

School-to-Work Will Train, Not Educate

by Phyllis Schafly

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STW), signed by President Clinton in 1994, is an attempt to use federal mandates and funding to browbeat the public schools into changing their mission. STW is being implemented nationwide by STW state laws, federal and state regulations, and the federal mandates that control the granting of federal STW funds.

School-to-Work is the implementation of Marc Tucker's "cradle to grave" plan outlined in his "Dear Hillary" letter, and it is moving rapidly through the schools. Tucker boasts that he has written the "restructuring" plans for more than 50% of public school children. Designed on the German system, it is a plan to *train* children in specific jobs to serve the workforce and the global economy instead of *educate* them so they can make their own life choices.

The traditional function of education was to teach basic knowledge and skills: reading, writing, math, science, history, etc. School-to-Work deemphasizes or eliminates academic work and substitutes mandated vocational training to serve the workforce. Instead of the focus being on developing the child, the focus is on serving the labor force.

There's a big difference between educating a child and training him to serve the workforce. According to the dictionary, to *educate* means to develop the faculties and powers of a person by teaching. Becoming skilled at reading, writing and calculating is essential to developing as a student and as a person and being able to fulfill the American dream. To *train* means to cause a person or animal to be efficient in the performance of tasks by responding to discipline, instruction, and repeated practice. That's what you do to your dog. That's what School-to-Work is: "performance-based" training of students to move into predetermined jobs.

Those predetermined jobs will not be selected by the student or his family. New bodies called workforce development boards, appointed not elected, will determine what jobs are needed in the coming years. The schools will then design the curriculum to meet these governmentally determined workforce needs, and use counselors and computers to do "job matching" of the students.

After you complete your vocational training, you will get a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) or Smart Card -- not a high school diploma -- and you won't be able to get a job unless you have one. This will function much like the green card that must be presented by resident aliens in order to get a job.

STW laws and regulations require vocational training to start "at the earliest possible age, but beginning no later than middle school grades." The federal STW statute even says that "career awareness" should "begin as early as the elementary grades." How many elementary or even middle school children do you know who are capable of choosing their lifetime career? Obviously, these decisions will be made by the school, not by the individual or his parents.

The goal is not to graduate highly-literate individuals but to turn out team workers to produce for the global economy. In the STW scheme, individual grades are inflated or detached from academic achievement, individual honors and competition are eliminated or deemphasized, and instead we have such "team" techniques as group grading, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, horizontal enrichment, job shadowing, mentoring, and job site visits. It is obvious that Outcome-Based Education was preparation for the STW system in which children are taught to be "team workers" instead of achievers.

A computer profile will be inputted for every student, and it will contain an awesome array of personal and private family information. These data will be available to the school, the government, and prospective employers. That doesn't sound like a free America! It sounds like George Orwell's *1984*.

Vocational courses in high school for illiterate or semi-literate students will train young Americans to compete in the global economy with people in the third world willing to work for 25 and 50 cents an hour. That's why a lot of big businesses have entered into partnerships with Governors and school districts to promote School-to-Work. They think the schools will do some of their job training for them.

But it's not the job of the taxpayers to do job training; that's the job of the corporations that hire them. It is the job of the schools to teach children to read, write and calculate.

School-to-Work is a direct threat to the individual student, his privacy, his goals, and his acquisition of an education that can help him reach them. Furthermore, a planned economy, with bureaucrats trying to predict what jobs will be needed in the next five years and training students for specific jobs, is a failure all over the world. All those who value freedom must defeat and defund School-to-Work.

Robert Reich, Ira Magaziner, and Marc Tucker are the social engineers driving the School-to-Work concept. They dream of using the schools to implement industrial policy, a.k.a. national economic planning, following the German and East European models.

Robert Reich's and Ira Magaziner's 1982 book entitled *Minding America's Business* bemoans America's "irrational and uncoordinated industrial policy" and that we lack a single agency to monitor our domestic economy and adjust it to changes in the world markets. They think we need an economic czar.

Robert Reich, in his 1983 book *The Next American Frontier*, wrote enthusiastically about Germany and Japan, where government-managed industrial policy uses loans and subsidies to shift resources into favored industries, and "induces" disfavored firms to exit from the industry. He praised the high percentage of their national economies that is poured into numerous, generous, tax-financed social benefits and "elaborate programs of job training," which he claimed resulted in low unemployment.

Marc Tucker, in his 1992 book *Thinking for a Living*, expressed admiration for the Soviet bloc countries. He wrote that they "have done a better job than we of building human-resource development programs."

The alleged economic efficiency of the German and Eastern bloc countries, so highly praised by Reich, Magaziner and Tucker, is now on the rocks. Germany's unemployment rate is 12% and the extravagances of the welfare state are heading that nation into economic decline.

School-to-Work is the "human-resource development" segment of the Reich-Magaziner-Tucker strategy to inflict America with a national industrial policy dictated by government economic czars. These elitists have convinced themselves that they possess "extraordinary insights" to restructure our economy. But central planning is a failure everywhere in the world!