

***Administrative Reform in the
Progressive Era:
The Chicago Debate***

Between 1890 and 1920, every major school system in the industrial north underwent administrative reform. This reform movement was designed to produce maximum efficiency and social order. To achieve these ends, the movement sought to centralized decision-making power in the hands of powerful superintendents and small, citywide school boards comprised predominantly of successful business and professional men. A bureaucratic structure was created that limited popular representation, insulating policymakers from the demands of working and lower-middle-class interests. Although premised upon "getting politics out of the schools," administrative reform actually exchanged one political structure for another. An essentially democratic system was exchanged for an autocratic one (Hays 1964; Tyack 1974).

The national debate over political structure in the Progressive Era constitutes one of the few clear instances of such debate in American educational history. This was especially true in the case of Chicago, where the Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) and its supporters articulated an alternative political theory to the one espoused by "administrative progressives" and "corporate liberals," which formed the philosophical basis of their twenty-year campaign in opposition to centralization (Hogan 1985; Tyack 1974).

The Chicago debate centered on a conflict between two competing conceptions of democracy: the elite conception and the developmental conception. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the Chicago debate as a step, by grounding it historically, in articulating a developmental theory of school governance.

The Social, Political, and Economic Context of School Centralization

The school centralization movement was a part of a much larger social, economic, and political transformation that occurred between 1890 and 1920. The emergence of monopoly capitalism and its management philosophy, and municipal reform in accordance with this philosophy, profoundly shaped the school centralization movement.

Monopoly Capitalism

In response to the Great Depression of 1893–97, American industrialists moved to consolidate their firms into large corporations. This response was shaped by the nature of the depression. The Great Depression was precipitated by a deflation of prices, interest rates, and profits. The 1870s and 1880s saw rapid industrialization and productive output, but also intense competition. This competition resulted in a deflationary spiral that cut profits, endangering many firms (Hobsbawm 1987). The dominant view among industrialists at the time was that the consolidation of firms was necessary in order to “obviate the effects of competition” (Kolko 1963, 13). Charles Francis Adams, president of Union Pacific Railroad, characterized this view, “The principle of consolidation . . . is a necessity—a natural law of growth” (cited in Kolko 1963, 14, also note the proposition of historical inevitability implicit in this statement).

Consequently, although the Sherman Antitrust Act was enacted in 1890, rapid consolidation took place in the American economy between 1898 and 1904. Kolko points out that the antitrust legislation was enacted to regulate mergers rather than to prevent them. In 1895, only 43 firms disappeared due to mergers; however in 1898, 303 firms disappeared. In 1899, mergers peaked, with 1,028 firms disappearing. In 1900, 340 firms disappeared and 423 in 1901. From 1895 to 1904, an average of 301 firms disappeared annually, compared to 100 from 1905 to 1914 (Kolko 1963, 18–19). Consolidation was viewed as the primary way to reduce competition. It was a way to gain control over markets through oligopoly in order to insure a high rate of profit.

In addition, the consolidation movement was accelerated by the fact that huge profits were readily available for lawyers and investment bankers to put the new corporations together, like those profits garnered through hostile takeovers in the 1980s. For example, the House of Morgan made \$150 million for putting together U.S. Steel (Kolko 1963). The high rate of profit available to promoters and underwriters of mergers added powerful momentum to the

consolidation movement, irrespective of its capacity to achieve monopoly control.

Indeed, as Kolko points out, the control of the market through consolidation was limited, resulting in the need for governmental regulation of the economy. The mere size of the new corporations made them uncompetitive with smaller firms that arose out of new capital formations. Smaller firms were inherently more innovative than the large bureaucracies created through consolidation, which gave them greater adaptability to market fluctuations and made them more competitive. Without the ready ability to innovate, bureaucratic structures demand predictability; and predictability in the market place could be best ensured through governmental regulation of the economy. Consequently, corporate executives successfully lobbied for federal regulation through the establishment of such regulatory agencies as the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Reserve Board (Kolko 1963). In the process, a precedent was set for government regulation of the private sector; classical liberal economic theory and practice was replaced by corporate liberalism. This precedent not only legitimized the centralization of economic authority, but it also legitimized the centralization of authority in other social realms as well, in particular public schooling. Corporate liberalism as a social philosophy legitimized the undemocratic centralization of power on all levels of society.

The Efficiency Movement

The size and complexity of the new corporations suggested to industrialists that traditional production methods and management systems were inadequate. A need arose for a "more rational or scientific way of controlling, monitoring and programming large and profit-maximizing enterprises" (Hobsbawm 1987, 44). This need was couched in the rhetoric of "efficiency," and a new management philosophy in its name emerged as "scientific management." As Hobsbawm notes, "The 'visible hand' of modern corporate organization and management now replaced the 'invisible hand' of Adam Smith's anonymous market" (45).

From 1890 to 1920 an efficiency craze hit the United States. One of the main preachers of efficiency was Frederick W. Taylor, whose system of "scientific management" gave concrete expression to the secular gospel. In general, scientific management was more a managerial philosophy than a practice in the sense that Taylor's complete system achieved only limited application, whereas its basic principles had a far-reaching impact (Montgomery 1979). As Bendix

(1963, 281) points out, “the social philosophy rather than the techniques of scientific management became a part of prevailing ideology.” This philosophy can be summarized in terms of four basic principles:

1. centralized planning
2. systematic and detailed task analysis
3. detailed instruction and supervision
4. incentive wage payment systems (Montgomery 1979; Haber 1964).

Although some scholars tend to view the reorganization of work under scientific management as an inevitable result of the logic of technological development (e.g., Chandler 1977; Haber 1964), just as consolidation and governmental regulation were viewed as inevitable results of a competitive free market, others maintain that it was a strategy freely chosen in order to ensure a greater degree of control in an ongoing struggle between management and workers over production authority (e.g., Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1978; Montgomery 1979). The latter view is supported by Sabel and Zeitlin (1985), who argue that the emergence of mass production was not the inevitable result of the logic of industrial development, but that mass production was chosen among other alternatives on the basis of power considerations. They argue that there was a craft alternative to mass production as a model of technological advancement, that technologically vital firms on the economic periphery served as alternative models of production. Mass production and the use of rationalized systems of work organization (scientific management) were not inevitable developments determined by the march of economic history. They were strategies that management employed to usurp control of the production process in order to increase profits and undermine labor militancy.

Central to scientific management was the view that efficiency was contingent upon complete managerial control of production. Control, in turn was based upon knowledge, or as Braverman (1974) points out, the separation of the “conception and execution” of production. The judgment of the individual worker was to be replaced by the laws and principles of the job developed by management through time and motion study. Taylor’s system was designed to usurp the knowledge dimension of the job and turn workers into mechanized implementors. In contrast to mass production techniques, where knowledge was centralized in the technology and organization

of the assembly line, scientific management developed as a form of job organization, which centralized knowledge in the manager *qua* planner. If workers were reduced to mere implementors with a severely limited knowledge base, management would have complete control of the production process. From this perspective, efficiency was inseparable from control (Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1978; Edwards 1979; Montgomery 1979).

Some scholars (e.g., Braverman 1974) maintain that scientific management was successful in its attempt to monopolize the knowledge base of production. A number of other scholars (e.g., Barrett 1983; Burawoy 1978; Edwards 1979; Montgomery 1979; Nelson 1975) maintain, however, that the workers' response to scientific management was not docility and obedience, but rather constituted attempts to articulate and apply their own versions of rationalization that would enable them to retain control of the production process. In reaction to the school centralization proposal, which was based upon the principles of scientific management, teachers articulated their own administrative philosophy in an attempt to retain control of the educational process as well.

The managerial system based upon the principles of scientific management was not only conducive to managerial control of the production process, but it was also completely compatible with large-scale organization born of consolidation. As Hays (1980) points out, as the scope and scale of organizations increased, there was a tendency toward the centralization of decision making. Scientific management was in complete accordance with this tendency and it was present not only in business but also in municipal government.

Municipal Reform

The standard interpretation of municipal reform in the Progressive Era maintains that good government triumphed over the corrupt alliance of machine politicians and special interests. However, Samuel Hays provides a convincing argument for the view that municipal reform was motivated by the desire of business, professional, and upper-class groups to gain control of city government. "Reformers, therefore, wished not simply to replace bad men with good, they proposed to change the occupational and class origins of decision-makers. Toward this end they sought innovations in the formal machinery of government which would concentrate political power by sharply centralizing the processes of decision-making rather than distribute it through more popular participation in public affairs" (1964, 162).

Before the Progressive reforms, city government was comprised of “confederations of local wards, each of which was represented on the city’s legislative body” (Hays 1964, 160). In this decentralized system, city councilmembers were representatives of ward interests, which usually were the interests of lower- and working-class groups. However, as the scale and scope of business firms grew, the ward system came under fire on the grounds that it did not pay enough attention to the city as a whole. Business growth demanded an infrastructure that covered the whole city, including physical plant and social welfare concerns (Hays 1964; Tyack 1974). Hays argues (164) that the political corruption (graft) seen in this era was the result of powerful groups being denied access to formal power and not as the product of “evil men.” In order to gain legitimate power, businessmen moved to reform the system by changing the structure of government and the selection of public officials.

Their model for reform was the business corporation. It was widely believed that government should be run like a business. Businessmen knew how to run large-scale organizations efficiently. As Haber points out, those who favored governmental efficiency “found scientific management a corroborative and invigorating idea” (1964, 116). Centralized authority in the hands of an administrative expert (city manager) or powerful mayor was in keeping with the tenets of scientific management and the interests of the business community.

Municipal reform generally took on one of three forms:

1. a commission plan where executive power was centralized in a board of five individuals;
2. city manager plans; and
3. city-wide election of city councils with strong mayoral power (mostly in large cities).

All of these forms centralized decision-making power, thereby limiting the influence of the majority of voters among the middle- and lower-income groups (Hays 1964), who, with the advent of large-scale immigration, were predominantly immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Municipal reform was a struggle between mutually exclusive systems of decision making: one decentralized and representative, the other centralized and autocratic. Whereas industrialists sought consolidation in order to gain control of markets and scientific management to gain control of the production process, municipal

reformers sought centralization to gain control of the political system. Industrialists, promoters of scientific management, and municipal reformers all represented the same class interests, and their reforms were intended to serve those interests.

Urban School Centralization

Urban school reformers also sought a fundamental change in the structure and process of decision making (Tyack 1974), a change in keeping with the centralization movement in business and municipal government. Progressive reformers sought to “take schools out of politics” by shifting decision making upward and inward in hierarchical administrative systems (Tyack and Hansot 1982, 107). The conflicts of value, debate, and democratic representation were viewed as inefficient and unnecessary in a properly functioning system of school governance (Tyack 1974). The old, ward-based system of governance was viewed as based upon an outmoded village system where power was decentralized and contained in informal structures of representation that invite corruption.

It was argued that decision-making authority should rest upon “scientific expertise” rather than political pull (Tyack and Hansot 1982). As was the case in business and government, this expert-based system was defined in terms of the principles of scientific management. For example, Harvey H. Hubbert, a wealthy member of the Philadelphia Board of Education, argued that it was only natural to apply the principle of corporate consolidation to education (Tyack 1974, 143). This meant centralized authority and precise standardization.

The principles of scientific management were adapted to school organization in three ways:

1. centralized planning (centralization of financial and educational policy decision making in the superintendent’s office);
2. precise specification of curricula and lesson planning and standards of teacher performance; and
3. emphasis on the budget process as a planning tool (e.g., cost-benefit analysis) (Callahan 1962; Tyack and Hansot 1982).

This administrative structure was designed to turn teachers into educational workers who had no policy making authority. In the name of efficiency, which was supposedly based upon scientific understanding rather than arbitrary political power, the ward system

that allowed significant degrees of representation and local control was destroyed. Control of the educational process shifted to educational administrators as representatives of certain class interests. For example, in Philadelphia, practically all the powers of the ward boards were abolished, and the central board was reduced from 42 to 21 members appointed by judges and chosen from the city at large rather than by ward. In New York, the ward boards were abolished, and the central board was reduced from 46 to 7 members. In San Francisco, authority was turned over to a bipartisan board of four directors appointed by the mayor and a citywide elected superintendent who was an ex-officio member of the board (Tyack 1974). In Cleveland, the board was reduced from 26 members and 3 paid executives to a seven-man council with one full-time executive director whose powers were wide-spread. Both the council and the executive director were to be elected in citywide elections (Cronin 1973). St. Louis reduced their board from 21 to 12 members and substituted citywide elections for ward elections. St. Louis also transferred authority for nominating professional staff to the superintendent, along with responsibility for curriculum, supervision, textbook selection, the suspension of teachers, and the selection of instructional clerks (Cronin 1973).

In all cases, reduced central boards, citywide elections, and the elimination of ward boards or ward representation paved the way for the concentration of power in the hands of superintendents. The reduced numbers of board members could not manage the affairs of expanding schools on a part-time basis. As Tyack (1974, 154) put it, consolidation created a "power vacuum" filled by educational administrators. It also effectively limited popular representation, giving control of school policy to business and professional elites. The overall result was centralized control in a corporate board with delegation of power to expert administrators (Cronin 1973).

In the final analysis, as Tyack points out, administrative progressives were not simply attempting to remove schools from politics; they were instead exchanging one form of political decision making for another. As was the case in municipal reform in general, a centralized, elite system replaced a decentralized, representative one. The system of governance proposed and erected by the administrative progressives is an example of what was later articulated as elite democratic theory. Its core features, centralized planning, precise specification of policy, and mayoral appointment of school board members, correspond directly to the core features of elite democratic theory: elite control of governmental prerogatives and a conception of participation limited to the selection of elites.¹

Probably the clearest theoretical articulation of elite democracy has been put forth by Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942). Schumpeter defined democracy as “a political method . . . for arriving at political—legislative and administrative—decisions” (269). By “method,” Schumpeter meant an institutional arrangement that would place decision-making power in the hands of a few individuals who had attained the confidence of the people. “Democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the terms ‘people’ and ‘rule.’ Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them. . . . Now one aspect of this may be expressed by saying that democracy is the rule of the politician” (284–285). The people in this system cannot be said to be engaged in self-rule, rather the people are nothing more than the “producers of government”; they are nothing more than a mechanism to select “the men who are able to do the deciding” (269).

Underlying Schumpeter’s and the administrative progressive’s conception of democracy is the view that relatively few people possess the intellectual ability or the education to pass judgment on public policy; expert control and bureaucratic administration are necessary in a complex world that demands scientifically informed judgments. In such a world, only “governments of experts” can manage public affairs (121–122). This view is essentially Platonic, akin to a distorted notion of positive liberty as self-mastery (Macpherson, 1973), wherein it is maintained that rational elites must control the irrational masses in order for social order to be achieved.

This notion corresponds directly to Max Weber’s (1946) concept of formal rationality embodied in bureaucratic organization. Weber believed that modern society demanded bureaucratic rationalization, characterized by hierarchical, centralized organization structures, formal rules, appointment of officials on the basis of expertise, and the division or specialization of tasks. Weber maintained that bureaucracy was the most efficient form of organization and efficiency and control were paramount in modern society. As Weber observes, “the bureaucratic organization . . . is, from the purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means for carrying out imperative control over human beings” (cited in Reich 1988, 7).

In terms of democratic government, rationalization demands government control by elites. Widespread political participation is seen not only as being infeasible but also highly undesirable. A passive populace is viewed as optimal. As Seymour Martin Lipset notes, “The

distinctive and most valuable element of democracy is the formation of a political elite in the competitive struggle for the vote of a mainly passive electorate" (cited in Arblaster 1987, 53). Samuel Huntington (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanski 1975) argues that the rise of political participation in the 1960s constituted a "crisis of democracy." The crisis was constituted by the fact that widespread political participation was jeopardizing elite control, in turn jeopardizing rational control of society. Thus a passive public is "good" for "democracy," whereas an active, politically engaged public constitutes a crisis of democracy.

The democratic nature of this system is defended on the grounds that it is open, competitive, and accountable. Extensive empirical evidence suggests, however, that this system is highly undemocratic because elite decision-making positions are confined to a few individuals who do not compete with each other but who collude to maintain power. They are not publicly accountable in that the majority of key positions are not subject to election (Tozer 1987). Even if it were open, competitive, and accountable, an elite decision making system would be a very weak form of democracy if democracy is defined as "self-governance."

The Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago (1898) was based upon the study of the Chicago school system and a comparative analysis of the reforms instituted in other cities. Due to its comparative perspective, the report summarizes thought about administrative reform in the Progressive Era. As Tyack (1974, 133) put it, the report constitutes "a compendium of centralist reforms." It is a clear statement of the philosophy of elite democracy and administrative centralization.

The Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago

In 1897, Mayor Carter Harrison created a commission to investigate and report on the administration of the public school system of Chicago. He appointed William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, to the commission. The commission elected Harper as its chair, allowing him to exert a considerable influence on the commission's report.² Before his appointment to the commission, Harper had served on the Chicago Board of Education (nominated by the Chicago Civic Federation), and he had been the chair of the Chicago Civic Federation's committee on education (Hogan 1985; Murphy 1981).

The Chicago Civic Federation was the founding chapter of the National Civic Federation, an organization primarily of corporate

executives, although they attempted to include labor leaders in order to influence the creation of a national labor policy. The federation's members, in keeping with the tenets of corporate liberalism, sought to regulate social life in order to ameliorate the excesses of the emerging corporate order and stabilize it. The National Civic Federation redefined liberalism from the removal of state control over private enterprise to state intervention in order to regulate the market economy (Weinstein 1968). Not surprisingly given Harper's connections to the Civic Federation, the commission's report was in keeping with the tenets of corporate liberalism.³

The Educational Commission of the City of Chicago reported that there were "grave defects in the present plan of administration" of the school system, and that it required "radical improvement." The fundamental defect was identified as "the administration of school affairs through committees of the board of education." This system had "proved on the whole unsatisfactory" (1898, xii). The commission argued that the committee system had resulted in "the appointment and retention of unnecessary and inefficient employees" in addition to "unwarranted difficulty and expense in the securing of school supplies" (xii). On the educational side, the committee system had been inflexible regarding reform of the curriculum, and teachers had been appointed and retained "in opposition to the recommendations of those who should practically determined all these questions" (xiii), that is, the Board of Education and its executives. In addition, there existed no salary schedule and no "plan of promotion" for teachers. All of the above were "vital defects" (xiii).

In 1879, the Illinois State Legislature enacted the "Act to Provide for the Appointment of School Directors and Members of the Board of Education." This act stipulated that the mayor of the city should appoint the members of the Board of Education from each ward of the city. In 1889, this stipulation was amended under the "Act to Establish and Maintain a System of Free Schools" for cities with populations fewer than 100,000. This act stipulated that members of the board of education of such cities should be elected (Article VI, section 2). However, section 17 stipulated that appointment should continue in cities with populations greater than 100,000. Chicago was the only such city in Illinois.

According to the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago (ECCC), the problem with ward representation was that each member of the board was committed to the interests of his constituents, to the neglect of the needs of the city as a whole (ECCC 1898, 10-11). It is important to note here that the constituents of the wards were

primarily immigrant working-class individuals, whereas the interests of the whole city were defined by elite business and professional men as their own particular class interests. Thus, the concern here was to centralize authority in the hands of elite interests, "in harmony with the principle of concentration of authority and responsibility" (ECCC 1898, 6). The commission argued that "it is evident that a board can fairly represent a city as a whole with a much smaller membership than would be necessitated by representation from each ward" (11).

Representation of the city as a whole was based upon a "new conception of the functions" of the board (11). The commission conceived the board's function as being purely "legislative" rather than a combination of legislative and executive. It maintained that the board should be a broad, policymaking body, analogous to a corporate board of directors, which would have the responsibility of prescribing "the general educational policy of the city" (14), including determining the curriculum and resource allocation. The separation of the legislative and executive functions of the board would attract "the very best men" (13) to serve on the board, that is, elite business and professional men. The "mass of detail work" inherent in committee management, which had kept these men from serving in the past, would be eliminated through the destruction of the ward system. Through citywide appointment (the size of the board would be reduced from 21 to 11 members) and the elimination of the executive responsibilities, an elite board could be ensured. Thus, the general educational policy of the city would be determined by corporate rather than popular interests.

The ward system had carried out its management functions through a number of committees comprised of representatives from each ward that managed the affairs of the schools in their respective wards. The commission argued that, with the rapid growth of the city, the committee system "had led to a very cumbersome and unwieldy system of administration" (24).

The commission proposed that the administration of the schools be delegated to a superintendent and a business manager. The 21 committees of the ward system would be reduced to 3 committees on educational, business, and financial affairs.

The commission proposed that the business manager be given control of the finance committee. It was proposed that he have the "charge and custody of the securities of the board and, under close supervision, act as its financial agent" (31). In addition, he was given the power to appoint "janitors, engineers and other persons whom he

shall require to assist him in the business affairs of the board" (30), which had previously been subject to the "political pull" implicit in the ward system.

The superintendent was designated as the chief executive officer of the school system and would be "in full charge of both educational and business functions." He would be entrusted with the execution of policy "outlined only in general" by the board (25).

"Political pull," which meant popular representation, was viewed as the most serious problem facing the school system. The appointment and retention of teachers through personal influence of board members was cited as being profoundly harmful "to the living interests of the city" (35). The commission maintained that a system of supervision capable of eliminating political pull "must definitely and finally concentrate all authority in an officer [superintendent] who shall be weighted with responsibility" (35).

The commission proposed that the superintendent "be given a very large measure of power." They proposed that "as long as he possesses the confidence of the board, and is retained as superintendent, he should be left unrestricted and untrammelled in his efforts to establish and administer the schools along the lines of sound educational policy" (41-42). Thus, as long as the policies of the superintendent served the interests of the board of education, total decision-making power regarding business and educational policy would be concentrated in his hands.

Specifically, the commission proposed that the superintendent be given power to (1) "decide all questions that concern teachers and the teaching in the schools" (43); (2) determine "the course of study, the choice of text books and apparatus used in the teaching in the schools" (44); and (3) "promote or reduce teachers and fix their salaries. . . and dismiss any appointees" (43). In addition, they proposed that the superintendent have a seat on the board but no vote. They argued that he "is not to be considered an employee, but rather a worthy and honored co-worker with the board, and as such should be treated on equal terms" (48). In other words, the superintendent was to be considered a member of the corporate elite, a major breakthrough in status and power. It is no wonder, as Hogan (1985) points out, that successive Chicago superintendents (e.g., Benjamin Andrews and Edwin Cooley) diligently worked through administrative fiat to implement the provisions of the report despite strong opposition and the absence of legislative sanction.

The commission suggested that the most fundamental of all the questions affecting the schools was that "of securing a good force of

teachers" (60). The superintendent was given the power to appoint teachers, however the commission argued that in large cities it would be impossible for the superintendent to "form a correct judgment of the mass of candidates through personal investigation" (62). They proposed the establishment of an "examining board" to assist him in this matter. This board would be comprised of three special examiners, one assistant superintendent, and the superintendent who would serve as chair. The examining board would be responsible for the appointment and promotion of teachers. Concerning the latter, a "rational method of promotion" (75) was proposed, wherein promotion was based upon past teaching success and professional advancement in terms of scholarship and teaching ability, determined by the report of the principal and superintendent of the teacher's district and "careful examination and approval of the examining board" (75).

A schedule of salaries was proposed based upon distinctions regarding "the grade or subject in which the teacher gives instruction, the term of service of the teacher, the success already achieved, and advance in scholarship and teaching ability" (76). In other words, salary increases should not only be based upon length of service, but also upon the difficulty of instruction, the degree of "efficiency" already shown, and evidence of scholarship.

In addition, the commission proposed that, in order to attract men into the teaching profession, especially in the higher elementary grades, "higher salaries be provided for men than for women in these grades" (78). The commission maintained that "paying higher salaries to men than to women of the same ability and training is not an unjust discrimination. The superior physical endurance of a man makes him . . . more valuable in the school system. Moreover, this question is a plain case of supply and demand" (80). It was felt that increasing the number of male teachers was essential for decreasing the high dropout rate of males in the upper elementary grades, and their numbers could be increased by offering higher salaries.⁴

Thus, the nature of the proposal contained in the report was consciously shaped by the "*ruling idea of concentration of authority and responsibility*" (56, emphasis added). In accordance with the managerial and social philosophy of scientific management and elite democracy, decision-making power was centralized in the hands of an "expert" planner, the superintendent. Educational policy would be determined by the superintendent and his assistants, and the teachers would become mechanized implementors with no decision-making power. In this sense, the report embodied the principle of the

separation of "conception and execution," the core of scientific management. The report also embodied the principle of centralized authority as it was applied in municipal reform. A decentralized ward system of government allowed policy to be determined by a collection of interests, primarily dominated by working-class interests. With the rise of monopoly capitalism and the emergence of citywide interests, elite business and professional groups, notably the Civic Federation, moved to usurp political power from the dominant lower-middle and working-class element of the city. The proposal to eliminate ward representation on the board of education and the committee management system was consistent with municipal reform in general. The commission, backed by the Chicago Civic Federation, moved to insulate decision-makers from popular interests, thereby ensuring that educational policy would be shaped in accordance with corporate interests. The Progressive Era was the age of consolidation and the centralization of authority; Chicago was no exception.⁵

However, the commission was not naive. Its members knew that their proposals were autocratic and would meet strong opposition from teachers and the general public. As stated, "When larger powers are placed in the hands of a superintendent . . . there is distinct danger that the schools will fail to respond fairly to the ideal of the people" (140). Their concern, however, was not that democratic ideals were being violated, but that if public opinion was ignored, a strong dissatisfaction would arise that might "lead to radical changes through the appointment of new members to the board of education" (140). In other words, if a mechanism for entertaining public opinion was not established, elite hegemony would be threatened. Consequently, the commission proposed the establishment of two advisory councils.

The first advisory council was a community commission made up of six residents of a given district who would visit and observe each school in the district and report to the board of education regarding "the work of each school, the discipline, sanitary and other arrangements of the building" (142). Note the conspicuous absence of issues directly related to educational policy (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and placement).

The second advisory council was the proposed establishment of faculty councils made up of teachers in each school and district, with a general council for the whole city. These councils would be given the "right of direct recommendations to the board on all matters connected with the educational system of the city" (167).

Both advisory councils were designed to account for public opinion without handing over decision-making power. Teachers and residents were allowed to make recommendations, but they played no formal part in the policymaking process.⁶ These councils were far less democratic than committee management; however, they provided a needed “democratic” veneer to the autocratic system proposed by the commission. This is an example of an attempt to “manufacture consent.” Schumpeter argues that manufacturing consent is an essential, unavoidable element of elite democracy.

Human Nature in Politics being what it is, [elites] are able to fashion and, within very wide limits, even to create the will of the people. What we are confronted with in the analysis of political processes is largely not a genuine will but a *manufactured will*. . . . The ways in which issues and the popular will on any issue are being manufactured is exactly analogous to the ways of commercial advertising. . . . in reality [the people] neither raise nor decide issues but. . . . the issues that shape their fate are normally raised and decided for them (1942, 263–264, emphasis added).

Both Schumpeter and the commission maintain that the manufacture of consent is an inevitable fact of modern political reality and a central element of elite democracy (see also Herman and Chomsky 1988).

Not surprisingly, the report received wide-spread praise from a number of university presidents, scholars, and other educational administrators. For example, Nicholas Murray Butler, professor at Columbia University and editor of the *Educational Review*, observed, “I can scarcely restrain my enthusiasm at the almost ideal nature of your report as it is outlined. The thoroughgoing way in which you have formulated the best ideas in city school administration is sure to prove of great benefit not only to Chicago but to many other cities of the country. . . . I regard its conclusions and recommendations as almost unassailable, whether viewed from the standpoint of theory or from that of practice” (cited in Chicago Board of Education 1899, 155). And David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University, wrote, “I find myself in entire agreement with the spirit of the suggestions and I believe that on such a basis it should be possible to bring the public schools of a large city to the highest grade of efficiency” (cited in Chicago Board of Education 1899, 155).

But to the dismay of administrative progressives and the Chicago Civic Federation, official attempts to enact the provisions of the report

repeatedly failed. Legislation was defeated in 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1909, 1911, and 1913. It took nearly twenty years before the report was enacted into law in 1917.⁷ The opposition to the report was led by the CTF and its supporters, especially Margaret Haley and Ella Flagg Young.

The Chicago Teachers' Federation Alternative

The commission argued that administrative centralization was a natural consequence of urban growth, just as industrial consolidation had been viewed as the logical result of economic development. However, the "rationalization" of industry in terms of both technology (i.e., mechanization and mass production) and organization (i.e., scientific management) were not the inevitable results of the logic of industrial development. Rather, they were alternatives chosen in order to gain control of the production process. Workers, however, did not merely acquiesce to this attack on their traditional autonomy, but they put forth their own versions of "rationalization" that would enable them to retain control of production. Likewise, school centralization was not the inevitable result of the logic of urban growth. It was instead a strategy corporate elites and administrative progressives employed to usurp control of the educational process from teachers and working-class immigrants. Like workers in general, the teachers of Chicago and their supporters did not acquiesce to the centralizers. They waged a twenty-year campaign against centralization based upon a developmental conception of participatory democracy.

The Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) was founded in 1897 to secure wage increases in accordance with increases in the standard of living and tenure to provide economic security. Although founded upon bread-and-butter issues, the CTF was also concerned with issues of authority and governance. Its members led the political opposition against administrative reform (Hogan 1985; Reid 1982).

Margaret A. Haley, one of the founding members and leaders of the CTF, led the fight against centralization. Haley recognized that school centralization was not an isolated phenomena but a part of a general societal trend. "Two ideals are struggling for supremacy in American life today," she wrote in 1903, "one the industrial ideal, dominating through the supremacy of commercialism; the other ideal of democracy, the ideal of educators" (1903b, 4). She maintained that "the tendency in the field of education today is the same as the tendency in the commercial, the financial and the political

world—that of concentration of power in one man or one set of men” (1903a, 6). She argued that the proposals of the Educational Commission were “fundamentally wrong,” for they conferred on one man, the superintendent, “all the duties and powers naturally and necessarily inherent in the whole teaching force and the people” (1903a, 7). In other words, the commission proposed to centralize authority, which, according to Haley, was naturally diffused. Centralization, therefore, was wrong on the grounds that it undermined the “rights of the rank and file” to exercise decision-making authority. It set “aside the principles of democracy in the internal administration of schools” (1903a, 7). Echoing these concerns, the CTF warned that the commission’s report would give the superintendent “autocratic powers unknown to the Czar of Russia,” that it would institute a police system “like in Russia” (*Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1899, 8).

Haley argued that due to the dominance of the industrial ideal, the centralization of power, there was a strong trend toward “‘factoryizing education,’ making the teacher an automaton, a mere factory hand, whose duty is to carry out mechanically and unquestionably the ideas and orders of those clothed with the authority of position” (1903b, 2). Consequently, she maintained that teachers had “no more voice in the educational system of which they are a part than the children they teach” (1903a, 8). Of course, turning teachers into mechanized implementors was an essential feature of scientific management and elite democracy.

Haley (1915) attributed the movement toward centralization to the desire among the “financial feudal lords of America” to control the public schools. Profits were contingent upon producing an obedient labor force, and the schools were the primary means to that end. As Haley put it: “the selfish interest of the wealth classes depends upon the breaking down of the popular power” (1915, 1). Elite interests were contingent upon centralized authority.

In her autobiography, Haley summarized the struggle against centralization in terms of a battle between “the two great opposing forces of American life: the defenders and the exploiters of true popular government” (Reid 1982, 270). The battle over the control of the public schools of Chicago was not merely a fight for teachers’ rights, but a fight to sustain the “cause of liberalism” (Reid 1982, 270), a fight for democracy itself.⁸ She maintained that the teachers’ struggle against autocracy was “as profound and as precious as the early struggles of the men who founded this nation” (Haley 1915, 1).

Haley not only viewed the centralization of authority as profoundly undemocratic, but also as highly impractical. In an often-quoted passage she maintained that the commission's report "provided for a superintendent who would need to be omnipotent as well as omnipresent in all parts of the system at all times, and capable of perfect justice, and that the only instance in history where there had been such a visitor on earth was nineteen hundred years ago and that he was crucified. . . the teachers of Chicago did not believe that if he returned to earth that he would come to Chicago by way of the Midway Plaisance [University of Chicago]" (Reid 1982, xx).

Through the use of sarcasm Haley made the point that urban growth demanded not the centralization, but the diffusion, of power. According to Haley, centralized authority was impractical in a large school system, a position directly opposite to the prevailing ideology of efficiency. Thus, according to Haley, school centralization was both undemocratic and inefficient.

Ella Flagg Young, who studied under John Dewey at the University of Chicago and became the first female superintendent of the Chicago school system under Major Edward Dunne's board,⁹ was sympathetic to Haley and the CTF's fight against centralization. She also held many similar views regarding the nature of the commission's report. In addition, she articulated a plan for a decentralized system of school governance.

Young recognized, as did Haley and the CTF, that the key to centralized authority was "close supervision" of the teaching force. She maintained that "no more un-American or dangerous solution of the difficulties involved in maintaining a high degree of efficiency in the teaching corps of a large school system can be attempted than that which is effected by what is termed 'close supervision'" (Young 1901, 107). Close supervision, in accordance with the tenets of scientific management, meant detailed instruction and standardization of all facets of the teaching process. It meant that all educational decisions would be made by the superintendent's office; teachers would merely implement the policy of that office. Young argued that this centralization of authority would turn teachers "into a class of assistants, whose duty consists in carrying out instructions of a higher class which originates method for all" (107).

Young saw the centralization of authority as a profound threat to the effectiveness of the school system. She maintained that "the level of power in the educational system is determined by the degree in which the principle of cooperation is made incarnate in developing and realizing the aim of the school" (9-10). In other words, school

effectiveness is contingent upon mutual cooperation between all members of the faculty and administration. Central to cooperation is the notion of freedom. Young (34) maintained that "freedom is an essential" for effective teaching. For genuine cooperation to occur and for a high quality of teaching to take place teachers must possess "freedom of thought" (107). If every aspect of educational policy is dictated by a central authority, then the very essence "of that form of activity known as the teacher" is undermined (34). Without a "free play of thought," there can be no genuine teaching and learning.

Young argued that freedom of thought was contingent upon the existence within the school system of "organizations for the consideration of questions of legislation" (107). She called for the organization of school councils consisting of "every teacher and principal" (108). Each school would have a council and would elect delegates to a central council. The function of these councils would be legislative. They would make policy recommendations to the superintendent and debate disagreements through a deliberative process. The system would enable teachers to have a voice in the determination of policy through a free discussion of educational ideas, wherein the "voice of authority of position" was absent.

Young acknowledged that the commission's report did provide for "teacher councils" that could make recommendations to the superintendent and the board, but she recognized the limitations of the commission's conception. The commission's councils would be limited to making recommendations without the capacity to debate disagreements with the administration. Access to policy debate is an essential feature of a democratic system of governance (Fishkin 1991). Young maintained that by providing an organizational mechanism that would give teachers access to information and the capacity to debate issues openly with the administration teachers' freedom would be preserved. The tendency to centralize authority would be checked by a decentralized federation of teachers' councils. However, even though Young provided teachers a voice and a means to participate in the policy process, her proposal did not go far enough; it did not provide teachers and parents with formal decision-making power. They were allowed to debate policy, but decision-making authority still remained the prerogative of the superintendent.¹⁰

However, Haley and Young do provide an alternative conception of democracy. Implicit in their response to the administrative progressives is a conception of democracy based upon the value of human development. Haley and Young opposed centralization on the

grounds that disallowing teachers from participation in the policy making process would undermine their development as teachers, as well as undermine the educational process. They wanted a democratic system of governance, in part because such a system would be most conducive to their view of teaching as a fluid, complex, and creative act. From this perspective, a participatory system of school governance was justified on the grounds of being consistent with teaching as creative and being necessary for the further development of such teaching.

In summary, the elite theorists and the Education Commission of the City of Chicago argued that elite control is necessitated by the efficiency demands of modern society. The argument in this chapter has been that elite control is not inevitably tied to modernity, but it was "constitutionally" chosen. Haley and Young provide a historical precedent for an alternative vision of constitutional choice: choice made on the basis of development rather than efficiency. This alternative was not formulated clearly or extensively by Haley and Young. However, it does have a significant philosophical tradition, to which we now turn.