

Spring 2005

## Why Study the Educational Policies Commission?

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### Recommended Citation

Urban, W. (2005) "Why Study the Educational Policies Commission?," *Georgia Educational Researcher*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

DOI: 10.20429/ger.2005.030101

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# Why Study the Educational Policies Commission?

## **Abstract**

It is an honor to be asked to give this address at GERA. To acknowledge that honor briefly, and with my tongue in my cheek a bit, let me start with a brief account of my own contact with GERA, and its parent organization, AERA. This account is offered to indicate how one like me who does historical research in education has interacted with the movers and shakers in our professional educational research organizations, who largely do not do such research, over the past three decades.

## **Keywords**

Educational Policies Commission, Educational foundations, Educational policy studies, American Educational Research Journal

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It is an honor to be asked to give this address at GERA. To acknowledge that honor briefly, and with my tongue in my cheek a bit, let me start with a brief account of my own contact with GERA, and its parent organization, AERA. This account is offered to indicate how one like me who does historical research in education has interacted with the movers and shakers in our professional educational research organizations, who largely do not do such research, over the past three decades.

I came to Georgia State University in the fall of 1971. From that time until the mid-1990s, I was a member of a Department of Educational Foundations, a group that housed me, an educational historian, and an educational philosopher, two educational sociologists, and a comparative educationist in a social foundations section, along with two other sections that contained educational psychologists and quantitative educational researchers respectively. This grouping, oddly enough, worked. It did so not because of any methodological compatibility or affinity on the part of its members but, rather, because at some level we acknowledged the legitimacy of each other's academic work and at another level, we united to protect all three of our groups. This protective activity was institutionalized in the form of defending service courses for the other departments in the college of education, courses that seemed continually under attack from some quarter or other in the college or university. Those courses, and the attacks against them, remain to this day, though the educational psychologists have been split from the other two groups, which now form two of four units in a Department of Educational Policy Studies.

More on ed. policy studies later, but for now let me turn to a review essay that I did in the *American Educational Research Journal* in 1975.<sup>1</sup> That article was for me a

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne J. Urban, "Some Historiographical Problems in Revisionist Educational History: Essay Review of *Roots of Crisis*, *American Educational Research Journal* 12 (Summer, 1975).

kind of throw away (I had a close historian colleague who held office in AERA and encouraged me to do the essay without saying much about the place that it was to be published). It turned out to be much more than that in terms of my relations with my colleagues in educational psychology and educational research. To them, I had arrived as a scholar by being published in *AERJ*. To me it was a one-off, as the British say, something I did only once with no intention to follow up. It turned out to be anything but a “one-off,” however, as I became much more involved with AERA through membership and holding office in its smallest division, Division F History and Historiography. Later, in the early 1990s, I became an editor of the very *AERJ* in which I had published.

These activities, which were always a kind of career side line for me personally, constituted a side line that earned me rather substantial, though I am not sure merited, status with my departmental colleagues. This was especially though not exclusively the case with the educational statisticians. That AERA was a side interest for me was born out last year when, faced with a moment of truth in terms of my professional affiliations, I let my AERA membership drop. It was by far the most expensive of my memberships and it was one which I used the least in my intellectual work. I didn't, and don't, read AERA journals, including *AERJ*, regularly although occasionally I find something of interest there. The AERA meeting, which is better described I think as a circus, became increasingly difficult for me personally. I just didn't have the stomach for it anymore.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of GERA, I have a more checkered history. I have always been aware of

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<sup>2</sup> Ironically, I will attend AERA this spring in Montreal. My reasons for attending, however, have little to do with AERA per se. Rather, I am going to receive the Raywid Award for achievement in educational research from the Society of Professors of Education, a long-time organization of educational scholars which has found continued life as a special interest group of AERA.

GERA, though I probably have attended at most three meetings before this one.

My awareness came from the influential activities of my GSU colleagues, John Neel and Bill Curlette, in the founding and early development of GERA. In my seven years as head of the Department of Educational Foundations, I was called upon to help financially with GERA a time or two and, I hope, responded appropriately. I have published one article in a GERA publication, in 1989, taken from my larger biographical study of Horace Mann Bond.<sup>3</sup> Curiously, but perhaps also revealingly, it is only with the infusion of qualitative researchers such as Don Livingston into GERA, I think, that I have been invited to give this keynote address. John Neel, Bill Curlette, and I can have a good discussion about this observation over a beer sometime.

What then does a historian have to say to a group of educational researchers, both quantitative and qualitative, at the dawn of the twenty first century? That is the question I want to discuss with you today. I will begin by telling you a bit about the Educational Policies Commission (EPC), its members, the sources I am using to study it, its birth and development (mostly its early development) and the themes of its early work, and finally how I have come to the point of considering it worthy of a major intellectual effort on my part (that is formally answering the question posed in the title of this address).

#### EDUCATIONAL POLCIES COMMISSION: MEMBERS

In its thirty two year existence from 1936 to 1968, the EPC had over 170 members. Members were either ex-officio or chosen by vote of the Executive Committees of the National Education Association and the American Association of

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne J. Urban, The Georgia Career of Horace Mann Bond, Georgia Educational Researcher 6 (August, 1989).

School Administrators, the two groups that sponsored the EPC. The ex-officio members were the presidents of the NEA and the AASA respectively, the Executive Secretaries of the two groups, and the Secretary of the EPC itself, who was also a member of the NEA staff.<sup>4</sup> The other members were most often k-12 educators, chosen for their prominence in the educational profession or in the National Education Association. Professors of Education in colleges and universities comprised a significant, small sub-group of the larger group of educators. Another small group was made up of individuals from outside of the schools but not outside of the area of education: college and university presidents and higher education association officials such as James Bryant Conant of Harvard University, Edward Day of Cornell University, and George Zook of the American Council on Education. The final, and smallest, group was made up of prestigious, and politically influential, lay members such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ralph Bunche. The interaction between the school people, the college presidents, and the lay people provides fascinating insight into k-12-higher education relations and the larger political arena in which education functioned.

I am in the process of trying to construct a data base of EPC members, which I will use to compile a group biography of EPC members. Categories that I intend to include in the data base are place of birth, geographical residence, occupational position held, political party, and religious affiliation. I am not sure what I am looking for here,

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<sup>4</sup> Others served in an ex-officio role for some of the EPC's history. For example, the United States Commissioner of Education was a member in the early years and the President of the NEA's Department of Classroom Teachers, and the President of other Departments, were members after the late 1940s.

but other historians studying topics as diverse as college student activists and women teachers in New Zealand, have constructed similar data bases.<sup>5</sup>

#### EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMISSION: SOURCES

I thought a brief word about sources might be of interest to this audience, as it shows something about how a historian conducts research. Historians typically divide their sources into the categories of primary and secondary, indicating with the adjectives the degree of closeness of the source to the events and actors being studied. Primary sources are generally first hand accounts of events, preferably by actors engaged in those events. For the EPC, the major primary sources are both published and unpublished. In the former category are the publications of the EPC and the reports and discussions of it in publications of the National Education Association such as its journal and its annual *Proceedings*.<sup>6</sup> In the unpublished category, the NEA Archives in Washington, D.C. contains over fifty boxes of records relating to the Educational Policies Commission, many of which are made up of verbatim records of the actual meetings of the EPC. This is an incredibly rich source, though the verbatim accounts merit a careful, and thus a somewhat slow, reading. In about eighty hours of work in the archives thus far, I have gone through about half of these records, bringing myself up from the first meetings in 1936 to those of the early 1950s. My brief account of EPC activities will, thus, concentrate on the early years, though I mention the later years in passing.

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<sup>5</sup> See Charles M. Levi, *Comings and Goings: University Students in Canadian Society, 1854-1973* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1970). The work on New Zealand women teachers is by Kay Morris Mathews; it is not yet published.

<sup>6</sup> The *Journal of Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association* has been published annually throughout the twentieth century. This publication, an incredibly rich source on diverse educational topics, includes verbatim record of the discussion of issues and resolutions at the annual NEA convention, as well as a record of the reports of the various sub-groups that made up the NEA, including the American Educational Research Association. The AERA became independent about the same time that the EPC died.

Another set of primary sources are those records of EPC meetings and deliberations, and the discussions of those events, that exist in the papers of EPC members. I know that the James B. Conant papers at Harvard University contain some EPC materials and I am hopeful that the Eisenhower papers at his presidential library will also be helpful. While these records may duplicate what is in the NEA Archives, they also may contain correspondence between EPC members that is not in Washington. I will try and find whatever relevant materials exist and make sure that I review them.

In the arena of secondary sources, discussions of the Educational Policies Commission that interpret the actions of that group through a study of its primary sources, the record is sparse. Edgar B. Wesley's centennial history of the National Education Association, published in 1957, contains a discussion of the EPC that is basically descriptive and not evaluative or interpretive.<sup>7</sup> Dissertations on the EPC abound, but, again, are often marred by an uncritical perspective.<sup>8</sup> One dissertation completed at Rutgers University in the 1970s is interpretive, but the interpretation is flawed by its outright approval of the EPC in almost all of its particulars.<sup>9</sup>

#### EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMISSION: BIRTH AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The EPC was founded in December of 1935. The reason for its birth was that the National Education Association and its most prestigious department or sub-group, the Department of Superintendence (later the American Association of School

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<sup>7</sup> Edgar B. Wesley, *NEA: The First Hundred Years* (New York: Harper, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> Walter D. Stills, *The Educational Policies Commission: A Leadership Organ in American Education*, Ed. D. Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, TN, no date, is an example of a detailed account of the EPC, but an account which contains little interpretation of its activities.

<sup>9</sup> Paul James Ortenzio, *The Problem of Purpose in American Education: The Rise and Fall of the Educational Policies Commission*, Ed. D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 1977. Ortenzio is so intent on approving the EPC and the educational progressivism that he sees it as representing that he largely ignores any weaknesses or problems in the EPC and its activities.



Administrators[AASA]) were gravely concerned about the threat to the public schools that had been created by the Great Depression of the 1930s. The body which proposed creation of the Educational Policies Commission was the Joint Committee on the Emergency in Education, which had been established in February of 1933 by the NEA and its Department of Superintendence.<sup>10</sup> The Joint Commission on the Emergency's tasks were to highlight the financial crisis created for the public schools by the Great Depression that had begun in 1929, and to signal a way out of that financial crisis, if possible.<sup>11</sup> For the Joint Commission, the solution to the crisis was a fiscal equity program spearheaded by a federal initiative to equalize revenues between poorer and richer states. According to the Secretary of the EPC for twenty years, its major purpose was "to help the schools to sustain morale and to meet the most catastrophic effects of the depression."<sup>12</sup>

In response to this proposal, in December of 1935 an Educational Policies Commission was appointed by the executive committees of the sponsoring entities, the National Education Association and the NEA Department of Superintendence. Its first organizational meeting was held in January of 1936 and its task was defined as "evolving well-considered and effective plans and policies." The EPC noted that there were substantial amounts of data relevant to this evolution already extant, and added: "The Commission proposes not to repeat these studies and investigations but rather to utilize

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<sup>10</sup>The Department of Superintendence, which later became known as the American Association of School Administrators, was a powerful network of school administrators that functioned under the NEA umbrella, but wielded an overwhelming amount of influence in NEA affairs.

<sup>11</sup>On the Joint Commission on the Emergency, see Edgar B. Wesley, *NEA: The First Hundred Years*, pp. 301-02, and Wayne Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations* (New York: Routledge/Falmer), p. 52.

<sup>12</sup>William G. Carr, *The Continuing Education of William Carr* (Washington, D.C.: The National Education Association, 1978): p. 48.

them in evaluating proposed procedures toward educational progress and improvement.”<sup>13</sup>

The EPC then specified several current critical issues which it intended to address, including school finance, educational agencies that had been established outside of schools to serve youth (the National Youth Administration [NYA] and the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] both created by the Roosevelt Administration), and the relationship of education to the social reconstruction that would follow the end of the depression. In this last regard, the report noted that “the next five years should be a period of great significance in the rebuilding of the structure of public education; of reestablishing, in the minds of citizens, those great purposes to which public education was originally dedicated; of recreating public enthusiasm for the American ideal, not only in education, but in regard to all matters pertaining to social progress.”<sup>14</sup> Here the EPC was emphasizing social reconstruction as a priority that might take precedence over either fiscal equity or school improvement as a goal. Another discussion of the EPC founding also notes that the group clearly intended to relate “educational problems to their economic, social, and political settings,” meaning that an important educational policy always was a policy with important social implications. This too suggests that social reconstruction, as much as or more than emphasis on educational equity or school improvement, was at the forefront of the EPC’s program. And social reconstructionism was a major emphasis of the EPC in its first five years of existence, 1936-1941. It produced five major reports in that period, and the first and last of these five were clearly in the reconstructionist vein.

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<sup>13</sup> *NEA Proceedings*, (1936): pp. 463-64

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

The first of the five was the most significant for the EPC, as it declared a political agenda that the group would subscribe to for the next five years. That volume, *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy*, was largely the work of the noted American historian Charles A. Beard.<sup>15</sup> In the early pages of the report, the Commission acknowledged that Beard was “the man best qualified for the task [of outlining education’s democratic function] by scholarship, social insight, and devotion to democratic institutions.”<sup>16</sup> While the report looked back, immediately, to the depression as its setting, it looked much further back historically, for its inspiration. The early chapters described the significance of education for the revolutionary-era generation of American political leaders, and then showed how that significance was extended by their successors in the Jacksonian era and the Civil War and Post-Civil War periods. The point of all of this was at least threefold: to establish the intimate relationship between education and American democracy, to prepare the reader for the discussion in the later chapters of the substantial changes that had taken place in American society since World War I, and to show that the activism of the New Deal Roosevelt administration had historic antecedents that made it an appropriate response to the changes in conditions. Those changes were such that, since World War I, and more particularly given the cataclysm of the depression, “The Assurance of Democratic Society [is] No Longer Taken for Granted.”<sup>17</sup> Education, for Beard in this report, was now charged with the

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<sup>15</sup>Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the Department of Superintendence, *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy* (Washington, DC.C.: The Commission, 1937). All EPC publications did not credit a single author. Beard was acknowledged as the preparer of the first draft of this report on its Acknowledgment page (no number).

<sup>16</sup>Acknowledgment, [unnumbered page], *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy*.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 90.

social task of consciously building the foundations of American democracy in a period when that democracy was imperiled.

Beard's discussion was directed to the point that the public schools in the late depression and post-depression eras must be politically autonomous. Autonomy was necessary for education to provide a countervailing power to the undemocratic influences arrayed against democracy in American life. While Beard was somewhat cryptic in identifying these powers, readers of his other works<sup>18</sup> in this period know that he was aligned with other liberal scholars and activists against the powerful private business interests that had fought the New Deal program and opposed its attempts to grapple actively with the depression of the 1930s. Further, much of Beard's text in *The Unique Function* was devoted to establishing historically the interest of the national government in democracy and democratic education, thereby signaling the report's agreement with the New Deal and its implacable opposition to the reactionary forces that opposed it.

The next few reports of the EPC took Beard's ideological focus and tried to apply it a bit more directly to schools affairs. One of those reports was on school administration, another was on educational purposes, and a third was on the relationship of education to economics. The fifth report on the EPC's first five years returned to the ideological and reconstructionist emphasis of Charles Beard. This report was by a noted educator and leader of the social reconstructionist wing of the educational progressives in the 1930s who was also a member of the Educational Policies Commission, George S. Counts. His work, *The Education of Free Men in American Democracy* saw a very different situation from the one that Beard had confronted. Counts replaced the primacy

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<sup>18</sup>For example, see Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913) or Beard, *The Economic Basis of Politics* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1923).

of the threat of the domestic foes of democracy identified in the Beard report with the international danger posed by the political regimes of the Soviet Union, Italy, and Germany in the late 1930s. These despotic regimes had gained the allegiance of much of their citizenry, largely through astute appeals to the cultivation of a blind, national solidarity. A truly democratic nation, in the midst of this type of propagandistic cultivation of the loyalty of the citizens of nations implacably opposed to democracy, had to make a new commitment to an invigorated democratic tradition that would instill the “loyalties of free men” in its own citizenry. To accomplish this end, education must take on a “moral character” in which the schools recognized that “Democracy is a vast and complex cultural achievement in the sphere of human relations and social values.”<sup>19</sup> This challenge was crucial to the survival of American democracy, and that survival was dependent on its educational institutions.

Specifically, Counts noted that the schools needed to “moderate the egoistic tendencies and strengthen the social and cooperative impulses of the rising generation.” This meant an enormously important role for the teacher. Specifically, “the teacher-pupil role is the vital element in all education” and “it is imperative that this relationship be marked not only by complete integrity and honesty but also by a spirit of mutual confidence, respect, and even affection.” Thus, in spite of Counts’s own commitment to liberal politics and social reconstruction, his analysis in *Education for Free Men* located the solution to the problems primarily in the public schools, not in the federal government or elsewhere in the larger society. This allowed his avowed internationalism and radicalism to be easily harnessed to the agenda of schoolmen possessing no such views but committed to the centrality of their institution in waging an international conflict.

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<sup>19</sup>*The Education of Free Men in American Democracy*, pp. 50, 48.

Also, given that World War II began while the Counts volume was being written, and that the United States would enter that conflict in the same year in which it was published, 1941, the Counts report proved to be the first step in the Educational Policies Commission's commitment to the utmost importance of international affairs for the proper conduct of American education. That commitment would grow during the war years, and intensify with the creation of the United Nations and development of that body's educational activities and organizations.<sup>20</sup>

Internationalism would constitute the third phase of the EPC's activities, taking center stage as World War II drew to a close and lasting for a few years until it became entwined with a cold war anticommunism in the late 1940s. In between Counts's work and the cold war anti-communism, the EPC took a mainly educational focus in its second phase of work, which lasted from 1940 through 1947. That emphasis was initially placed on the topic of citizenship education, perhaps the only school related topic that could be linked to both the political radicalism of social reconstructionism and the internationalism of George Counts. As those of you in the audience should not be surprised to find out, there was also a financial context to the civic education work. The EPC, financed initially by a five-year grant from the General Education Board, managed to obtain an additional, and substantial, grant from the GEB for a large study of civic education in 1940.<sup>21</sup>

In the World War II years, the EPC continued its emphasis on school matters, as well as a focus on war-related issues, both of which took it far away from its social

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<sup>20</sup> For an initial effort on this topic, see my 2003 History of Education Society Paper, International Education and an International Teachers' Organization: William G. Carr, UNESCO, and the World Confederation of the Organized Teaching Profession.

<sup>21</sup> The GEB gave \$50,000 for the civic ed. study, *Learning the Ways of Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators, 1940).

reconstructionist emphasis of its early years.<sup>22</sup> As the war ended, the EPC embraced the internationalism of the newly formed United Nations, especially its educational branch, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). In the late 1940s, the EPC became embroiled in the Cold War-related issue of communism in the schools. It tried to be responsive both to the attacks on communism and to the defense of traditional liberties by calling for the dismissal of communist teachers in the schools and, at the same time, by defending the academic freedom to teach about communism.<sup>23</sup>

In the second half of the 1940s, the EPC turned its attention to the topic of the relations of the public schools to religion. It here returned to the 1930s focus of defending the public schools, though not with any socially or politically radical intent. Instead, the EPC had to confront a social situation in which the postwar climate seemed to play havoc with the moral certainties of Americans and in which the American Catholic church was moving vigorously, and with some success, to obtain public financial support for its schools. The signature report of the EPC in this period was *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools*.<sup>24</sup> Published in 1951, this report was the culmination of almost five years of discussions of the EPC on how to meet the moral crisis of the postwar world and the political challenge to public education of the Catholic Church. It tried to uphold the separation of church and state at the same time that it tried to show that the public schools

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<sup>22</sup> The most noted publication of this period was probably *Education for All American Youth* (Washington, D.C.: Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators, 1944). This work outlined a plan to transform American secondary education, exchanging the academically-oriented high school for an institution that encompassed the thirteenth and fourteenth grades and that took vocational education seriously.

<sup>23</sup> The most influential member of the EPC in this period was James Bryant Conant. Many of the policies Conant would advocate in his published works were adumbrated in EPC reports such as *Education and International Tensions* (1948). Dwight D. Eisenhower was also a member of the EPC in this period and influenced its publications in the international arena.

<sup>24</sup> Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators, *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1951).

could teach moral education in a way that would satisfy the desires of parents, many of whom were members of religious dominations, for moral training for their children. This was no mean trick and I am devoting a long paper to this report in which I explore its successes and failures in meeting these challenges.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the EPC produced a variety of reports on a variety of topics. It seems fair to say that these decades saw a gradual waning of influence of the EPC, as it turned its attention increasingly to directly school related topics such as school athletics, educational television, and the gifted. In 1968, as the National Education Association moved to establish itself as a teachers' union that would advocate for teachers as its major rival the American Federation of Teachers was doing, the EPC was dissolved.

#### EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMISSION: SIGNIFICANCE

I am finally ready to answer the question posed in the title of this address, "Why Study the Educational Policies Commission?" The easiest answer is that the Spencer Foundation has given me a two-year grant to conduct the study. But that only moves the question back a stage. Why did Spencer award the grant? As I noted in my grant proposal to Spencer, my EPC study is undertaken with the assumption, articulated most recently by the noted historian Eric Foner, that "All history, the saying goes, is contemporary history." He adds: "People instinctively turn to the past to help understand the present. Events turn our attention to previously neglected historical subjects."<sup>25</sup> This is a rather unusual perspective for me to foreground in my work, as I think I am known for institutional and biographical studies that, while they might speak to the present, do so

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<sup>25</sup>Eric Foner, A Changing History, @ *The Nation* (September 23, 2002), p.5.



only after careful and concerned scholarship that respects the reality of the past as much as, or more than, it informs the contemporary scene. I have come to the point in my career, however, where it seems to me that contemporary educational concerns, in this case the fate of the American public school, demand a history that speaks to them more directly than obliquely.

The public schools are under attack now from the White House, from the most powerful leaders and perhaps even a majority of the members of the majority party in both houses of Congress, from many of the now majority Republicans in our state government in Georgia, from religious groups in the USA and in Georgia that are gaining increasing visibility and political power, from educational policy analysts who see public schools as one of many competing educational agencies for dollars, and from well-meaning reformers who say (but I am not sure that they mean) that they only want the improvement, not the abolition, of the public school. Given these attacks, I have chosen to do research on an agency in an earlier era, the Educational Policies Commission, which saw the public schools as under significant attack and tried to construct an intellectual platform from which to answer that attack. My hope is to help energize the defenders of contemporary public education as they seek to respond effectively to the current criticisms.

And I have found in my early work that the EPC does speak in some ways to the present situation. First, the EPC speaks to me in terms of the field of educational policy itself. This field is made up of specialists in educational policy who are housed both in schools of education and in free-standing policy schools. We have both sets of actors at Georgia State University. As I have served on various committees which combine

educational policy scholars from inside and outside of the College of Education, I have been struck by the difference in commitment of these two groups. Looking at the EPC has led me to an understanding of that difference. Recall that the EPC's major commitment at its inception was to the autonomy of the public schools. One of the major connotations of that autonomy was that the public schools should not be considered simply one of many public agencies with claims on public funds. Rather, the public schools as the major agency of democracy in society deserved a separate and primary place in public funding. The EPC members were leery of people in the social sciences, especially those in public administration, since they thought that public administration as a field had insufficient regard for the importance of public education, seeing it simply as one of the many public agencies competing for attention and support.<sup>26</sup> I think the situation is quite similar in today's field of policy studies. Despite designations in policy schools of specialists in educational policy, these specialists, and these schools, see public education as one of a number of competing agencies in the public arena. We in professional education regard the public schools as a special agency deserving of special attention, and we try to give the schools that attention.

Two other issues from the EPC past speak directly to the present. The attempt of the EPC in *Moral and Spiritual Values in Education* to assert the moral role of the public schools without confounding them with denominational religion was fraught with ambiguity and controversy. Yet the volume that was finally produced constituted a

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<sup>26</sup> On the difficulties the EPC had with economists, see Volume II of the EPC Proceedings for November 27-29, 1938, pp. 145-58, in EPC Papers, Box 933, National Education Association Archives, Washington, DC. In 1945, as the EPC was discussing another issue, a long-time member warned that PH D's in social science were usually coaching politicians suspicious of the public schools. He added that the public administration specialists had refused to accept the argument in the Beard report about public schools being unique and the concomitant need for the schools to be protected from the clutches of local politics and politicians. See EPC Proceedings, September 15-17, 1945, p. 382, EPC Papers, Box 939, NEA Archives.

platform from which to assert the moral role of the public school. Our own age is again fraught with religious challenges to the public schools and charges that they are immoral or amoral. Certainly it would not hurt to pay serious attention to what the EPC accomplished in its publication and see what that accomplishment has to say to our current situation.

Another issue of concern to the EPC, the educational role of the federal government, also has current resonance. The EPC thought that federal funds were a necessity for equitable funding across the nation. They wanted that funding without federal control which, they thought, would impose an unwarranted uniformity on an institution that needed to reflect the diversity of the states and localities in the nation. It is cruelly ironic that what we have now in the No Child Left Behind Era is a situation that the EPC never contemplated: a federal government that is quite comfortable in prescribing a testing regiment that threatens, if it has not already imposed, a rigid pedagogical uniformity that is combined with a minimum financial commitment to the public schools. I want to interrogate the EPC's devotion to federal aid without strings to see if somewhere in it lays a clue to the eventual outcome of the opposite situation.

In all of these cases, as an historian I cannot let my sense of current crises distort my historical analysis of the EPC. What I can, and intend, to do, however, is to make sure that any present ramifications of that analysis are presented clearly to my readers. I hope you have found this brief session worthwhile and I hope that you may even look forward to more work on the Educational Policies Commission. Thank you.