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# ❖ The TAX TIMES ❖

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*Comments from Outgoing BCTA President Tom Sladek*

## Arrogance

**The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS  
ASSOCIATION**  
*Promoting Fiscal Responsibility*

Concluding three years as president of the BCTA, I am reminded of events which illustrate the need for taxpayer vigilance, unity and action. I was dismayed when a BCTA officer proposed to a County Board committee the application of certain proven business techniques to a borrowing decision, only to have a west side supervisor reject the suggestion, 'because this isn't business...this is government.' I find the school districts' lobbying to undo the statutes requiring a referendum for major bonding projects to be an ironic, unfortunate lesson in citizenship. And, I was stunned a couple of years ago when some County Board incumbents blasted our Association for offering candidates the opportunity to publicly declare their position on an issue (county sales tax) of key interest to voters.

The common thread here is arrogance. Citizens can't understand government. Public involvements is unwanted interference. How dare you suggest that I declare my position on an issue?

This arrogance, this notion that government decision making be left to insiders, professional politicians and those properly schooled (read: degree in Public Administration) manifests itself in ugly ways. Taxpayers are ignored, discouraged from participation, or even met with hostility when they attempt to inquire, to influence or to advocate. Nothing better illustrates the need for concerned taxpayers to be unified, organized and willing to assert.

After all, this is not a trivial matter. It is about the economic freedom which has produced for us a standard of living second to none. Confiscatory levels of taxation destroy incentive for work, saving and enterprise. Want to be a patriot? Join a taxpayers group.

And, is anything we ask of government unreasonable?

Is it unreasonable to expect that public wages and benefits be somewhat comparable to those in the private sector?

Is it unreasonable to expect year-to-year government spending to increase, at most, the rate of inflation?

Is it unreasonable to expect public employees, in return for job security only dreamed of by their private sector counterparts, to be flexible and embrace change?

Is it unreasonable to expect leaders in government to employ the same management techniques for improving and measuring results that are commonly used in private business?

Is it unreasonable to expect real, measurable productivity gains in return for investment of tax dollars in technology?

The answer to all of these question, of course, is "no". However, if these expectations are to be met taxpayers must become increasingly involved and increasingly heard. Because, as I've witnessed over the past few years, the insiders are ready, willing, and anxious to do the job of government without you.

\* \* \* \* \*

On October 17th, Frank Bennett was elected president of the Brown County Taxpayers Association by our Board of Directors. I've know Frank for many years. He is a skilled leader who will serve the Association very, very well and I wish him the best.

Tom Sladek

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## Jail Site Selection Committee Makes Recommendation.

After approximately 5 years of meetings by various groups and committees to determine the need for, and then a location for a new Brown County jail, the Jail Site Selection Committee of the county board has selected a location which they feel is most suitable for further consideration.

The need for additional facilities has been fairly well established in recent years. The expense of transporting and storing prisoners in other jails throughout the state seems to keep growing continuously, and the fact that Brown Counties growth and the reality that the crime rate is growing as well mandates that this is a problem which must be addressed as a top priority.

Over a dozen sites have been considered at some time in the site selection process, ranging from downtown adjacent to the present jail to various sites throughout the city and county. Obviously the realization that a convenient location, providing possible room for expansion, and available at reasonable purchase and development costs would have to be determined prior to proceeding with final approval. Other primary criteria such as acceptance by neighboring property owners and the ultimate cost of operation after construction also had to be considered.

All of the sites originally proposed probably had sufficient unique features to qualify for further consideration, but one by one they were eliminated. Four locations remained as suitable potential jail sites and the reasons they were considered is as follows.

**Brown County Golf Course** - There would be no acquisition cost as 36 acres of buildable land is county owned. Natural gas is available but sewer and water would have to be added at estimated costs of \$390,000 and \$242,000 respectively.

**West Landfill** - Also county owned with natural gas available. However, would require an estimated \$450,000 for sewer and \$225,000 to extend water to site. Not as much space available as other sites and might require purchase of additional land from private parties.

**Brown County Airport** - Natural gas, water and sewer available, but would require \$70-180,000 to enlarge sewer line. Would require zoning approval of the 10.8 acres being considered and estimated reimbursement of \$916,000 to airport. FAA regulations restrict certain land use which could be a problem.

**Sanger Powers Correctional Institution** - Natural gas is available, but sewer service would cost estimated \$608,000 and water \$300,000. Cost of land would be approximately \$5,000 per acre or \$90,000. Also, possibility state might not want to sell this property to Brown County.

The next step taken by the committee was to determine the most

suitable location based on the following criteria: Impact on neighborhood, Acquisition cost of the parcel, Site development costs and conditions, Location of the parcel, and environmental factors.

After all factors had been considered, the available land at the Brown County Golf Course was the preferred site, and apparently will be recommended as the location of the new Brown County Jail.

We want to commend the jail site selection committee for sorting out all of the suggested locations, and for making acquisition and property development cost a top priority. This will be one of the largest expenditures facing the taxpayers of Brown County in the foreseeable future, and public support is important.

The next step will probably be to come up with a practical set of plans and a price tag everyone can accept. This will include whatever remodeling and utilization is made of the present jail and the ultimate cost of staffing and maintaining two separate facilities.

# Annual Meeting Notes

The BCTA Annual Meeting on October 17th, featured a debate between the candidates for Brown County Sheriff, Michael Donart and Tom Hinz. Both candidates supported construction of a new Brown County Jail. The main point of disagreement between them was the need to construct local substations for the Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Donart supported construction of special buildings, but challenger Tom Hinz felt that substations could be operated using existing building, such as village halls, schools, or other municipal buildings.

Gerald Slavik was elected to a three-year term as a BCTA director for the first time. Frank Bennett Margaret Bushman Ray Krusic, Robert Miller, Tom Sladek, and Dan Theno were re-elected to three-year terms as BCTA directors.

Continuing BCTA directors are: John Beckman, Charles Brand, James Derbique, James Frink, Rod Goldhahn, Robert Imig, Patrick Moynihan, David Nelson, George Parker, and Wayne Vander Putten.

Brown County Taxpayer Association officers elected at the annual meeting for the next fiscal year were:

President . . . . .Frank Bennett

First Vice-President. . .Rod Goldhahn

Second Vice-President. . .Robert Miller

Treasurer. . . . .James Frink

Secretary. . . . .David Nelson

David Nelson - Secretary

## Frank S. Bennett Jr., elected president of Brown County Taxpayers Association.

I am pleased and honored to be the President of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. With the changes taking place in the many county governments, it is more important than ever that taxpayers have a voice in the direction we take. Your input is needed and we as a group must present strong arguments to our elected officials to assure that our money is spent properly.

Most of you do not know much about me, so I will take a minute to give you some background. I was born in Beloit, Wisconsin, and graduated from Beloit Memorial High School in 1959. After spending four years as a fire control mechanic (radar for airborne missile) in the Air Force, I attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison, graduating in 1968 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. After graduating I started working for Charmin Paper Products. My career involved starting up new plants at Cape Girardeau, Mo., and Albany, Ga., and a new product (Bounce) in addition to many production, maintenance and engineering assignments. I retired in 1996 and have been involved with county government directly and indirectly since. I married my wife Betty while attending college and have two children, Michele and Michael. We reside at 2400 Ingold Court in Ashwaubenon.

I look forward to serving the organization and expect that we will influence the future of the city and the county.

**Frank S. Bennett Jr. - President, BCTA**

# Why the State Took Control of “Education”

## Government Schools Are Not There to Serve Children

by Sheldon Richman

Many a profound word is spoken unwittingly. Senator Edward M. Kennedy’s office once issued a paper stating that the literacy rate in Massachusetts has never been as high as it was before compulsory schooling was instituted. Before 1850, when Massachusetts became the first state in the United States to force children to go to school, literacy was at 98 percent. When Kennedy’s office released the paper, it was 91 percent, although if the “function illiterates” were removed, the rate would have been much lower.

The implications of this statement are earth-shaking. The schools were, at the very least, supposed to teach children to read. If after nearly 150 years of compulsory, government schooling, the literacy rate is lower than it was when parents freely saw to their children’s education, what has been the point of “public education”? What happened to the billions of dollars spent and all of the promises made to parents? Should we accept another promise from, or tolerate the allocation of another penny to, what can only be regarded as nothing less than a stupendous fraud?

None of this has deterred the advocates of public schooling from demanding more money of the taxpayers, with the unsubtle message that it is the peoples parsimoniousness that has kept the system from delivering on its extravagant promises.

The schools, to put it bluntly, are a scam and a scandal. Despite steadily rising expenditures in the last half century (doubling every twenty years), survey after survey demonstrates that students who have been through the public schools cannot accomplish relatively simple tasks. Not only do they have trouble with reading and arithmetic, they are appallingly ignorant of history and geography. Part of the rationale of the public schools is to make children good citizens with a strong sense of American heritage. Thus it is interesting to contemplate that in a 1989 survey by the National Endowment for the Humanities, nearly one quarter of college seniors thought the words “from each according to his ability, to each according to his his need” were found in the U. S. Constitution!

David Boaz, Vice President of Cato Institute, points out that the record of the schools is revealed in the following facts: “25 percent of U. S. college freshman take remedial math courses, 21 percent take remedial writing courses, and 16 percent take remedial reading courses. Meanwhile a recent survey of 200 major corporations has found that 22 percent of them teach employees reading, 41 percent teach writing, and 31 percent teach mathematical skills. The American Society for Training and Development projects that 93 percent of the nations’s biggest companies will be teaching their workers basic skills within the next three years.” As public education has become worse at teaching traditional, basic subjects, it has increasingly turned to other, murky activities that allow it to evade objective evaluation, such as promoting self-esteem and good relations with the planet.

Surely, today’s kids are not stupider than in the past. So what is the problem? The problem is that government runs the education system. There is a de facto monopoly in education that has done exactly what we would expect of any protected monopoly: it has become grossly inefficient as it pursues its interests whether or not those interests coincide with the interests of students. Although schools are primarily governed at the local and state levels, a nationwide education bureaucracy controlled by teachers unions and professional administrators, with help from the U. S. Department of Education, determines how education is provided. And since people must pay taxes to the school system whether or not their children use it, most parents who are unhappy with the schools cannot afford to pay tuition for private schools. Thus, they are captives of a system over which they have virtually no influence. (And we already have the two-tier, rich-nonrich system that the apologists of the public schools warn of.)

The school system is an authoritarian, procrustean bureaucracy to which every child is expected to adjust himself. Ignoring the uniqueness of each individual, it expects all children of a given age to learn the same things in the same way. If a child does not meet expectations, the system assumes there is something wrong with *him* not the school. Naturally, most students, if not humiliated and terrified, are bored. A high school teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia, one of the richest counties in the nation, wrote recently that boredom is the predominant undertone of school. “Instead of quality teaching,” he wrote, “schools are obsessed with time and regimentation. Such a concern would be justifiable if it produced results, but what it produces is a feeling among students that if they show up and shut up, everything will be fine. . . . Almost every student I talked to complained about the deadly repetition of course material over the years, especially history and some government courses.” The teacher quoted one student as saying, “The game is memorize this, spit it back and don’t give me any grief.” Another said, “It’s hard to stay interested when you get that impression that administrators and teachers just want you to be there and keep on moving - - that they don’t care if you are interested as long as you aren’t causing them any trouble.” Bear in mind that these students were talking not about an inner-city school, but about one of the best high schools in suburbia.

In the earlier grades, boredom is also a problem. If a child’s lack of interest actually disturbs the class, he could be diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Syndrome and may be prescribed the potent drug Ritalin. Only a government school bureaucracy could wonder what is wrong with young children who prefer to more around, talk, and learn what they want to learn rather than sit quietly and listened to an adult droning on.

Why are there public schools? When the government decided to help poor people buy food, it didn’t build state grocery stores. It issued food stamps that are used at private stores. The point is not that food stamps are a proper government function, but that funding and provision are distinct issues. Why did the state take on the provision of education? It was not because children were going uneducated: recall the statement of Senator Kennedy’s office. As Jack High and Jerome Ellig of George Mason University have written, “Private education was widely demanded in the late 18th and 19th centuries in Great Britain and America. The private supply of education was highly responsive to that demand, with the consequence that large number of children *from all classes of society* received several years of education.” (Emphasis added.)

Government schools were not a response to the lack of private education, but rather a direct assault on it. Public education was the brainchild of the “Progressive” mindset, which sees only disorder and chance in liberty. Public education would, in the Progressives’ view, homogenize America’s ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population and create a national culture. (The result has been an enduring and nasty battle over whose values would be subsidized by the taxpayers.) The Catholics were a prime target of public education. Indeed, one can see the public school movement as an attempt to, among other things, “Christianize the Catholics.” Another objective of the schools was to make good quiescent taxpayers out of the children who would be future citizens and voters. A further purpose was to keep children out of the work force so they would not compete with adults. Finally, the schools were looked on by the guardians of the economy as a “sorting machine,” which would track and channel children into the curricula they were deemed suited for in order to fulfill the needs of industry.

The most revealing feature of public schooling is compulsory attendance. Children have to go, and the length of time has increased over the years. Teacher and school critic John Holt found it interesting that children may not take the high school equivalency exam sooner than the age at which they would complete high school. Why not? If a child can demonstrate at age 13 that he knows what is required of a high school graduate, why shouldn’t he be able to take the exam and be done with school. There is only one answer: because the school is primarily a custodial institution. It is not there to serve the children.

Nothing is less suited to an environment of compulsion than learning. The very



idea of compulsory learning is ludicrous. Given a biologically normal child, learning is inevitable. Think how much children learn during their pre-school years. Compulsion is not merely superfluous; it is self-defeating.

The urgent solution to the education crisis is the complete separation of school and state. The public schools should be sold to the highest bidder, school taxes scrapped, and compulsory attendance laws repealed. Anyone should be free to start any kind of school, profit on non-profit, religious or secular. There should

*Sheldon Richman* is a Senior Editor at the *Cato Institute* and the author of *Separating School & State: How to Liberate Americas Families*. This article is copyrighted by The *Education Liberator*, the monthly publication of the *Separation of School & State Alliance*. The Separation Alliance can be reached online via email ([separate@sepschool.org](mailto:separate@sepschool.org)) or [www\(http://www.sepschool.org\)](http://www.sepschool.org), voice (209-292-1776), or snail mail (4578 N. First St, #310, Fresno CA 93726).

be no government requirements for curricula or textbooks. Parents should be free to send their children

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to any kind of school—or none at all. Laws regarding child labor and apprenticeships should be scrapped. All restrictions on homeschooling should be abolished.

As John Holt noted, this would not only liberate parents and children, it would revive the moribund teaching profession. As Holt put it: “Only when all parents, not just rich ones, have a truly free choice in education, when they can take their children out of a school they don’t like, and have a choice of many others to send them to, or the possibility of starting their own, or of education their children outside of school altogether; only then will we teachers begin to stop being what most of us still are and if we are honest know we are, which is jailers and baby-sitters, cops without uniforms, and begin to be professionals, freely exercising an important valued, and honored skill and art.”

Submitted by Robert Miller

Editors note: The preceding article was printed in the “TAX TIMES” as an incentive to promote discussion on ways to improve public education. The opinions presented are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the the views or position of the BCTA. While we agree that certain changes are in order to the education system, they should be made within the framework of existing organization. We welcome your views on this subject, and solicit any valid suggestions on the subject of education that we can promote as an organization.

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