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Spencer C.J. Gregg
Lakeridge High School

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CRISIS IN EDUCATION – THE EFFECT OF THE COLD WAR ON THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The end of World War II found the United States (U.S.) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) in a fragile and tense relationship.¹ Having lived through one or two recent wars, Americans understood the horrific impact of war in loss of lives and changes to American society and culture. Striving to avoid another world war, Americans believed that the struggle for supremacy over the Soviets should be played out in economic productivity, advancement of science and technology, and exploration of space.² This strategy was dependent on an abundance of scholars in education, engineering and the sciences; yet unfortunately, the American educational system was in crisis and American students were lagging years behind their European counterparts.³

Of particular public concern were competencies in reading, writing, math, sciences and physical fitness. Motivated by a national fervor to demonstrate superiority and dominance over Soviet counterparts, the U.S. government intervened and invested in curriculum development, expansion of math and science programs and created incentives

¹ Even though they ended the war as allies, the fundamental differences in national values and ideologies evolved into a sense of distrust and resentment between the world powers.

² Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

³ Rudolf Flesch, *Why Jonny Can't Read: And What You Can Do About It* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1955).

for improved physical fitness. In essence, U.S. Cold War tactics unintentionally elevated the standards of the American educational system.

By the close of World War II, the nation recognized the value and importance of a strong education. At that time, the educational objectives at the primary and secondary level was to provide a curriculum focused on the development of “life skills” to prepare students who did not plan to attend college or other training after high school. Under the leadership of Harvard president James B. Conant, the Redbook on education was published to outline the desired general education. For secondary schools, natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities were added to the general education topics. The intent was to develop individuals who “thought effectively, communicated efficiently, and were skilled in thoughtful at making judgments and discriminating among values.”⁴ Critics of this approach declared the schools of education and its professors were responsible for the low-achieving status of American students. This came to the forefront when Rudolf Flesch, a readability expert and writing consultant, captured the nation’s attention around the underperformance of U.S. students in his 1955 publication, *Why Johnny Can’t Read*. This manuscript declared that the U.S. was lagging two years behind the reading and writing levels of their children in other developed countries. According to Flesch, the underlying cause was the transformation of elementary education from the 1920s until the 1950s. Flesch believed the transition from teaching children to read phonetically, that is by learning the sounds of each letter and then sounding out each word, to a whole word teaching methodology directly contributed to the loss of reading skills for American youth. Flesch opened his book with a letter to

⁴ Ronald Evans, *Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2004), 104.

Johnny's mother and proclaimed, "Do you know that the teaching of reading never was a problem anywhere in the world until the United States switched to the present method around 1925?"⁵ Thus began a national debate on the development of educational curriculum.

Flesch was not alone in his commitment to a phonics based teaching methodology. Over time phonics found its way back into the classroom. Twenty-five years after Rudolf Flesch's original book was published, he released a sequel, *Why Johnny Still Can't Read: A New Look at the Scandal of our Schools*. Flesch remained steadfast in his original claims that a *phonics first* methodology of education is superior over the whole word technique now referred to as *look-and-say*. He did acknowledge that many schools modified their curriculum and employed a blend of phonics and look-and-say approaches, yet he was critical of the way phonics was incorporated into curriculum.

The look-and-say educators say, 'We do teach phonics.'
This is a false claim. They don't teach phonics the way the
word is commonly used; they teach only a small part of it;
and they teach it the wrong way.⁶

Regardless of Flesch's perspectives, the importance of the *Why Johnny Can't Read* is noteworthy; for his work showcased the importance needed changes to the educational system.

Around the time Flesch was challenging the nation's reading and writing skills, world events were escalating the importance of exceptional engineers, mathematicians

⁵ Rudolf Flesch, *Why Jonny Can't Read: And What You Can Do About It* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1955), 2.

⁶ Rudolf Flesch, *Why Johnny Still Can't Read: A New Look at the Scandal of Our Schools* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 72.

and scientists. Already unnerved by the Cold War, the nation experienced an immense blow to its pride when the Soviets launched Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite. Sputnik was a technological marvel, around the size of a beach ball, and took 98 minutes to orbit the Earth. This marked the start of the U.S. - Soviet space race; an event that deeply impacted Americans. Paul Dickenson showcased the public perception of the satellite in his book *Sputnik: the Shock of the Century*.

‘Listen now,’ said the NBC radio network announcer on the night of October 4, 1957, ‘for the sound that forevermore separates the old from the new.’ Next came the chirping in the key of A-flat from outer space that the Associated Press called the ‘deep beep-beep.’ Emanating from a simple transmitter aboard the Soviet Sputnik satellite, the chirp lasted three-tenths of a second, followed by a three-tenths-of-a-second pause. This was repeated over and over again until it passed out of hearing range of the United States.⁷

The launching of Sputnik came at a time when the U.S. was enjoying remarkable economic and scientific advancements. Interstate highways had been constructed and suburbs were growing. Families were proud owners of cars, color televisions, and for a select few, early versions of computers. Public health programs were expanding and Dr. Salk's polio vaccination against polio offered a new sense of hope.

At a time when Americans were feeling confident in their accomplishments, the sudden emergence of the Soviets as scientific world leaders caught the American public off-guard. The space war was underway and the Soviets had won the first leg. "No event since Pearl Harbor set off such repercussions in public life," asserted Walter A.

⁷ Paul Dickenson, *Sputnik: the Shock of the Century* (New York: Walker and Company, 2001), 1.

McDougall in *The Heavens and the Earth—A Political History of the Space Age*.⁸ Space Pioneer Simon Ramo described the American response as “Comparable to the reaction I could remember to Lindbergh's landing in France, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's death.”⁹

President Eisenhower was criticized for not giving space exploration adequate attention and G. Mennen Williams, the Democratic Governor from Michigan, reinforced Eisenhower’s image as a do-nothing golf playing president by mocking him in verse:¹⁰

Oh little Sputnik, flying high
With made-in-Moscow beep,
You tell the world it's a Commie sky
and Uncle Sam's asleep.

You say on fairway and on rough
The Kremlin knows it all,
We hope our golfer knows enough
To get us on the ball.¹¹

In response to the public uproar, the U.S. accelerated its space exploration tactics and established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to demonstrate the U.S.’s commitment to a competitive space program. President Eisenhower acknowledged that if the U.S. wanted to dominate the space wars, NASA was critical to achieve short term goals but the nation also needed to develop a cadre of

⁸ Walter McDougall, *The Heaven and the Earth – A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 142.

⁹ Simon Ramo, *The Business of Science: Winning and Losing in the High-tech Age in Sputnik: the Shock of the Century*, Paul Dickenson (New York: Walker and Company, 2001), 4.

¹⁰ Roger Launius, “Sputnik and the Origins of the Space Age” (n.d. accessed 7 March 2016); available from <http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/sputorig.html>; Internet.

¹¹ G. Mennen Williams, “O Little Sputnik,” in *Dark Side of the Moon: the Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest*, Gerard Degroot, ed. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 66.

experts in mathematics, engineering and the sciences to concentrate on new technology and innovation.¹²

President Eisenhower sought congressional support for matching educational programs with national defense needs and outlined the role of the federal government in advancing educational standards. Congress, concurring with the President, enacted the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. This legislation provided financial aid for individuals who were preparing to be teachers and excelled in math, science, engineering and languages. In addition, the Act funded grants to states to enrich courses, expand language programs, provide fellowships for doctoral students, and advancements in technology and statistical analysis. Over time the NDEA was expanded to include aid for equipment and materials for elementary and secondary school education in history, civics, geography, English and reading. The NDEA legislation symbolized the triumph of US Cold War educational policy.

While the NDEA was instrumental in aligning the role of education in supporting national policy it had an unintended consequence. Not all schools, nor all educators, supported significant governmental involvement. School districts were divided on important socio-political issues related to federal aid for education, sovereignty of state's rights, racial integration, teaching methods, and academic philosophies.¹³ Ultimately, the

¹² "Sputnik and The Dawn of the Space Age," (2007, accessed 29 February 2016); available from <http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/>; Internet.

¹³ Stuart J. Foster, "Red Alert! The National Education Association Confronts the "Red Scare" in American Public Schools, 1947-1954," *Education and Culture*, 14:2, (Fall 1997), 1.

NDEA decreased the influence of educators and eventually led to the formation of teachers unions in the 1960s.¹⁴

Even with increased governmental intervention, public schools had significant influence in their local communities. By the 1950s, the educational system was emerging as the predominant venue for the development of a competitive society. Schools were the public institutions in every community that touched nearly every citizen. Education historian Diane Ravitch described them as “get-at-able”.¹⁵ Along with the development of fundamental academic competencies, schools were emerging as the premier vehicle for influencing Americans to be more partial to the military and war. Knowing that widespread support was critical, especially for the seven million high school students that would grow to be soldiers, the U.S. government initiated an anti-communist propaganda campaign in public schools.¹⁶

¹⁴ Spring, Joel, *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 169.

¹⁵ Diane Ravich, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 112.

¹⁶ School based propaganda dates back to 1917 when President Wilson commissioned the nation’s first governmental propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information (CPI). This agency was responsible for the first initiatives that used public schools as a channel of persuasion for federal priorities. Schools were targeted because they were a way to reach a large population and carefully crafted messages could be disseminated to both educators and students thus engineering consensus on key governmental policies related to the war. Wilson’s strategy was highly successful in gaining support for the war and established a precedent for the use of educational propaganda during military conflicts.

As the American public began to understand the human toll of WWI, they began to feel they were manipulated into entering the war. This led to the questioning of the use of propaganda in educational settings. The journalistic and academic community began to scrutinize propaganda techniques and began to openly debate the role, legitimacy and potential impact of propaganda on society. At the core of the issue was the fear that propaganda’s influence on public opinion could create a society so susceptible to political

The power of the American educational system was not only of interest to the U.S. government, but the Kremlin took notice as well. In his pamphlet titled “They want your child!” Allen Zoll warned the nation about Soviet attempts to embed communist ideology into American curriculum. According to Zoll “...infiltration and control of American education became communism’s number one objective in America. They want the children of America. They want your child.”¹⁷ These messages were reaching the American public during the time the government was defining effective strategies to unite the nation against the Soviets.

Therefore, core to the development of America’s youth was education on the dangers of communistic ideology and the risks of nuclear armament. The objective of

influence that they could lose the ability to think critically about the impact of federal and state policy. In contrast was the perspective that the use of propaganda could serve as a method to transform all of society. The challenge before educators and curriculum designers was to determine if propaganda should replace critical thinking development as the core function of education.

Prior to World War II, debates related to the use of propaganda favored the belief that the role of schools was to cultivate critical thinking skills and to eliminate the use of propaganda, yet perspectives changed when the U.S. entered into the war. Policy makers and educators agreed that national security was the highest priority for the nation and that schools should be used to cultivate citizenship and adequately prepare individuals for participation in national defense.

Educators noted that this was a pivotal time in elevating their role and importance in society. They recognized that by maintaining independence of public schools from governmental control they could improve their social significant as important conduits for advancing national goals. Their strategy was to follow state doctrine on a volunteer basis thereby demonstrating value and commitment, as well as, minimizing federal intervention. This benefited the educators personally and also the schools through increases in federal and state funds for educational programming. Claire Llewellyn Williams Hope, “Cold War Educational Propaganda and Instructional Films, 1945 – 1965,” Master’s thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, (2011).

¹⁷ Allen A. Zoll, *They Want Your Child! The Real Meaning of Federal “Aid” to Education: Showing its Relation to the Whole Marxist Movement* (New York: National Council for American Education, 1949), 2.

government was to increase a sense of patriotism and to promote support for military intervention should the U.S. be threatened by a European or Soviet attack.

To develop anti-communism curriculum, educators depended on instructional tools, predominantly existing text books coupled with films, developed by the newly established Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) and branches of the military.

In 1951 John T. Flynn published an article in *Readers Digest* claiming that current social studies texts presented a “seductive form of propaganda for collectivism-chiefly the type we call socialism.”¹⁸ Flynn’s position was supported by authors Kitty Jones, Robert Oliver, and Mary Allen all of whom eventually published books mirroring Flynn’s claim. To counter the collectivism messages expressed in the social studies texts the Citizenship Education Project (CEP) at Teachers College, Columbia University, developed and disseminated updated materials for teachers including *Promises of American Liberty* (1952), and *When Men Are Free: Promises of American Liberty* (1955).¹⁹

A selection of anti-communist films were developed and embedded into public school courses; these films became popular for the general population as documentaries or science fiction features. During a time when Senator McCarthy was actively driving out communist practices in the U.S., an Armed Forces Informational film, *He May Be a Communist*,²⁰ informed Americans of all ages how to contribute to McCarthy’s efforts by

¹⁸ Evans, 100.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁰ Armed Forces Information Film number 5, *He May Be a Communist* (Released 1950).

turning in potential communists where they worked, played and prayed. *The Big Lie*, produced in 1951 by the US Army opens with a picture of Adolf Hitler stating “The great masses will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one.”²¹ For the next 19 minutes, viewers are taught about the lies told by Hitler and Stalin to expand their personal control and to seek support for communism. Intended to create a deep fear of communism, the central theme to this movie was that communist governments lead to oppressed societies, and Americans must be prepared to fight for democracy. Hollywood also made notable contributions to educational films. In 1962, Warner Brothers released *Red Nightmare*,²² a film starring respected actor, Jack Kelly and narrated by Jack Webb, dramatized the loss of American freedoms should the U.S. embrace a Communist environment. Even though the film was a work of fiction it was effective in creating a fear of Communist expansion.²³

In Tony Shaw’s *The Politics of Cold War Culture*, he discussed the U.S. government’s use of media and entertainment as methods to influence the American culture in order to achieve national military goals. Looking retrospectively he noted that the approaches may have been strategic at the time, however they are no longer aligned with American values:

The degree to which culture was used as an instrument of state propaganda in the West, as opposed to the East, during the Cold War has recently been the subject of considerable scholarly and public interest. In the United States much of the discussion has revolved around the dark days of cultural

²¹ U.S. Army, *The Big Lie*, Warner Pathe News, Producer. (Released 1951).

²² Armed Forces Information Film number 120, *Red Nightmare*. George Waggner, Director. Warner Bros., Producer (Released 1962).

²³ Hope, 118.

and political absolutism associated with Senator Joseph McCarthy. Witness, for instance, the soul searching prompted among many Americans in 1998 by the granting of an honorary award at the Oscar ceremonies to Elia Kazan, the celebrated film director who had gained notoriety for ‘naming names’ in his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952.²⁴

In addition to anti-communism messages, instructional films were developed to reinforce the possibility of nuclear annihilation to offer methods of survival should an attack occur. A popular film targeted at primary grade children was *Duck and Cover* by the U.S. Civil Federal Defense Administration.²⁵ This film blended animation with shots of real children and provided a simplistic overview of the dangers of atomic weapons and what to do if an atomic bomb lands nearby. Designed for older children, *A is for Atom* was produced by the General Electric Corporation. This film offered a detailed review of atoms and the power they unleash when split or changed. The film discussed the importance of the atom for the development of nuclear warfare, yet also presented several examples of the value of the atom during peace time as a significant source of energy.²⁶

After the establishment of propaganda within the school system and the math and science initiatives were put into action, American children were now mentally prepared

²⁴ Tony Shaw, The Politics of Cold War Culture, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 3:3, (2001), 60.

²⁵ During the early Cold War years, the threat of atomic warfare had been used to promote adherence to national policy. This elevated the role of educators. Although concern regarding nuclear weapons remained, public protests against the use of atomic power began in the early 1960s. Then in 1962 with the discovery of Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba, public schools intensified their duck-and-cover drills. U.S. Civil Federal Defense Administration, *Duck and Cover*. Anthony Rizzo, Director. Archer Productions, Producer. (Released 1951).

²⁶ General Electric Company, *A is for Atom*, Carl Urbano, Director. John Southerland Production. (Released 1953).

for the possibility of war against Communism. The final key measure that the United States had to accomplish was to ensure their youth were physically prepared in case a war with the Soviets commenced. The push for an increase in school-based physical education during the Cold War era was triggered by an article by Hans Kraus and Bonnie Prudden, “Muscular Fitness and Health.”²⁷

It was December 1953 and Dr. Hans Kraus, associate professor at New York University, and his associate Bonnie Prudden, saw something wrong throughout the nation. They noted that the U.S. was falling behind when it came to physical preparedness of school children across the board. The easy-going lifestyle of leisure which had begun in the early 20th century was resulting in negative health outcomes. Dr. Kraus stated in the article “Too little attention has been paid to the fact of the dropping of physical fitness.”²⁸ The article highlighted Kraus and Prudden’s study of children aged six to nineteen living in thirteen suburban communities. Over 4,000 American children and 3,000 European children were tested. Kraus and Hirschland found that 56.6 % of the children failed to meet a minimum standard of physical agility and muscular fitness required for health.

In a 1954 follow-up article, “Minimum Muscular Fitness Tests in School Children,” Kraus and Hirschland, refined their original claims and offered solutions for addressing the fitness status of American youth. The second article stated the mark of American children who were considered not physically fit was now 57.9% as compared to 8.7% for Europeans. Kraus and Hirschland suggest combating this dangerous trend

²⁷ Hans Kraus and Bonnie Prudden, “Muscular Fitness and Health,” *Journal of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 24:10, (1953). 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

with six workouts of the trunk and legs, which would promote both strength and flexibility. Kraus and Hirschland stressed that the workouts were essential for the 57.9% of the children below the minimal standards, however, the proposed exercises would benefit all youth to ensure that their physical and emotional health levels remain at a healthy level.²⁹

There was a significant fear within the United States that they would be passed up on a physical level by the European nations, specifically the Soviet Union. Concerns had been voiced that U.S. soldiers were physically unfit. In fact, during World War II and the Korean War, over 50% of those on draft boards did not meet the physical standards. A study at Yale University of their incoming freshman also showed physical decline. In 1951, 51% of their freshmen were able to pass their physical test; by 1956 that number dropped to 43%, and in 1960 the number hit 38%. The ongoing decline of physical wellbeing served as a catalyst for President Eisenhower's establishment of the President's Council on the Youth Fitness in 1956. This council oversaw and encouraged the healthy physical development of youth across the nation. In order to help accomplish their goals, the council launched the President's Challenge to incentivize physical action. This rewarded children across the nation who achieved a certain level of physical activity. The council also introduced a series of standardized physical tests to promote and assess physical activity, such as, the 50-yard dash, the 600-yard dash, the standing broad jump, pull-ups, sit-ups, and the softball throw.³⁰

²⁹ Hans Kraus and Ruth Hirschland, "Minimum Muscular Fitness Tests in School Children," *Research Quarterly, American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 25:2, (1954), 178.

³⁰ Dixie Shaffer, *50 Miles: Running the JFK, the Nation's Top Ultramarathon* (Copyright, Dixie Shaffer, 2008).

As the nation moved on to the Kennedy presidency, Americans gained a leader who was willing to promote fitness as a key priority. Just prior to his inauguration, John F. Kennedy published an article in *Sports Illustrated* titled, “The Soft American.” In this article he articulated the poignant message that

The physical vigor of our citizens is one of our most valuable resources if we allow it to dwindle and grow soft then we will destroy much of our ability to meet the great and vital challenges which confront our people. We will be unable to realize our full potential as a nation.³¹

President Kennedy also addressed the necessity for soldiers to have a “bodies which have been conditioned by a lifetime of participation in sports and interest in physical activity” in order to be successful in war, with “stamina and strength which the defense of liberty requires are not the product of a few weeks' basic training or a month's conditioning.”³²

In fact, the President was adamant of the danger fact that loomed in front of the nation, “Thus, in a very real and immediate sense, our growing softness, our increasing lack of physical fitness, is a menace to our security.”³³ He declared there was a very real threat that the U.S. could be passed up as a world superpower if Americans did not increase the physical health of our soldiers. He recognized President Eisenhower’s efforts and then acknowledged the work still to come;

This is a national problem, and requires national action. President Eisenhower helped show the way through his own interest and by calling national attention to our deteriorating standards of physical fitness. Now it is time

³¹ John F. Kennedy, “The Soft American”, *Sports Illustrated*, 13:26, (1960) 16.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

for the United States to move forward with a national program to improve the fitness of all Americans.³⁴

President Kennedy outlined a plan to improve the physical health within the United States. The first step focused on the creation of a United States program that partnered with the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Secretary of the Interior to address physical fitness issues. The next step was to put accountability for the physical fitness of Americans in the hands of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This department was charged with researching ways to stop the negative trend in American youth and to create programs to be implemented in public schools throughout the nation. The third step in Kennedy's plan required the governors of every state attend an annual meeting on physical fitness to review the progress of local citizens in physical activity over the prior year and to talk about opportunities for improvement in the oncoming year. The fourth and final step was simple; ensure that sports and education are embedded within the U.S.'s youth culture for the considerable future. President Kennedy summarized his vision with a simple remark;

If we are to retain this freedom, for ourselves and for generations yet to come, then we must also be willing to work for the physical toughness on which the courage and intelligence and skill of man so largely depend.³⁵

As the 1950s came to a close, the social changes of the 1960s introduced a shift in national focus from competition with the Soviets to unrest over civil rights, the Vietnam War and international control over nuclear weapons. College students began

³⁴ *Ibid.* 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

demonstrating against an educational system that had emphasized adherence to national ideals and questioned the congruence with their own values. Educators recognized their concerns and pondered their own contribution to this sense of disillusionment. This began a movement toward a method of teaching that aimed at critical thinking as the most important outcome of education, and an end of promoting topics related to U.S. military priorities.³⁶

The civil rights movement of the 1960s dramatically transformed the Cold War messages of racial harmony to an awareness of racial inequalities. Fueled by the Black Power Movement, African Americans demanded the teaching of black history and culture along with the recruitment of black teachers and students.

African American parents pushed school boards to approve the teaching of black history and culture. College students pressured administrators to recruit black teachers and students, create Afro-American cultural centers, and institute Black Studies classes and departments.³⁷

With the heightened awareness of the injustices borne by African Americans no longer did U.S. citizens believe the rhetoric of nation-wide equality; instead they began to recognize the mistruths in public messages.³⁸

As anxiety escalated over the nuclear arms race the U.S. found itself entering into the Vietnam War in an attempt to contain communism. Yet the high loss of U.S. lives since the onset of the Cold War weakened American support for U.S. foreign policy. Anti-war demonstrations began to be commonplace on college campuses. The

³⁶ Hope, 161.

³⁷ Steven M. Gillon, *The American Paradox: A History of the United States Since 1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 181.

³⁸ Hope, 163.

demonstrations were widely publicized through television and the anti-war campaign became a nationwide crusade.

College students had remarkable clout. Resulting from the baby boom, colleges contained the largest concentration of young adults in the country. While their passion spread across multiple causes, they were united by the desire to challenge the established political and cultural order. A watershed event occurred in 1964 when students at the University of California at Berkeley protested the on-campus activism ban and demanded the right of academic freedom for students and professors. This was the result of deep-seated discontent over the intellectual paternalism enforced by the political and educational policies when they were in elementary and secondary school. This showcased student displeasure with the role of propaganda in education. The Berkeley events signified the end of the period that college students viewed the American political environment without critical judgment. From that time on began a shift educational curriculum from creating a sense of national consensus to addressing controversy and hypocrisy and fostering analytical assessment. By the end of the Cold War period the goal of education was to satisfy the inquiring mind and pursue truth wherever it may lead.³⁹ In his article “Controversy in the Classroom,” high school teacher, Gerard Duffy articulated the importance of transparency in education:

Should the history teacher move his class beyond the interpretation of history and question the morality of war, for instance? Should he move into such areas as the ethics and legality of the Vietnam situation? Should the credibility gap be discussed? If we take our role seriously as probers of humanity, we have no choice but to open up these areas for discussion. If we are truly educators, we must include in our presentations the fact that our President lied during the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 176

U-2 Affair and the Bay of Pigs invasion, for instance, and if this prompts students to complain that they can never be certain that they are hearing the truth from the government, is this not a sound conclusion? ⁴⁰

The 20th century was a period of radical change in the American educational system. The initial acceptance of ideological management in schools was motivated by a commitment to prepare the nation during time of war, and the rise of U.S.S.R. as a powerful nation. The practice of incorporating propaganda into education resulted in misinterpretations of history, current affairs and national policies for a generation of students. Even when contested by journalists, educators or the public, the power of the Cold War consensus overshadowed resistance to the national propaganda campaign. Bolstered by the student movements of the 1960s educators began the process of revising curriculum to ensure future generations are developed as critical thinkers.⁴¹

Divergent perspectives of the role of government in education during the Cold War era polarized individuals within the educational system. At one end were those who embraced federal funding and oversight; in direct conflict were individuals who advocated for state and district control. In 1955, economist Milton Friedman counseled the nation that the government did have a role, and was limited to an economic investment in the development of the American workforce. Friedman acknowledged that the government had begun this through the subsidy of vocational and professional education; however, he disagreed with this approach. According to Friedman,

⁴⁰ Gerard Duffy, "Controversy in the Classroom," *The History Teacher*, 1:4 (May, 1968), 34.

⁴¹ Hope, 179.

government should not be investing in individuals; rather it should create opportunities for individuals to access education and in return hold them accountable for a return on the investment. “Individuals should bear the costs of investment in themselves and receive the rewards, and they should not be prevented by market imperfections from making the investment when they are willing to bear the costs.”⁴²

In addition to Friedman’s concerns as to governmental funding of education, he also expressed concern about government’s involvement in education administration.

This re-examination of the role of government in education suggests that the growth of governmental responsibility in this area has been unbalanced. Government has appropriately financed general education for citizenship, but in the process it has been led also to administer most of the schools that provide such education. Yet, as we have seen, the administration of schools is neither required by the financing of education, nor justifiable in its own right in a predominantly free enterprise society.⁴³

Many of the issues raised during the Cold War years continue to be relevant today. In an environment of under-funded public schools challenged by increased educational standards through the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, school districts and educators find themselves under extreme pressure to follow governmental policy regardless of their support for the intervention. Yet history tells us the fight is worth it.

Significantly, to the extent that citizens of the United States truly value critical thought, free inquiry, equality of educational opportunity, and respect for diverse and

⁴² Milton Friedman, *The Role of Government in Education*, (1955 accessed 13 March 2016); available from <https://webspaces.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/FriedmanRoleOfGovtEducation1955.htm>. Internet.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

multiple perspective, then much can be learned from mindful reflection of events fifty years ago. Indeed, a look back to the late 1940s and early 1950s offers a sobering and often painful reminder that the stakes are high and much is to play for in contemporary political battles for the control of American education.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Stuart Foster and O.L Davis, “Conservative Battles for Public Education within America’s Culture Wars: poignant lessons for today from the red scare of the 1950s,” *London Review of Education*, 2:2, (2004), 133.

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