liberal arts and sciences abdicated their responsibilities by not accepting the seriousness of an appropriate curricula for teachers. 106

Having established his first contention, Bestor makes his claim for the intellectual disciplines.

At the undergraduate level the education of the future teacher should be an education in the liberal arts and sciences. This ought to be self-evident. 107

In the event that it is not self-evident, Bestor continues on the following page:

For him (the teacher) the fundamental intellectual disciplines are not supplements to,

105 Ibid., p. 242.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
but the very essence of, his professional stock in trade.108

Bestor returns to his attack on professional educators by labeling them "vocationists," using "survey courses" to impart knowledge. Bestor does not explicitly define the term "survey course." His implied definition is found in the following quote, and is implicitly a course which treats an intellectual discipline as subject matter, that is, a collection of facts and data without structure:

An unhealthy appetite for survey courses is one symptom of educational distemper. Liberal education seeks to develop general intellectual ability rather than narrow vocational competence, but it does not do so by spending its time on mere generalities....It is the vocationalist who delights in survey courses, urging his students into one after another in the belief that they will thereby get the most 'subject-matter' for the least expenditure of time and effort.109

Bestor suggests the likelihood of survey-course education is greatly increased if professional educators control teacher education:

This parody of liberal education is likely to be foisted upon prospective teachers if their undergraduate programs are worked out in consultation with professional educationists

108 Ibid., p. 243.

109 Ibid., pp. 243-244.
instead of with professors imbued with the point of view of the liberal arts and sciences.110

Bestor also contends the graduate program in teacher education is lacking in the same areas as undergraduate education. This grave defect is also laid to rest at the doorstep of professional educationists. To reform these great abuses, Bestor suggests new emphasis and requirements for the certification of teachers and for the awarding of the Master of Education and Doctor of Education degrees.

At the undergraduate level the greatest danger from pedagogical interference is not the substitution of courses in education for courses in fundamental disciplines (serious though such displacements can sometimes become), but the subtle distortion of that part of a student's program nominally in liberal arts and sciences. . . .

At the graduate level, on the other hand, the multiplication of course work, in mere pedagogy to the substantial works in the fundamental intellectual disciplines, is the great abuse.111

The reform Bestor suggests is intended to create a program of study that will be of an advanced scholarly character and be completely relevant to the intellectual tasks a public school teacher must perform.112

110 Ibid., p. 244.
111 Ibid., p. 245.
112 Ibid., pp. 245-246.
To illustrate his reform Bestor provides the example of an undergraduate history major with an English minor. He sets this hypothetical teacher in a situation where he is called upon, and can at any time be called upon, to teach history, English, and algebra.

Bestor proposes his reform:

The university should permit him, first of all to take courses that will round out his knowledge of the various fields of history. For this purpose many undergraduate courses should be more appropriate than the graduate courses offered to research students. These he should be free to elect. When he has completed a sound program in history, he should be allowed to go back to the point at which he dropped mathematics in college, and to study that field systematically, exactly as an undergraduate major in mathematics would do .... So it should be with each of the fields in which he has to teach, or in which, perhaps, he develops an interest for the first time.113

Bestor also proposes degree requirements in accordance with his reform. For the Master of Education degree a student must demonstrate through comprehensive written examination at least as thorough a knowledge as a competent undergraduate in the fields included for that degree. No thesis would be required.

For the Doctor of Education degree an oral examination would cover five fields. The student must also demonstrate

113Ibid., pp. 246-247.
knowledge of the classic written works in each field and although no thesis would be required, he will have written one original substantial essay in each field.\(^\text{114}\)

For this intellectual labor by a graduate teacher Bestor suggests:

A student who pursues such a well-thought-out program for a full academic year beyond college graduation and who brings his command of two subjects to certain pre-established standards should receive a Master's Degree. A student who pursues it with distinction for three years beyond college graduation and who brings his command of five subjects up to the standards set should be entitled to a Doctorate.\(^\text{115}\)

Bestor, having stated his ideas on degree requirements, makes clear the point he originally intended:

The university might make use of the degrees of Master and Doctor of Education (M.Ed. and Ed.D.)...The present proposal, however, would put them under the jurisdiction of the university as a whole, not the department of education or pedagogy, ... The degrees in education would be discontinued as mere awards for the completion of narrowly specialized vocational training in pedagogy.\(^\text{116}\)

Bestor intends to restore teacher training to the university by secession:

\(^{114}\)Ibid., p. 247.

\(^{115}\)Ibid.

\(^{116}\)Ibid., p. 248.
The university, in other words, should commence an orderly process of devolution with respect to many of the activities hither to associated with departments and colleges of education. The university as a whole must reassert the fact that it, and not one department within it, is responsible for education.117

Bestor contends educational certification is tied to teacher training in America by requirements set up by professional educators. Therefore it is logical to reform certification requirements and procedures. He intends to reform certification in order to promote, or restore, intellectual disciplines to teacher training. He begins his argument thusly:

Progress toward a rational program of teacher training in America is blocked today by the state laws and administrative rulings that govern the issuance of teaching certificates. This roadblock was created by the professional educationists.118

According to Bestor, the requirements are legislated such that:

Above all, a teacher must possess a certificate from the state in which he or she intends to teach, and accordingly must satisfy requirements that are partly fixed by statute and partly spelled out by a board, commission, or designated officer . . . In addition, the schools themselves are under the constant scrutiny of regional

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., p. 248.
accrediting agencies. Consequently, the criteria used by regional accrediting agencies exercise an influence upon teacher training almost as direct and positive as though they were embodied in law. . . Finally, teachers are actually selected for given positions by local school authorities, whose views on the proper preparation of teachers thus have a cumulative, if rather indirect, influence upon the programs of study which teachers pursue.119

Bestor claims the result of what at first glance appears to be a properly proportioned responsibility is indeed:

...a system that results in distorted emphases of the most extreme sort. In particular, it is a system that grossly exaggerates the importance of listening to classroom lectures in pedagogy, and that gives totally inadequate attention to the teacher's knowledge of the subject he professes to teach. This, of course, represents the false emphasis of the educationists....120

Bestor contends this false emphasis is created by the state which requires a certain number of hours in "education" courses to certify a teacher. This requirement forces students to take education courses. Even though practice or student teaching is required, certification is not granted on this basis alone, which Bestor maintains is but further evidence of this false emphasis.121

119 Ibid., p. 255.
120 Ibid., p. 256.
121 Ibid., pp. 256-257.
Bestor sees the current method of certification as defective for several reasons. First, pedagogical courses and practice teaching fail to serve their intended purpose. Secondly, state and local control are the reverse of what they should be.

First:

Teaching is a form of communication, and an exceedingly personal form of communication. The personality of the teacher is the most important of his or her pedagogical qualifications. A state agency, working from documentary records, is in no position to judge the personality of a candidate for teaching, and therefore, its certificate of teaching ability is largely meaningless.122

Continuing in the same vein, Bestor goes on to say:

Every teacher must have skill in pedagogy... But knowledge and skill in pedagogy can obviously be acquired in many different ways besides sitting in class and listening to lectures about it.123

According to Bestor, state and local authority should be reversed. It should be:

...the task of state certifying authorities to certify the teacher's competence in his subject; it is the task of local school authorities to determine his skill at teaching. Each is equipped to do the job I have indicated. Neither is equipped to do the other's job.124

122 Ibid., p. 260.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., p. 261.
What actually is taking place is the reverse, according to Bestor.

The matters that local authorities are competent to determine for themselves are precisely the ones that the state educational bureaucracy insists on controlling from above; and the kinds of minimum requirements that the state is in the best position to enforce are precisely the ones that are left largely to local discretion.\(^\text{125}\)

To reform certification procedure Bestor proposes that liberal arts and science professors use the university's power in accrediting associations, and new certificates be devised in conjunction with certain legislative reforms. In regard to accrediting bodies, Bestor suggests:

The regional accrediting bodies are membership associations, and the members are institutions. Each member college or university has a vote in determining policy and hence standards. The faculty of every college ought to insist upon knowing precisely how the vote of its institution has been and is being cast. The faculty senate ought to appoint the college representative to the accrediting association and it ought to instruct him to labor unceasingly for the raising of the standards of preparation required of teachers in the subject they are teaching.\(^\text{126}\)

Bestor is quite specific regarding the reforms he proposes. His first step would be to remove from the statute

\(^{125}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{126}\text{Ibid., pp. 261-262.}\)
books a fixed number of courses or hours in pedagogy. Secondly, he would fix requirements that would assure a certified teacher is both proficient in teaching and fully prepared in the area he or she is to teach. According to Bester there should be two certificates. One certificate should testify to teaching ability and the second would cover each of the basic areas of public school teaching.127

Of the first, says Bester:

There ought to be several ways of earning it. An experienced teacher ought to be granted it simply upon presentation of satisfactory evidence of a successful teaching career of a specified length of time. For a candidate without previous experience, successful completion of a period of practice teaching would be the principal requirement.128

Certification in the "subjects of public school instruction," according to Bester,

...should be granted on the basis of state-administered comprehensive examinations in the various subjects....There should be at least two levels of such examinations, one leading to limited, the second to advanced certification in the subject or discipline.129

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127 Ibid., p. 263.
128 Ibid., p. 264.
129 Ibid.
Part III: Curriculum Influence

Bestor's view of the curriculum has been previously presented. He contends the fault for not realizing his curriculum lies with professional educators. Further, Bestor contends "regressive" education has replaced the progressive education of the 1920's and professional educators have instilled a cult of contemporaneity.

The essence of a "progressive education" for Bestor is that education which advances the "great traditions" of liberal education. Conversely, "regressive education" undermines those traditions. The "cult of contemporaneity" is composed of a group of educators who emphasize the integrated courses; who, Bestor contends, by incorporating into history the areas of economics, sociology, and political science have created the social studies, as opposed to the social sciences, in an attempt to better understand current or contemporary problems. He contends this social studies format has reduced the basic disciplines to a position where their fundamental structure and ways of thinking cannot be learned.

Bestor discusses the existing problematic situation in American curriculum. He goes on to accuse and indite professional educators as the cause of the problem and proposes means

130 Ibid., p. 143.
131 Ibid., p. 128.
through which to effect a cure. This part of the chapter will discuss the four areas of Bestor's views on the present American educational curriculum.

Bestor views the current curriculum in four adverse lights. First, there is the separation of professional educators from the university as a whole. Second is the rise of the free elective system. Thirdly, he refers to the demise of progressive education to what he calls "regressive" education. Fourthly is the "cult of contemporaneity" among professional educationists. These four phenomena are the "grave faults" and "basic defects" he discusses in the following statements.

Grave faults in the organization and structure of our educational system lie behind the distorted emphasis that are apparent in public school policy. The basic defect...is the division that has been created - especially as concerns curriculum and ultimate purpose - between the public school world and the world of scholarship, science, and the professions. The heart of the problem is the schism that exists in institutions of higher learning between the professors of pedagogy (or, to use the misleading title they prefer, professors of education) and all the other faculties, both liberal and professional.132

In further elaboration of his point, Bestor goes on:

During the past generation the American public schools have run into an appalling number of blind alleys, principally because educational policy is no longer being worked out

132 Ibid., p. 156.
co-operatively by the entire learned world. Curriculum-making for the public schools has fallen into the hands of an exceedingly narrow group of self-styled experts - principally professors of pedagogy, or, as they prefer to call themselves, professors of education.\textsuperscript{133}

Bestor considers what he terms the "free elective system," a system where a student may take any course in his general area and is free of courses required by the university, as a major defect in American education. He describes its advent thusly:

Univeresities took the first downward step when they accepted the idea that any kind of educational program, provided only that it added up to a prescribed number of hours in the classroom, was the equal of any other as a means of liberal education.\textsuperscript{134}

Bestor finds several faults with the "free elective system." He maintains it did not answer the question regarding what has previously been referred to as the "knowledge explosion," and it allowed into the curriculum courses other than the intellectual disciplines.

The free elective system has long since provided a faulty answer to the questions raised for education by the increasing complexity of modern knowledge. It did not solve the problem of integrating the new disciplines into an ordered structure of learning.\textsuperscript{135}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., p. 102.
\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., p. 402.
\end{flushleft}
And regarding his second contention:

But the free-elective system also opened the door to courses in subjects that had no conceivable claim to scholarly or scientific standing.136

The demise of progressive education from its stalwart purposes of the 1920's is indicative to Bestor of a general degeneration of American education. It is interesting to recall that Bestor himself was a graduate of what was perhaps the most progressive school of its time, The Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Bestor contends progressive education became regressive education when a shift in purpose took place. According to Bestor:

What progressive educationists undertook to do in those fruitful years, was to bring the teaching of the basic disciplines to the highest perfection possible in the light of modern pedagogy. They did so by emphasizing the relevance of knowledge and intellectual skills to the problems of practical life and citizenship.137

The plummet of progressive education from the exalted position in which Bestor held it was due to a shift in purpose. Bestor continues:

136 Ibid., p. 73.

137 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 46.
Education that called itself progressive ceased to be an effort to accomplish more effectively the purposes which citizens, scholars, and scientists had agreed were fundamental. Progressivism began to imply the substitution of new purposes.\textsuperscript{138}

Bestor contends that this not very subtle shift in purpose was due, again, to the intellectual schism between the learned world and the public. The following statement by Bestor succinctly concludes his argument.

Experts in pedagogy were feeling their oats, were abandoning their proper task of improving instruction, and were brazenly undertaking to redefine the aims of education itself. By disregarding or flatly rejecting the considered educational views of the scholarly, scientific, and professional world, these new educationists succeeded in converting the division between secondary and higher education from a mere organizational fact into a momentous intellectual schism. Progressive education became regressive education, because, instead of advancing, it began to undermine the great traditions of liberal education and substitute for them lesser aims, confused aims, or no aims at all.\textsuperscript{139}

Of the three "grave faults" or "basic defects" present in today's curriculum, Bestor considers the professional educators' "cult of contemporaneity" most ominous. Bestor contends this cult is the result of a subtle shift in terms from "social sciences" to "social studies." He suggests the cult was

\textsuperscript{138}Bestor, \textit{The Restoration of Learning}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid.
devised to further separate the teacher from the learned world. And further, he states than an emphasis on the contemporary is an educational evil.

Bestor first develops the genesis of the "social studies."

Discriminating use of words and careful analysis of intellectual concepts disappeared as soon as the professional educationists translated "the social sciences" into "the social studies" and began to talk about "social education." Anything to which the adjective "social" (in any one of its manifold senses) might be applied was regarded as an appropriate topic for the social studies.140

And further, in the same vein of thought, Bestor states on the following page:

The change of name that has taken place - from "history" to "social studies" - can no longer be regarded as a mere matter of words. It has already produced confusion of purpose in the schools, watering down of the content of instruction, and deterioration in the training of teachers.141

At this point in his argument Bestor enlarges his scope to single out the particular destruction of history as a discipline by the professional educators. As an example of an earlier criticism of Bestor, that he draws conclusions from unwarranted evidence, note his implication that an ignorance of history

140 Ibid., p. 128.
141 Ibid., p. 129.
makes one particularly susceptible to the cult:

The professional educationists who wish to give the schools a wholly contemporary orientation are well aware of the advantages they derive from widespread use of the term "the social studies." They could not have hoped to attack history directly. Once courses in history came to be labeled courses in social studies, however, a protective camouflage was thrown over the manipulation of the educationists. Little by little history could be replaced by something else, largely unobserved by the public and even by the scholarly world. Little by little teachers could be freed of any obligation to study history systematically and could be initiated, as innocent neophytes, into the cult of contemporaneity.

The present emphasis on the contemporary is an evil per se according to Bestor because it vitiates against the purpose of the school and invites the public to violate what Bestor calls, but does not define, its academic immunity:

Discussion of current political, economic, and social problems is not the principal purpose of the school, but only an incidental means to the accomplishment of its real ends. These ends I have already summed up as intellectual discipline.

Regarding the danger to the school itself, Bestor says:

If an educational institution proclaims itself to be primarily a forum for the discussion of contemporary issues, it is, by that

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142 Ibid., p. 128.

143 Ibid., p. 125.
very act, inviting all the pressure groups of the community to converge upon it. It is, in effect, waiving the academic immunity it would otherwise be entitled to claim.144

Having discussed the defects in curriculum as a direct result of professional educators, Bestor carries his discussion to the genesis. He contends school boards that control curriculum are overly influenced by professional educators:

As boards of education, whether local or statewide, are composed of citizens who are not themselves professional experts, such boards require technical, expert, professional advice. Here, I believe, is where the existing organization of public education in all the various states is radically defective. The common assumption seems to have been that one and only one professional group needed to be consulted: namely, the professional educationists, comprising, in the main, school administrators, professors of education, and educational bureaucrats trained by the latter.145

"The common assumption" referred to in the previous passage is apparently intentionally fostered by professors of education.

Professors of pedagogy, deeming themselves the only authentic professors of education ...taking advantage of the unfortunate laxness of academic terminology, professors of education represent themselves to the general public as the only members of university

144Ibid., p. 136.
145Ibid., p. 125.
faculties who need to be consulted with respect to the ultimate aims and purposes of education.146

Having established what group is actually formulating curriculum, Bestor goes on to state what group should actually be doing so. He also is quite adamant about why professional educators should not be included in the formulating group.

Bestor states what groups should be involved and why:

To devise a balanced and adequate curriculum for any system of schools is pre-eminently a work in which the wisdom of many men must be enlisted. It presupposes a clear recognition of the role that each of the various intellectual disciplines must play in advancing the intellectual, the civic, and the technological welfare of the nation. It calls for an insight into ways of thinking in more fields than a single individual can hope to encompass. Curriculum-making, in short, is a task that belongs to the learned world as a whole.147

Bestor contends professional educators should not be the sole group formulating curriculum. Like engineering, pedagogy is an applied science answering practical, not philosophical, questions. Pedagogy attempts to say how to teach; it has no basis for deciding what to teach.148

146 Ibid., p. 104.
147 Ibid., p. 103.
148 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 41.
Concluding his point thus far, Bestor continues:

In particular, specialists in pedagogy have no expertness entitling them to decide what weight and attention ought to be given to the different subjects of study. Their proper function is to improve the methods of instruction; they have no mandate to determine its content as well. Scholars, scientists, and professional men, collectively, constitute the body most capable of offering sound advice on the content of curriculum. They are the men and women who know which intellectual skills are vitally necessary to maintain the life of the nation in flourishing condition, for it is they who are actively engaged in advancing knowledge and in applying it to the practical problems of the present-day world. They, rather than the pedagogues, should be advising the people concerning the content of the public-school curriculum, in order that the people's decisions may be wise ones.\(^{149}\)

In order to control the influence of professional educators in curriculum making, Bestor suggests two things: involvement by the legislator, and a separate commission of scholars.

Bestor suggests the legislature should redress the omission from many school codes of any statement relative to the basic content of the public school curriculum. No clear statute exists, Bestor contends, because most school laws were enacted when it was commonly accepted that intellectual disciplines would be the curriculum. It seemed unnecessary to enact the obvious. Professional educators have hence been able to

install trivialities in the place of intellectual disciplines without violating the letter of the law. ¹⁵⁰

Regarding scholarly participation, Bestor suggests a "first step" as follows:

The first step, as I see it, must be for the learned world to create an agency entirely its own through which it can state its views on public-school policy independently and unitedly. It must be ready at all times to express a considered judgement concerning the intellectual soundness of the programs that are offered in the elementary and secondary schools. It must address its remarks directly to the public, who make the final decisions on educational policy. And it must speak with a voice unmistakably its own, not allowing its words to be smothered or twisted or censored by others.¹⁵¹

Bestor states such an agency is necessary because:

It is idle to think that scholars and scientists, divided a hundred ways by professional ties within their specialized fields, can exert a real influence upon public educational policy until they present a united front on the matter.¹⁵²

In order to "present a united front," Bestor continues:

...such a commission ought to be established by the learned societies of the nation, and by them alone. The reason for keeping the

¹⁵⁰Ibid.
¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 223.
¹⁵²Ibid., p. 224.
commission independent of all political and economic pressure groups, and hence all non-professional associations, is obvious. The exclusion of educational associations... while deliberate, is not intended as a gesture of hostility. It is merely a recognition of two facts: that the professional educationists are already thoroughly organized and vocal, and that scholars clearly differ with them on many vital issues of public educational policy.153

Having established a working agency for the propagation of scholarly opinion, Bestor holds:

Once the point of view of the learned world on public educational policy is made clear to citizens at large, I am confident that they will give it general and effective support.154

Bestor has in effect proposed a political pressure group. The group is apparently intended to offset the one already in existence for the professional educators, a group Bestor has termed the "interlocking directorate of educationists." It is obvious Bestor is presupposing the righteousness of his position. He is, however, not unique in proposing his agency. It is a well known axiom among political scientists that where one ideological group exists, another will emerge to oppose it.

153 Ibid., p. 227.

154 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 128.
Part IV: Anti-Intellectualism

Throughout his writings Arthur Bestor berates the blatant anti-intellectualism of professional educators. He considers anti-intellectualism among the educators a major fault. According to Bestor, this phenomenon is the major cause of the sad state of American education today. He does not, however, establish a cause and effect relationship between the anti-intellectualism of professional educators and the rise of "life-adjustment" programs, such as driver education, or the neglect of the intellectual disciplines. It is quite clear, however, that he intends that relationship inferred:

The varieties of anti-intellectualism discussed in preceding chapters - 'life-adjustment' education, the 'cult of contemporaneity,' and the rest - are products of extreme cultural isolation.155

The "cultural isolation" Bestor refers to is the isolation between teachers and professional educationists. He goes on to establish anti-intellectualism and discuss its cause.

A philosophy that I can only regard as anti-intellectual and, in the last analysis, anti-democratic, has gained wide currency among professional educationists in the United States. It finds expression in multitudes of educational reports and periodicals. It is inculcated in many institutions and

departments concerned with the training of teachers. It dominates the thinking of many school administrators and their professional advisors. 156

Bestor continues in the same quote to explain his purpose relative to anti-intellectualism:

My purpose is, and has been, to expose the fallacies of this dangerous and deceptive emphasis or direction in education, and to reaffirm a sounder set of intellectual values. 157

Bestor and Richard G. Hofstadter, a noted historian and scholar and author of Anti-Intellectualism In American Life, are in agreement on two major facets of anti-intellectualism in education and on its basic cause or genesis. They disagree, however, as to the general cause, and over the fundamental concept of precedent. Bestor contends schools were intended to be, and earlier in our history were, intellectual. Hofstadter contends intellectualism was never intended to be a foundation or function of American education.

Bestor delves into the cause of anti-intellectualism, blaming it on intentional choices of policy regarding what for practical purposes was the need to educate all the children of a burgeoning America. 158

156 Ibid., p. 42.
158 Ibid.
Bestor holds thusly:

The pedagogical difficulties connected with educating all children, regardless of social status, cultural background, and intellectual capacity, can never be solved unless we analyze the problems fearlessly and accurately. Euphemism and sentimentality characterize far too many discussions of the question. As a result, dangerously anti-intellectual and anti-democratic conclusions have been perpetuated, wrong choices of policy have been made, and educational progress has been immeasurably retarded. 159

Bestor indicates professional educators and the progressive movement for anti-intellectualism and sets forth the evils of the philosophy and part of its cause.

A failure to distinguish between man's needs in general and their specifically educational needs is one basic cause of the anti-intellectualism so rampant among professional educators. "Life-adjustment" and similar programs are monstrosities in the literal sense of that word, for they consist in the abnormal overdevelopment of certain features of the school program and the withering of other more important features. They are vicious educational programs, not because the elements in them are necessarily bad, but because they are completely out of balance. A well-intentioned but incidental concern with the personal problems of adolescents has grown so excessive as to push into the background what should be the school's central concern, the intellectual development of its students. 160

159 Ibid., p. 120.

160 Ibid.
Hofstadter's view is very similar to Bestor's regarding the lack of intellectualism in American education. It is at variance, however, on two major points. Hofstadter does not contend American educators are intentionally anti-intellectual; he argues, instead, that there is no precedent for intellectualism. He does, however, hold the cause of anti-intellectualism to be similar to Bestor's.

The schools, moreover, had been coping for some years, and were to continue to cope for many years more, with the task of educating the children of that vast tidal wave of immigration that had come into the country between 1880 and the First World War. 161

After a short discussion of immigrant children statistics in the school system, Hofstadter continues.

Giving such children cues to American life, and often to elementary hygiene, seemed more important to many school superintendents than developing their minds along the lines of the older education; and it is not difficult to understand the belief that a thorough grounding in Latin was not a primary need, say, of a Polish immigrant's child in Buffalo. 162

Bestor and Hofstadter are at extreme variance on the contention of precedent. Bestor has throughout maintained intellectual disciplines and intellectualism should be a major part

162 Ibid.
of American education on the basis of precedent. Hofstadter contends, however, that intellectualism was never intended to be a part of American education:

As to the vast, inarticulate body of the American public, it is impossible to be certain exactly what it expected from the school system... That the development of intellectual power was not a central concern seems clear... There seems to have been a prevailing concern that children should not form too high an estimate of the uses of the mind.163

Bestor apparently feels he has made the case against anti-intellectualism axiomatic. He does not delve at great length into the harm he thinks this philosophy has caused. He does, however, relate anti-intellectualism to freedom.

To build our defenses of freedom firm and deep, we need to eradicate, before it is too late, the anti-intellectual tendencies that have crept into our public education system.164

Apparently still considering the place of intellectualism in education as self-evident, Bestor makes what appears to be a totally absurd statement. He states, "A non-intellectual school is a positively anti-intellectual force in society."165 One

163 Ibid., p. 306.
165 Bestor, Educational Wastelands, op. cit., p. 78.
can only read that statement as analogous to the proposition that, "If you're not with us, you're agin' us," -- a patently ridiculous and illogical contention completely disavowing the right to remain neutral, uncommitted as to course or policy, or even to disagree.

Bestor proposes to eliminate anti-intellectualism by restoring communication between the scholarly world and the public school system, and by removing professional educators from their exalted position on curriculum and policy bodies. 166

To eliminate anti-intellectualism from our schools we must do more than combat its arguments....we must restore the free circulation of ideas between all parts of the educational world. 167

That Bestor holds little hope for such a restoration incorporating professional educators is made obvious by his ensuing statement.

The department of education typically refuses to look upon the university as a community of scholars working to a common end....In its relationship with the university of which it is a part, the typical department of education shows no real interest in interdisciplinary co-operation and no sense of academic partnership. 168

166 Previously discussed in Part III, Chapter VI.
167 Bestor, The Restoration of Learning, op. cit., p. 156.
168 ibid., p. 173.
Given Bestor's long and continuous argument for intellectual disciplines, it is easy to understand why the evils of anti-intellectualism and anti-intellectuals are obvious to him. That he has failed to make them obvious to one who does not grant his basic premise is quite clear. One can hardly fail to note that arguing against anti-intellectualism is not equal to arguing against non-intellectualism. Anti-intellectualism certainly must be taken as the opposite end of a continuum occupied by intellectualism or the intellectual. Bestor is, therefore, implicitly arguing for the creation by American public schools of intellectuals, an end never conceived of by either the public or the founders of our educational system.
CHAPTER VII

A DISCUSSION OF THE ENSUING CONTROVERSY AND CRITICISM

Of Bestor's two books, the first, *Educational Wastelands*, created the largest outcry of protest and criticism. His second work, *The Restoration of Learning*, was largely an expansion and defense of his first book. The launching of Sputnik less than a calendar year after the release of his second book turned his critics to more serious defenses of their progressive education policies.

With the launching of Sputnik by the Russians came the launching of severe and popular criticism on the school for allowing the Russians their coup. This criticism claimed American education had failed in several areas. It was claimed the Russians were producing more and better mathematicians and scientists. That progressive education and life-adjustment programs produced students unacceptable to the business and professional world was also claimed. A great stress was embodied in these criticisms for programs for the gifted student. Frank Jennings states that immediately after Sputnik:

all of the criticisms, all of the complaints, all of the warnings, all of
the parochial angers and frustrations
focused on the schools. 169

In the three years between his publishings, Bestor was
assailed by his fellow faculty members, primarily in the College
of Education at the University of Illinois, and by prominent
educators at every level. The criticism and controversy rested
on several major areas. Among the main faults of Bestor
according to his critics was his misrepresentation of basic
evidence, his un-academic use of rhetoric, his unwarranted con-
clusions, and his total misunderstanding of the thinking
process.

It should be noted, however, that all of his major critics
recognized problems in the schools. None were ready to claim
the American educational system was perfect, or even without
fault. The question, said his critics, was one of degree, and
primarily, of area. Gordon Keith Chalmers writing in the New
Republic states:

Dr. Bestor has performed admirably the long
job of fact-finding and criticism necessary
to confirm the impression of a host of dedi-
cated teachers at school and college that
despite almost universal good will in the
school system, the governing principles are
largely third rate. 170

169 Frank Jennings, "It Didn't Start With Sputnik," Saturday
Review, XIV (September 16, 1967), 77-79.

170 Gordon Keith Chalmers, "Where Today's Education Falls
Harold C. Hand, a professor of education at the University of Illinois, was among the chief critics of Bestor. Hand wrote a lengthy (49 page) article examining the evidence Bestor uses and accusing him of misrepresentation of basic evidence and unwarranted conclusions. Hand deals only with the literary technique, research, and documentation employed by Bestor. Hand claims that when a learned scholar authors a book to be published by a university press, certain assumptions are made. It is assumed the book will be scholarly, not polemical, the documentation will be competent in respect to coverage or balance, that there will not be "stacking of the cards" by presenting only those among the pertinent items of evidence which support the author's position or thesis, and that there will be no suppression or distortion of pertinent evidence for this or any other purpose.171

Hand painstakingly examines all these assumptions regarding Bestor's work and proves them false. He reprints large sections of Bestor's source material, primarily pamphlets from the Illinois Curriculum Program. Hand successfully documents Bestor's selective quotations to prove them misrepresentative and distorting. Hand states:

...he (Bestor) permitted himself to ignore significant bodies of pertinent context of

which he was presumably aware, to draw inferences which the ignored contextual evidence either flatly contradicts or renders absurd, to withhold other significant evidence destructive of his charges, to offer inferences, based on irrelevant data, to conclude contrary to the preponderence of the available evidence, to misrepresent grossly the situation on which he based numerous of his negative criticisms, to torture secondary source materials while ignoring the equally available primary source, and to distort evidence on which he drew to make it suit his purposes.172

William Clark Trow, Professor of Education at the University of Michigan, is critical of Bestor for his extended use of value judgements, and constant equivocations of meanings. Trow's major critical article appearing in Educational Theory and entitled "Academic Utopia?" documents his charges. Trow says:

What he can do with meaning, particularly by slipping unobtrusively from one to another while holding on to the same word must be seen to be believed, and personal value judgments are made on every page with vigor and assurance....the reader runs constantly into such loaded value words as trivia, preposterous, inanity, nonsense, monstrosity, charlatan....which make the writer's position clear, though an impassioned self-involvement that in general is less characteristic of scholarly writing than of campaign oratory.173


Discussing Bestor's constant equivocation of meanings, Trow goes on to point out a specific and typical example:

We read that "professional educationists seem to prefer aptitude tests to examinations which show how much a student knows and what he is capable of doing with his knowledge. But a college needs students who are not merely apt but well trained."

...But the author's propensity for belittling what he does not like leads him, by the use of the word "merely," to shift from the basic meaning of "apt," which is fitness or attainment and hence, inherent predisposition, as it is understood in the term "aptitude test" to imply a superficial adeptness or adroitness. This example would hardly be worth noting were this rhetorical mannerism not so frequently encountered.174

Bestor's conception, or misconception, of the thinking process was a major point among his critics. Almost without exception all of his critics attacked him on this point. Most eloquent on this point was William Clark Trow.

Having discussed Bestor's outline of thinking, found on pages 54-55 of Educational Wastelands, Trow states:

One (drawback) lies in the nature of the learning process and the nature of the thought structuring, another in the question of predictability. If Professor Bestor's ideal plan were literally followed, no one would be ready to solve a problem until he is at least through college.175

174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
Trow also claims Bestor's thinking process based on the disciplines "is largely based on the now discredited faculty psychology." It is mandatory to point out that faculty psychology when practiced under optimum conditions may well be worthwhile. But the school setting is generally recognized not to be the optimum setting, at least as they exist today. The question is still under debate.

There are three general areas in which Bestor is highly criticized by his critics. These three areas are his reforms, intellectual disciplines, and life-adjustment.

Ernest O. Melby, in "Where and What are the Educational Wastelands" severely criticizes Bestor on his concepts of intellectual disciplines and life-adjustment. Melby contends the problems involved in finding ways to train "all of the children of all of the people" who previously dropped out of school or failed under the older methods espoused by Bestor led to what Bestor ridicules as the "life-adjustment" movement. Melby further contends "an education which primarily trains the mind too often becomes one that trains only the mind."

Arthur F. Corey, writing in National Parent Teacher magazine agrees with William Clark Trow regarding intellectual

176 Ibid.

177 Ernest Melby, "What and Where are the Educational Wastelands," School and Society, LXXIII (March 3, 1956), 71-75.

178 Ibid., p. 73.
disciplines and Bestor's style as a whole. One of Corey's opening statements referring to Bestor is also his introduction to his denouncement of Bestor's theories on intellectual disciplines. Corey states:

...the fact that Dr. Bestor is a competent historian and yet quite unfamiliar with modern child psychology and development emphasizes that a person can attain intellectual competence in one area of human experience without qualifying as a dispenser of intellectual manna in all areas.179

The stress and purpose of Bestor's intellectual disciplines is to place value on the process of learning, not the product. Contemporary psychology, however, has taught us the learning process takes place as the mind works on a useful task. Corey maintains the thinking process and the product of that thinking process are both valuable goals for education and that Bestor ignores the latter.

Corey maintains Bestor's reliance on precedent and past solutions as a major error on Bestor's part. Corey states:

When a person puts heavy emphasis on the past, he tends to assume that new problems may best be solved by time-tested methods and to resist any suggestion that the new problems require new answers...we should recognize that the problem of providing mass secondary education for virtually all

the people in a free society has no precedent in history. It is a new problem, and it will require new answers.180

William Clark Trow is perhaps the most articulate of Bestor's critics. Trow has been previously quoted in this chapter regarding intellectual disciplines. He also maintains that Bestor's reforms and recommendations are fundamentally weak because they have already been tried and found wanting.181

Bestor's reforms embody a single educational ladder which was set up in nineteenth century America to replace multi-tracked European education, and later dropped.182

Bestor attempted to answer most of his critics in journal articles and speeches. Finally in 1956 he authored a revised and enlarged edition of Educational Wastelands, entitled The Restoration of Learning. In this work he devoted several chapters to answering his critics. The controversy was soon superceded by Sputnik, however, and Bestor, having made his charges, dropped out of the critical educational literary scene.

182 Ibid., 23.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Part I: Summary

Arthur Bestor is an educational essentialist. His main thesis has been that the purpose of the school is to teach how to think, and that this purpose can best be accomplished through the study of fundamental intellectual disciplines. His entire position can be summed as one which seeks to instill intellectual disciplines as the chief curriculum of the public school.

Bestor discusses several areas of American education, each of which is directly related to intellectual disciplines. Teacher training is incorrect because it emphasizes pedagogical courses. Progressive education and the life-adjustment movement have reduced the importance and appearance of intellectual disciplines in the schools. There exists an interlocking directorate of professional educators which controls teacher training and the school curriculum. This directorate is anti-intellectual in nature and seeks to keep intellectual disciplines out of teacher training programs.

Bestor justifies intellectual disciplines on three premises. He holds they are structured ways or methods of
thinking and hence can be used to teach how to think. They are also perfectly compatible with democracy because they constitute the liberal education which makes men intellectually free. Every man should be trained in the fundamental disciplines to give him the power necessary to meet and surmount his problems.

In his desire to have intellectual disciplines become the mainstay of the public school curriculum Bestor has proposed a statute to that effect. He also suggests the interlocking directorate of professional educators be dissolved by liberal arts professors reaffirming their rights and duties in determining college curriculum. According to Bestor, if the scholarly world will but unite against professional educators, they can regain control of courses and curriculum.

Throughout this thesis it has been contended that Bestor's attempt to establish by precedent and personal testimony that intellectual disciplines are the only means to thinking has been based on selective and/or irrelevant evidence. That his premises about thinking are grossly mistaken has also been held. It has also been contended that Bestor has idealized democracy and further, that his intellectual fervor has biased him against the possibility that "disciplined" intelligence may not be the mainstay of practical American life.

Part II: Conclusion

There is no contention, implied or explicit, in this thesis that American education is perfect. It is readily
conceded that there are many areas which drastically need improvement. Bestor has made some valid points in his writings. One value of his writings is that they serve to draw attention, criticism, and discussion to education.

Bestor's position has often been extreme and polemical. He writes with passion and fervor about a subject he obviously feels deeply about. His attacks and criticism were often unfounded and many of his basic premises either incorrect or stated so extremely as to negate their validity.

A major point he makes is in regard to the lack of aim or direction in American education. He intends to supply that direction in the form of intellectual disciplines. It appears painfully true that a present workable philosophy of education is lacking and terribly needed. There needs to be a great deal of thinking, proposing, and testing in this area. Unfortunately, it also appears obvious that Bestor's well-intentioned plans will simply not meet modern criteria.
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The thesis submitted by Yale L. Mandel has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

January 30, 1968
Date

Signature of Adviser