

“Hizzhonor:” Chicago Politics Under Richard M. Daley

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Region: [USA](#)

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First the father, Richard J. (mayor from April 20, 1955 – December 20, 1976), now the son. To Chicagoans – “Hizzhonor,” and for some – “Hizzhonor Da Mare.” Authors Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor called the elder an “American Pharaoh.” For former Chicago columnist, Mike Royko, he was “Boss” in his 1971 book by that title. When he died on December 20, 1976, Royko wrote:

“If ever a man reflected a city, it was Richard J. Daley,” for better or worse. He was “strong (and) hard-driving” with Texas-sized ambitions, but also “arrogant, crude, conniving, ruthless, suspicious, intolerant, raucous, hot-tempered, devious, big and powerful.” He was Chicago.

Now the son – mayor since April 24, 1989. His official biography reads:

Now in his sixth mayoral term, “Richard M. Daley has earned a national reputation for his innovative, community-based programs (on) education, public safety, neighborhood development and other challenges facing American cities.” More on that below.

On April 25, 2005. Time magazine called him “the nation’s top urban executive.” A week earlier, it said:

“He wields near-imperial power” (in) steer(ing) the Windy City into a period of impressive stability, with declining unemployment and splashy growth.” Never mind that the facts belie the hyperbole. More on that as well.

Earlier, the Wall Street Journal praised him as “a fix-it, problem-solving man” and most recently in a February 7 interview as: “The President’s Mayor....whose personality and history are inseparable from Chicago(’s) political culture....successful and enormously popular.” He hopes bringing the 2016 Olympics to Chicago will “showcase the city (as a) gleaming tourist destination (and) At this stage in the process, the city’s bid is not just Chicago anymore. It’s the United States of America.” Indeed, and like the nation, Chicago and Illinois reek with problems, corruption, and are for sale to the highest bidders, business ones, of course.

According to the Corporate Crime Reporter, Illinois ranks sixth worst in the nation on corruption after Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Alabama and Ohio. In the wake of the governor Blagojevich scandal, The New York Times (on December 13) said Illinois has “a tradition (since the 19th century) of corruption” (because) the state’s unusually lax (campaign finance) laws” allow it, and local citizens say it’s just the way it is.

On February 3, Dick Simpson, Thomas Gradel, and Andris Zimelis (below Simpson et al) from the University of Illinois Chicago's Political Science Department published: "Curing Corruption in Illinois – Anti-Corruption Report Number 1."

They call it "an unfortunate aspect of Illinois (and Chicago) politics for a century and a half," in citing one example after another – like former secretary of state Paul Powell's \$800,000 stash found in shoe boxes when he died, 13 judges caught for fixing court cases, and a state auditor's embezzlement of over \$1.5 million to buy two planes, four cars, and two homes.

Since 1972, three governors (besides Blagojevich), state legislators, two congressmen, 19 Cook County judges, 30 aldermen, and many others were convicted of corruption. In all since 1970, around 1000 public officials and businessmen were caught and convicted.

It's a tradition as far back as the 1860s, and mainly in Chicago where its large immigrant population helped politicians gain power. Needing housing and work, they turned public office into a bazaar. It's called patronage, and in return, politicians got support. Businessmen as well with bribes and payoffs for lucrative contracts, free from "troublesome city inspectors."

Former Chicago alderman Paddy Bauler said it best: "Chicago ain't ready for reform," and he was right. Richard J. Daley modernized machine politics, and while mayor, many of his subordinates were jailed. Under Richard M., the machine "simply adjusted to draw its power from interest groups, corporations, unions, and the global economy instead of ethnic communities." Everything changes, yet stays the same.

The 2004 – 05 Hired Truck Program involved private trucks for city work, but was phased out after a Chicago Sun-Times investigation uncovered companies being paid for little or no work and having mob and city officials' ties. Daley's patronage chief Robert Sorich was involved. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to 46 months in prison with US District Court Judge David Coar saying he ran a corruption operation "with a capital C."

Simpson et al calls Chicago "a one-party system where Democrats control the city" but govern like Republicans. They also explained that while many Daley aides were convicted of corruption, "neither father or son" was ever indicted. Yet, "corruption continues unabated in city, county, suburban, and state" politics. Paddy Bauler was right, and it's no different today. Here's more:

- the FBI's Operation Safebet investigation into political corruption and organized crime's control of prostitution throughout metropolitan Chicago snared over 75 individuals;

- Operation Gambat targeted First Ward connections to organized crime with 24 individuals convicted or pleading guilty;

- Operation Incubator on City Hall corruption involved bribes to win city contracts for collecting unpaid parking tickets and water bills; convicted were four aldermen, a former state senator, a deputy water commissioner, and an aide to former Mayor Harold Washington;

- Operation Greylord into Chicago's court system netted 87 court personnel and attorney convictions and guilty pleas, including 13 judges;

- Operation Haunted Hall about City Hall ghost payrolls yielded 38 indictments and 35

convictions, including four aldermen, a Cook County treasurer, and a state senator;

- Operation Silver Shovel probed city government and netted 18 convictions and guilty pleas from public employees and six aldermen;

- Operation Board Games into public corruption of insider deals, peddling, and kickbacks involving state government boards; and

- much more systemic corruption for decades, including under both Daleys.

Simpson et al explained while corruption permeates Illinois, “the most notorious and persistent (kinds are in) Chicago(’s) City Council.” The guilty aldermen range from “bumblers (to) the most brilliant (and powerful) politicians” like Tom Keane and Richard J. Daley’s floor leader, “Fast Eddie” Vrdolyak.

In the past 35 years, 30 alderman were indicted and convicted of bribery, extortion, embezzlement, conspiracy, mail fraud, and income tax evasion – three Republicans and 26 Democrats. Three others were indicted. Two died before going to trial, and the other was too sick to proceed. Several others weren’t indicted but resigned after media investigations.

“In most cases, the Chicago political machine taught the crooked aldermen the fine art of graft.” They learned from the grassroots up. “They saw political officials amass power and get rich over time by playing the game, keeping quiet, and delivering votes and campaign funds for the party.” Locally, heads only rolled if exposed in the media. “The Cook County States Attorney or Illinois Attorney General almost never investigated or prosecuted political corruption.” The task fell to federal attorneys, postal inspectors, FBI, and IRS agents.

The convicted are a who’s who in Chicago and state politics, and the game is as old as the system – “Pay-to-Play” and “quid pro quo” with the latter very hard to prove, but it made millionaires out of the players.

These crimes persisted for decades, so it’s clear Chicago and Illinois house “a thriving culture of corruption.” Fixing something this embedded will take decades of committed change, no simple task after a century and a half of plundering public coffers for personal gain.

Simpson et al put it this way:

“Corruption is not funny (or) free. It costs taxpayers more than \$300 million a year. (What’s called) ‘The Chicago Way’ has also undermined the sense of political efficacy in voters. Why apply for a city or state job if you know only patronage employees or politicians’ relatives will be hired anyway? Why report corrupt officials, if you know they won’t be punished (unless the Feds do it), and they may turn the powers of government on you?”

Voters become apathetic because they know the “fix is in.” After a tradition of corruption, it’s time “to become the land of Lincoln rather than the land of “Where’s Mine.”

Richard M. Daley’s Machine

Simpson and four associates (Ola Adeoye, Daniel Bliss, Kevin Navratil, and Rebecca Raines) wrote earlier about “The New Daley Machine: 1989 – 2004” and compared it to the old one under his father – from 1955 – 1976.

Elder Daley's was characterized by "patronage, slate-making, and alliances" to Chicago's business community. Richard M.'s new version continues some of the old ways, "but patronage precinct captains are supplemented by candidate-based, synthetic campaigns using large sums of money from the global economy to purchase professional political consultants, public opinion polls, paid television ads, and direct mail."

In government, it's enforced by a "rubber stamp city council and public policies that benefit the new global economy more than the older developer" one. From 1955 to the present, two Daleys, father and son, have run Chicago for over 40 years and show no sign of stepping down with Richard M. a still youthful 66 and likely to run for a seventh term in February 2011.

He solidified power with strong business and trade union backing, especially from construction, real estate, finance, law, lobbying, and tourism related interests. His "regime is composed of traditional (rubber stamp city council backing along with) developers, city contractors, construction unions, real estate firms (plus) major contributors from the new global (economy), including banks, lawyers, and international manufacturing firms."

Combined, it's less democracy and more centralized power under the new "Chicago Machine." In city council votes, mayoral support runs about 90%. In elections, it's mainly from Whites and Latinos who are rewarded for their backing.

An old-fashioned political machine runs city precincts and the government, but private business instituted important changes. One is "turning over major public decisions either entirely to the private sector (with minimal government supervision) or to quasi-independent governmental agencies appointed by the mayor and governor."

In the 1990s, Chicago, like other cities, renovated a corporate-centered downtown and expanded its service economy. It became "the Midwest capital of the global economy," for example in tourism and conventions with millions of annual visitors and growing annual tax revenues as a result. "Most tourist, convention, and major development decisions are made behind closed doors with little public input" and considerable private sector influence. On the one hand, business greatly benefits at the discretion of an imperial mayor heading a powerful Chicago Machine.

It's active in elections where it crushes a "poorly organized opposition. In the 2003 aldermanic elections, all but five (of 50) incumbents were re-elected, most by landslide totals, and those that lost (got) tepid machine support in the face of strong community opposition." At the same time, ward committeemen won in "mostly uncontested romps."

With less power than his father, Richard M. still runs Chicago unchallenged. Democrats dominate city politics. The last Republican mayor ("Big Bill" Thompson) left office in 1931. The Great Depression ended their rule when Anton Cermak took over, built a strong constituency among African Americans, and consigned Republicans to small pockets on the city's far northwest side and suburban growth post-war.

As for regaining power in Chicago, they face "the prospect of a long wait," according to one observer. Democrats are well entrenched, and business loves them. Why not, they're more Republican than Republicans and voters hardly notice. They should as topics below explain.

Growing Poverty in Chicago

Last year, the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (HA) prepared a “2008 Report on Illinois Poverty: Chicago Area Snapshot.” It quotes federal poverty monetary threshold guidelines (FPL). In each case, they’re woefully inadequate, given the city’s true cost of living. FPLs are:

- \$10,400 for a single person;
- \$14,400 for a family of two;
- \$17,600 for three;
- \$21,200 for four; and
- \$24,800 for five.

From 1980 – 2008, greater Chicago experienced a 114.5% increase in poverty. Up to last year, it affected 400,000 suburban residents and over 570,000 Chicagoans or 21.2% of the population. Given the global economic crisis and massive monthly job losses, these numbers are rising dramatically at a time basic necessities like food, housing, health care, energy costs, and more are less affordable for many.

Like most major cities, Chicago is greatly impacted. HA reports 977,320 Chicagoans as low income poor and 1.2 million “at risk of experiencing poverty,” meaning they struggle daily to meet basic needs and are dangerously close to the edge. One negative event (like job loss) alone can push them over.

Latinos and especially blacks are far more impoverished than whites. Women are more affected than men. So are children, the disabled, one wage-earner households, and anyone “without education past high school.” One-fourth of Chicagoans have no health insurance. Being employed is no guarantee against poverty. Over 56,000 full-time workers are impoverished and nearly 210,000 part-time ones. From 2000 – 2006 alone, when adjusted for inflation, Chicagoans’ median annual household income declined by \$3515 besides greater erosion since the 1970s. The changing job market and lost benefits are to blame, and conditions keep worsening with one-third of all northeastern Illinois jobs classified as “low-wage service” ones.

Affordable housing is shrinking, and the percent of renters paying over half their income for shelter rose substantially from 2000 – 2006 to around 30% of the population, leaving fewer resources for other needs. Critically important is that “the vast majority” of people needing help get none. Since 2000, under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, welfare rolls dropped 77%, meaning tens of thousands of Chicagoans are on their own and can’t make it. Less housing aid is also provided because vouchers from nine of the 12 Public Housing Authorities aren’t available. For many, the situation is critical.

The result is extreme poverty is rising. It reached almost 10% in 2006 and now is much higher given the economic crisis. In January, Feeding America (FA) reported that Obama’s economic stimulus plan provides nothing for the hungry when growing numbers are needy and desperate.

Chicago and other city food banks report a 30% demand increase for their services. Many are newly unemployed, currently don’t qualify for food stamps, or are waiting for benefits to

be approved. FA's president, Vicki Escarra, said "Americans are going hungry, we're in crisis," and government help isn't forthcoming. "Food banks are on the front lines feeding people," so they're typically an early warning sign of what's to come. In December, 70% of them couldn't meet community needs, and that percentage is rising as resources can't match demand.

In a December report, Chicago Community Trust reported that local conditions are far worse than a year earlier:

- 6000 Chicagoans face homelessness each month;
- 350,000 Cook County residents depend on food pantries to survive; tens of thousands more monthly are joining them; 625,000 rely on food stamps;
- 440,000 Illinois workers are unemployed and more layoffs are announced daily; and
- metropolitan area home foreclosures doubled from autumn 2007 to autumn 2008.

The Decline of Public Housing in Chicago

Last July, the Chicago Tribune ran a lengthy report on "Public housing limbo" in which it asked "What went wrong with Chicago's grand experiment." Thousands of families were displaced despite hundreds of millions of dollars spent after the Daley administration let private developers shape public housing's future for the city's poor under the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Plan for Transformation.

CHA calls it "a blueprint for positive change (to) improve the appearance, quality and culture of (Chicago's) public housing." Tribune reporters Jason Grotto, Laurie Cohen and Sara Olkon called it a "virtual giveaway of public land" so real estate developers could displace poor residents and gentrify neighborhoods for profit. In the past decade, Chicago saw a surge in upscale development with many working-class and poor neighborhoods transformed for the well-off.

In the 1960s, sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term "gentrification" to describe the invasion of middle and upper income households into areas no longer affordable for the poor. Upscale condos replaced low-cost housing with people displaced to what Marquitta Campbell discovered – substandard construction, leaky ceilings, mold, awful odors, and much more making new quarters worse than the old ones.

Also low-cost housing proceeded slowly and got bogged down by bureaucracy, politics, and complex financing made all the worse by today's crisis. With a glut of unsold upscale properties, developers won't build low-profit ones for the poor.

The result is thousands of displaced Chicagoans have waited years for new public housing, and since 2001 no new applicants have been accepted. The trend goes far beyond Chicago in the wake of the Bush administration prodding dozens of cities to adopt similar plans to dump their poor, shift them to shoddy new buildings, and concentrate on gentrifying neighborhoods for profit.

Recently, many projects stalled as the economy faltered, but it hit Chicago hardest. Under ambitious Daley plans, it undertook the nation's largest public housing redevelopment with the idea of reshaping the city and enriching builders.

Stateway Gardens was typical. It was once some of the nation's worst public housing. It's demolition made it prime real estate for Allison Davis, a developer with close Daley ties. His Park Boulevard project is close to US Cellular Field, home of the White Sox, but it's in trouble. Construction bogged down and one development team member went bankrupt.

At Plan for Transformation's launching, Daley vowed to replace Chicago public housing eyesores with 25,000 new units for the poor. But housing advocates worried that displacing thousands quickly spelled trouble, and so it has. Horizontal ghettos replaced vertical ones, made up mainly of impoverished black families.

Daley promised to "rebuild lives." Meanwhile, demolition proceeded, new construction slowed, and stringent employment rules and background checks prevented most residents from returning to refurbished neighborhoods. Most took federal housing vouchers, were told they'd be back in five years, were forced to move numerous times since the plan started, and are no closer now to getting new housing than before.

Stateway Gardens was supposed to be a bustling neighborhood with new buildings, businesses, and a renaissance for Chicago's South Side. Instead, most of the 33-acre site is vacant with dirt and brick pallets astride unfinished sidewalks and homes.

The Daley administration approved the plan to mix public housing with for-sale condos in the same buildings. It required selling market-rate homes first. Under financing terms, developers can't build affordable housing until it's pre-sold half its upper-scale units. When housing peaked and imploded, so did construction for the poor.

One development team promised to build 439 public housing units by September 2008. The number so far is 53 and no new development is planned. For its part, Chicago's CHA offered free land and paid to clean up property and tear down old high-rises. The city also spent millions for new roads, water pipes and sewers.

If housing stayed healthy, developers stood to profit handsomely with all kinds of sweeteners at public and former residents' expense. They donate heavily to the Machine and are well compensated in return. As for the poor, Francine Washington summed it up saying: "The only thing wrong with Park Boulevard is the management." City government as well the way it always is.

Chicago: "The National Capital of Police Repression"

That's how Frank Donner characterized Chicago in his 1990 book "Protectors of Privilege." As an ACLU attorney, he explained how city police and US intelligence agencies targeted alleged internal subversion, and while it operated "was the outstanding example of its kind in the United States (in terms of) size, number, and range of targets or operational scope and diversity."

He referred to "wide-open, no-holds-barred style surveillance" unmatched anywhere in the country. For years, "Chicago-style official vigilantism (waged) guerrilla warfare against substantial sectors of the city's population." He called it "institutionalized aggression, unique in the annals of any American city. Its (methods) were flamboyantly illegal and in many instances criminal."

Law enforcement employed intimidation, physical confrontation, and outright abuse. That

was then. What about now. CNN reported that between 2002 – 2004 alone, “more than 10,000 complaints – many involving brutality and assault – were filed against Chicago police officers.” Yet only 18 of them resulted in disciplinary action, according to attorney Craig Futterman who uncovered the data while researching a client’s claim.

Diane Bond sued the city and police on charges physical and sexual assault. The administration settled for \$150,000, admitted no wrongdoing, reprimanded no officers, two were later promoted, and this case is typical of many.

For years, community activists accused the Department’s Office of Professional Standards (its investigative unit) of indifference and poor oversight. The Daley administration did nothing to change things.

On November 15, 2007, The New York Times headlined: “Chicago Police Cases Exceed Average.” Writer Susan Saulny explained that city police “are the subject of more brutality complaints per officer than the national average, and the Police Department is far less likely to pursue” them, according to a University of Chicago report titled “The Chicago Police Department’s Broken System.”

It’s detailed and damning in citing extensive abuse, a broken disciplinary and supervisory system, and a practice of impunity. Under the Daley administration (much like others that preceded him), cops can get away with anything and they do.

Listed were police brutality, illegal searches, false arrests, racial targeting, sexual abuse, shoddy investigations, a culture of silence, and apartheid justice. The data is conclusive. It:

- “demonstrates the existence of deficient disciplinary and supervisory policies;
- provides powerful evidence of deliberate indifference – the affirmative efforts that policymakers must make not to know about individual and group patterns of abuse and the egregious harm caused by (it); and
- supports several theories of causation, including demonstrating that minimally effective practices would have identified and stopped (these things instead of) encourag(ing them through a culture of indifference, silence, and impunity).”

The report called the Chicago Police a “regime of not knowing,” and accomplishing that requires considerable effort. “It (takes) a deep commitment to the machinery of denial, including denying incidents of brutality, turning a blind eye to patterns of abuse, refusing to look at data that is just a key stroke or two away, and passively encouraging a culture of silence in the face of abuse perpetrated by officers.”

As expected, those most affected are blacks, Latinos, and the city’s poor and disadvantaged. The report asks: “Does a different Constitution apply in inner city minority (and poor) communities?....How great is the loss of life, liberty, and property? The loss of hope and opportunity? The loss of family? Loss of justice? Loss of faith in our political institutions?” How important is it that Richard Daley is as silent as the police?

Why is he letting Chicago police equip 500 rank-and-file officers with military assault weapons, according to a March 25 Chicago Public Radio report? In question is the purchase of 500 M-4 semi-automatic rifles powerful enough to penetrate walls and cars, both sides of a military helmet at 600 meters, and travel up to two miles, meaning stray bullets may kill

anyone and likely will, especially in poor neighborhoods where they'll be used.

Destroying Public Education in Chicago

Under Richard Daley, Chicago took the lead in destroying public education nationally through privatization schemes for profit. Two previous articles by this writer covered them. Below is material from them.

As Chicago Public Schools (CPS) "CEO" before becoming Obama's Education Secretary, Arne Duncan

led Chicago's Renaissance 2010 Turnaround strategy for 100 new "high-performing" elementary and high schools in the city by that date. Under five year contracts, they'll "be held accountable....to create innovative learning environments" under one of three "governance structures:"

— charter schools under the 1996 Illinois Charter Schools Law; they're called "public schools of choice, selected by students and parents....to take responsible risks and create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system;" in 1997, the Illinois General Assembly approved 60 state charter schools; Chicago was authorized 30, the suburbs 15 more, and 15 others downstate. The city bent the rules, initially operated about 53 charter "campuses," and now has nearly 100.

Charter schools aren't magnet ones that require students in some cases to have special skills or pass admissions tests. However, they have specific organizing themes and educational philosophies and may target certain learning problems, development needs, or educational possibilities. In all states, they're legislatively authorized; near-autonomous in their operations; free to choose their students and exclude unwanted ones; and up to now are quasi-public with no religious affiliation. Administration and corporate schemes assure they won't stay that way because that's the sinister plan. Duncan was a key part of it, and so is his successor.

George Bush praised these schools in April 2007 when he declared April 29 through May 5 National Charter Schools Week. He said they provide more "choice," are a "valuable educational alternative," and he thanked "educational entrepreneurs for supporting" these schools around the country.

Here's what the president praised. Lisa Delpit is executive director of the Center for Urban Education & Innovation. In her capacity, she studies charter school performance and cited evidence from a 2005 Department of Education report. Her conclusion: "charter schools....are less likely than public schools to meet state education goals." Case study examples in five states showed they underperform, and are "less likely than traditional public (ones) to employ teachers meeting state certification standards."

Other underperformance evidence came from an unexpected source – an October 1994 Money magazine report on 70 public and private schools. It concluded that "students who attend the best public schools outperform most private school students, that the best public schools offer a more challenging curriculum than most private schools, and that the private school advantage in test scores is due to their selective admission policies."

Clearly a failing grade on what's spreading nationally en route to total privatization and the triumph of the market over educating the nation's youths.

In 1991, Minnesota passed the first charter school law. California followed in 1992, and it's been off to the races since. By 1995, 19 states had them, and in 2007 there were over 4000 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia with more than one million students in them and growing.

Chicago's two other "governance structures" are:

- contract (privatized) schools run by "independent nonprofit organizations;" they operate under a Performance Agreement between the "organization" and Board of Education; and
- performance schools under Chicago Public Schools (CPS) management "with freedom and flexibility on many district initiatives and policies;" unmentioned is Delay's close ties to the Bush and Obama administrations and their preference for marketplace education; the idea isn't new, but it accelerated rapidly in recent years.

Another part of the scheme is also in play, in Chicago and throughout the country. Inner city schools are being closed. Remaining ones are neglected and decrepit. Classroom sizes are increasing, and children and parents are being sacrificed on the alter of marketplace triumphalism.

Consider recent events under Daley. Last February 27, the city's Board of Education unanimously and without discussion voted to close, relocate or otherwise target 19 public schools, fire teachers, and leave students in the cold. Thousands of parents protested, were ignored and denied access to the Board of Ed meeting where the decision came down pro forma and quick. It wasn't the first time and won't be the last. For years under the current mayor, Chicago closed or privatized more schools than anywhere else in the country, and the trend is accelerating. Since July 2001, 59 elementary and secondary schools were closed or replaced with charter or contract ones.

The trend continues in Chicago and across the country to "reform" education nationally, hand it to business profiteers, destroy teacher unions, end public education, commodify it, educate the well-off, cheat underprivileged kids, consign them to low-wage, no benefit service jobs, and end the American dream for millions.

Arne Duncan is doing it as Obama's Education Secretary with schemes like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) that became law on January 8, 2002. It succeeded the 1994 Goals 2000: Educate America Act that set eight outcomes-based goals for the year 2000 but failed on all counts to meet them. Goals 2000, in turn, goes back to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and specifically its Title I provisions for funding schools and districts with a high percentage of low-income family students.

NCLB is outrageous, and Duncan administered the worst of it in Chicago. It's long on testing, school choice, and market-based "reforms" but short on real achievement. It's built around rote learning, standardized tests, requiring teachers to "teach to the test," assessing results by Average Yearly Progress (AYP) scores, and punishing failure harshly – firing teachers and principals, closing schools and transforming them from public to charter or for-profit ones.

Critics denounce NCLB as "an endless regimen of test-preparation drills" for poor children. Others call it underfunded and a thinly veiled scheme to privatize education and transfer its costs and responsibilities from Washington to individuals and impoverished school districts. Mostly, it reflects current era thinking that anything government does business does better,

so let it. And Democrats (like Obama, Duncan and his successor) are as supportive as Republicans.

So far, NCLB renewal bills are stalled in both Houses, election year politics intervened, and final resolution will be for the new administration and 111th Congress to decide. For critics, that's positive because the law failed to deliver as promised. Its sponsors claimed it would close the achievement gap between inner city and rural schools and more affluent suburban ones. It's real aim, however, is to commodify education, end government responsibility for it, and make it another business profit center.

Obama promised to fix "the broken promises of" NCLB. Whatever's done will affect millions of students already harmed with little chance that the worst of this act will be changed. Nonetheless, National Education Association (NEA) president, Dennis Van Roekel, is hopeful that the new administration will be "the beginning of a promising new period for public education in this country."

Arne Duncan won't let it. He told Congress that NCLB funding "should be doubled within five years, and that the law must be amended to give schools the maximum amount of flexibility possible...." Repealing the law, ending the funding and privatization schemes, and fostering policies to educate all kids equally regardless of socioeconomic status is what's needed. Obama and Arne Duncan won't let it. They've consigned poor kids to the trash bin of no future.

Below are some Duncan policy initiatives, now run by new CPS "CEO," and former Chicago Transit Authority head Ron Huberman:

- using the CPS's \$5.5 billion budget for no-bid contracts to cronies for all sorts of goods and services; Huberman now recommends them to the seven-member board, and nearly always they're approved unanimously with no discussion or debate;

- militarizing Chicago high schools (perhaps most in the country) on the pretext of offering students "choice;" JROTC programs were institutionalized, and high schools were established entirely for military studies; poor minorities comprise the overwhelming majority of affected students;

- while still in Chicago, Duncan litigated to be freed from an early 1980s federal desegregation consent decree; he claimed he did everything possible to comply even though city students are predominantly black and over 90% black and Latino; Chicago has over 300 segregated black schools plus 40 or more all-Latino ones;

- Duncan opposed and litigated against federal oversight of special education programs; he violated the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ignored parents' wishes, the needs of the children, and forced teachers to go along; and

- Chicago has nearly 100 quasi-private charter schools, many of them run by for-profit companies; less than 10% of them are integrated; the city is notorious for violating the education needs of minority students; their schools are sub-standard and abysmal.

Under "Renaissance 2010," 59 public schools were closed, and 2009 plans call for shuttering at least another 22. In its February issue, Substance News headlined: "End Ren 2010! echoes across city....Chicago protests grow." Backing them against closure and privatization is an alliance of parents, teachers, students, grandparents, and community leaders. Even

cold winter mornings and nights haven't kept them off the streets – downtown outside, and inside, the Board of Education headquarters. Their mission – save Chicago public education from a rapacious scheme to privatize it.

With no background or knowledge of education, it's Ron Huberman's job to do it. As new CPS CEO, he's in charge of:

- gutting the city's public system in favor of privatization schemes for profit;
- continuing the process of militarizing them;
- neutralizing the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU);
- educating the well-off, not minorities or the poor; and
- wrecking the dream of disadvantaged kids who'll be sacrificed on the alter of marketplace education the way Richard Daley and Washington mandate.

"The President's Mayor," nationally known for his "innovative, community-based programs (on) education, public safety, neighborhood development and other challenges facing American cities." After 20 years in office, he's just months away from equaling his father's reign as Chicago's longest serving mayor.

"Hizzhonor," the most prominent of today's big city bosses with no sign of stepping down or changing decades of Chicago-style politics.

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