

DeVOS WILL SHAKE THINGS UP

Betsy DeVos, the new Secretary of Education, is feared by those who are afraid of change, afraid of breaking up the public school monopoly, and afraid of religious schools. She will shake things up, and it is about time.

If the Ku Klux Klan were to devise a plan to keep poor blacks in poverty, they could do no better than to lead the fight against school choice. But they don't have to lift a finger—the teachers unions and the education establishment are doing the job for them.

While the motivations may be different, the outcome is the same: All of these people have one thing in common—keeping poor blacks in their place. DeVos hopes to break their stranglehold, which is why she is so feared.

The enemies of school choice organized mass phone calls against DeVos, all of which were in vain. It would be instructive to know how many poor blacks flooded the phone lines demanding that they not be given the same opportunity afforded rich people, namely the right to send their children to a private school. It would be astonishing if even one did so.

DeVos was chosen to be the nominee on November 23, and immediately the forces of regression organized against her.

The ACLU immediately went on the offensive warning that “private and parochial schools” would benefit. Such a condition it said, “perverts the bedrock American value of separation of church and state.”

There is a reason the ACLU never mentioned the “bedrock American value” of religious liberty. When it was founded in 1920, it listed every right incorporated in the First Amendment as one of its top ten priorities, save for freedom

of religion. Ever since, it has worked tirelessly against this right, the exception being the religious rights of prisoners, Muslim extremists, and the like.

Also attacking DeVos on the day she was nominated was the Interfaith Alliance. It is so opposed to religious liberty that it has tried to stop the installation of war memorials honoring veterans if they mention God. Its opposition to the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which defends marriage between a man and a woman, showed its ideological colors. It has also tried to censor Bill Donohue: in 2010, it joined with other left-wing groups lobbying TV producers never to invite him again.

The third organization to rip DeVos was Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Founded as a virulently anti-Catholic group in the 1940s, it is led by Barry Lynn today. He accused DeVos of mounting a “*crusade* to create school vouchers across the country.” Notice his italic. Betsy the Crusader is coming to Washington!

Katherine Stewart, writing in the *New York Times*, agreed with Lynn, citing a comment DeVos made in 2001 saying educational reform is a way to “advance God’s kingdom.” Terrifying. Had a nominee invoked Satan’s kingdom, it would be seen as free speech, if not applauded.

The public school establishment, of course, led the charge. Michael Mulgrew of the United Federation of Teachers warned that school choice would undermine public education in New York City, which is “moving in the right direction.” In point of fact, Mayor Bill de Blasio’s decision to award failing schools in New York with *more funding* turned out to be a monumental failure. After spending 839 million dollars, almost all these schools failed to meet expected standards.

Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association, was predictably upset. “Betsy DeVos is not

qualified,” she said, “and even more than unqualified, Betsy DeVos is an actual danger to students—especially our most vulnerable students.” Of course, it is precisely “the most vulnerable students” who stand to benefit the most by giving their parents the same opportunity that Barack and Michelle Obama have had in sending Sasha and Malia to private schools.

Best of all was the argument made by some faculty members at the University of Cincinnati. “DeVos is unqualified.” Why? “DeVos has no relevant credentials in education, no formal training or experience in teaching, and no advanced knowledge of educational research.” That’s her strength: she hasn’t been corrupted by the credentialized class. She knows what works, which is more than can be said about many of those with initials after their name.

If having the right education credentials made for academic success, the United States would be number one in the world in tests of academic achievement. But it is not. Indeed, it is way down the list. It’s time someone who is an outsider to the establishment was given the chance to promote real reforms, including competition among schools.

These activists and educrats are scared to death of allowing parents the right to choose which school to send their children to, knowing full well that they might opt to select a charter school, non-denominational private school, Christian school, Catholic school, or a yeshiva.

Betsy DeVos prevailed over these demagogues. We congratulate her, and Vice President Mike Pence (he broke the 50-50 tie in the Senate), for beating the forces of regression.