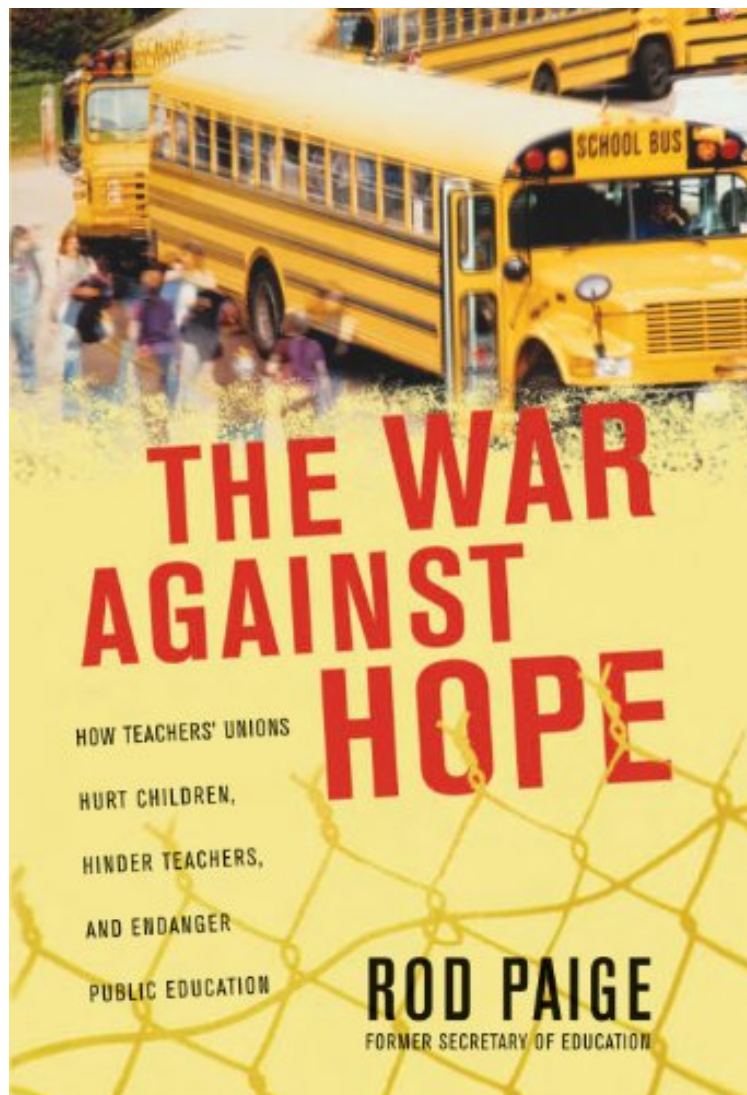


(Mobile library) The War Against Hope: How Teachers' Unions Hurt Children, Hinder Teachers, and Endanger Public Education

The War Against Hope: How Teachers' Unions Hurt Children, Hinder Teachers, and Endanger Public Education

Rod Paige

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Rod Paige : The War Against Hope: How Teachers' Unions Hurt Children, Hinder Teachers, and Endanger Public Education before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The War Against Hope: How Teachers' Unions Hurt Children, Hinder Teachers, and Endanger Public Education:

4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The Ball Is in the Union's Court By James Charnock I have written many critiques of articles and books, but this book had my head swirling. I was a teacher and union building rep (at the same time) for many years and although I did not agree with everything the union did (who does?) I was never aware

of the union's practices and history that Paige reports. I have always considered a union necessary because of the practices and working conditions foisted on teachers by principals and district staffers (for the superintendent and board). Even though I walked picket lines and encouraged fellow teachers to join with full membership, I never protected an obviously-incompetent or racist teacher. In fact, I encouraged the principal to deal with him or her--to the consternation of my union Higher-Up. (You see, we teachers don't always blindly follow the union...or the administrators.) One repeating problem in my school and district was caused by the upper-level administration placing on teachers the burden of one educational fad after another--all (to my knowledge) ending in failure and the waste of millions of the taxpayers' dollars. And just like some teachers pass students along with no justification, so do some teacher college professors pass potential teachers who immediately or eventually fail our students, the community and the nation. As Paige would seem to agree, I think teachers' unions should be only a business entity dealing with working conditions and pay. Leave the curriculum up to the superintendent (not that he or she has done a great job), or, as in charter schools, up to the local school. Yes, I have once or twice been the subject of union harassment by one or more of the union's "blind" followers, but I was tough enough to handle it. And I didn't consider this treatment pervasive. Paige has revealed many negative practices by teachers' unions that need to be answered by them. But, remember, unions do not hire teachers (even if a certain board may be in a union's pocket, as Paige reports), so blame the boards of education, the administrator and curriculum developers at the administration headquarters. I am not in sympathy with the idea--pushed by Paige--that teachers should receive merit or performance pay for a job well done. In my own classes I had students who learned much faster than others--and all of my students were poor enough to have a lunch subsidy. I worked very hard to get results, but a teacher in an area where most students are on level can get the same results or better and not have to put in the hours and effort I did, and he or she may receive merit pay, but not me. So, additional pay based on test scores (measured against a standard) is not fair to teachers. Let me explain further. I say hire only quality teachers and check that quality not by how the students meet a standard, but how much progress the students have made toward that standard. If--and I'm not exaggerating here, especially for big-city schools--50 to 75 percent of my 8th graders enter my class not knowing their times tables (which means their math is hardly above grade 3) and they leave my room testing at the end of grade 6, they have made around 3 years of progress in one year! Yet, they are still 2 years behind being ready to move into grade 9. This means, they don't meet the acceptable standard for math. And I don't deserve performance pay. This is what I know and it is what teachers' unions know. "Merit" pay is a theory in the field of teaching youngsters. If it's put into practice and schools still don't improve performance that much (meaning some teachers may be fired), what are we to do, given that teaching has one of the greatest turn-over rates of any profession? The reality is that up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years. I think supporters of performance pay are barking up the wrong tree. If one is wondering if teachers need unions, one needs only read of the history of U.S. teaching to get an answer. (See my book, *MT. HOREB: THE LITTLE WHITE SCHOOLHOUSE ON LITTLE DEER CREEK* to get a short history; then check the bibliography.) We can't go back to the days when teachers were basically educational missionaries: Paige lauds those teachers that spend their days, nights and weekends (yes, cell-phone available) "serving" their students and indicating that this is what he thinks is a good example of dedication. And for some interesting and moving labor songs (union history) get the lively CD "Classic Labor Songs." I agree with Paige that for the sake of the students, and the nation, teacher union power needs to change. How those changes can be crafted to the benefit of all does need to be hammered out. Paige gives some of his ideas for improvement. How are the unions going to react? How are parents going to react? His book is against teachers' unions (of course, he will protest that, mildly)--though he does rightly praise a few union "mavericks," as he calls them. He says (after much criticism) that he thinks most teachers are praiseworthy, except that they are not quite so because of their blind allegiance to their unions who, he says, blinded them. He thinks he has strongly presented his evidence, now let the strong unions counter. Let's hope this sorry state of affairs is soon corrected. It's not practical to think we can throw the babies (some unions, boards, teachers, teachers' colleges and even parents) out with the bath water (techniques for change), but let's do change the diapers (some present philosophies). The Creative Teacher: Activities for Language Arts (Grades 4 through 8 and Up) 5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The best book written on teacher unionism By A. Krinsky The problem with studying the teacher unions is that if you understand fully how they operate -- turning the entire public education establishment into a many-trillion dollar casino rigged to give us the perception that spending more will pay off, but actually doing nothing but impoverishing us all in dreams of educational opportunity -- you will want to simply throw up. I needed a barf bag to get through this book. Dr. Paige has done an amazing service to all of us who care about education reform by laying bare the lock-stock-and-barrel juggernaut that is teacher union political control over the education system in America. From the class-room to the White House, they bully and destroy their virtually defenseless opponents at every opportunity. They are a \$2 billion/year political gorilla with a 2.5 million teacher army. They shield themselves with contracts, front groups, politicians-for-hire, law-suits, massive amounts of television and radio, teacher newsletters, the PTA, highly paid staff calling themselves "teachers," and of course, teachers themselves -- brainwashed with poisonous, venomous propaganda from the time they enroll in schools of education until past retirement. The asymmetric domination is pervasive, comprehensive, and frightening, complete with hush-money and

threats -- private and public. This is the modern-day mob. And children, without whom schools would not exist, are the hostages of these parasites. If this is not an organization out of control and out of alignment with American values, I do not know what is. Can they be outlawed? Imprisoned? What can we do? Thank you Dr. Paige.

27 of 31 people found the following review helpful. Correct on Some Points, Misleading On Others By Casey Gagnon

I am a veteran public school teacher and read this entire captivating book in one sitting. Paige does make some valid arguments about the corrupt, anti-child actions of teachers unions. Some of his frustrations I share 100%. First of all, I agree that unions make it very difficult for school districts to fire blatantly incompetent teachers. I know that because being a teacher myself, I have had to work with some of these teachers. They are a cancer on our profession and make us all look bad. For example, a few years ago, I taught in a classroom next to a teacher who would scream and yell at her 3rd grade children (mostly Hispanic) that they were "stupid and lazy." One day, we could hear her yelling such vicious things at her students that even a few of my own 5th grade students started crying. In tears, one girl asked me why that teacher "was allowed to treat little kids that way" and if I could go next door and ask her to stop. This teacher would also have some of the very lowest test scores in the district year after year after year, therefore bringing down the academic ranking of our entire school. Everyone, including the principal, knew how horrible this teacher was, but the principal refused to do anything because she knew that the union would protect this teacher 100% and that therefore any attempt to discipline her would be a futile waste of time and effort. I also agree with Paige that because of union contracts, there is very little incentive, apart from a teacher's own conscience, to go "above and beyond" to help the students learn. The teacher pay scale applies to every single teacher, regardless of his/her competence or effectiveness, and is based only on seniority and continuing education units. Therefore, the veteran 30-year teacher who does the bare minimum will usually make at least TWICE as much as the new teacher down the hall who comes to work early, stays late, works hard, and does a darn good job teaching the kids. Paige cites research which claims that a teacher's effectiveness declines after he/she has been on the job for five years. If this claim is accurate, it is probably due to the fact that a teacher's salary does not correlate even one bit to how good that teacher is. Once a teacher has been in the system for a while, he/she begins to realize this and as a result, there is a decline in motivation to perform the job well. However, I do take issue with Paige on some points. First of all, it appears that he wants to make teachers unions the "scapegoat" and implies that these unions are the main cause (if not the sole cause) for low academic achievement. However, although teachers unions should bear some of the responsibility, they are by no means the only ones at fault. In fact, one reason why we need a union is to protect us from incompetent administrators in our school districts. The elimination of tenure would allow a principal to arbitrarily dismiss a teacher for any reason, even if that teacher is the most skilled and competent in the school. Such reasons might include something as trivial as a mere personality conflict or the administrator's own personal and subjective opinions about the teacher's performance. Teachers would be afraid to "blow the whistle" on a corrupt principal or administrator for fear of being fired. I can tell you that it would be very difficult for me to give my full attention to teaching the children if I were consistently worrying in the back of my head whether or not I would have a job the next year to pay my bills and support my own kids. Still, the fact remains that tenure does protect some pretty LOUSY teachers, but completely eliminating it would be even more disastrous for our students. I would also suggest that in my experience, tenure and unions are not the only reasons why so many incompetent teachers remain in the classroom. Often, the school principal is also to blame by not properly documenting a teacher's deficiencies, as well as top school district administrators who will not support principals who choose to take steps to have an incompetent teacher dismissed. Paige also suggests that teacher pay should be tied with student academic performance measures (i.e. standardized tests). This suggestion is based on a deeply flawed assumption that if students are performing at a high level academically, their teacher must be outstanding, and that if students are failing, the teacher must be lousy. The idea of "merit pay" would end up harming the very students it aims in theory to protect. If merit pay ever became a reality, most of the nation's best teachers would flock to school districts in affluent suburban neighborhoods that have the highest test scores. The students in low income areas, the ones who need good teachers the most, would be stuck with whatever is "left over." This is the inevitable result of a system that would penalize an outstanding teacher just because that teacher works in a school with high poverty or with students still learning English as a second language, while at the same time handsomely rewarding a terrible teacher who is lucky enough to teach in an affluent district with more socioeconomically privileged students who would still ace the standardized tests even if they had been taught by a fruitfly! There are really no easy answers regarding these issues, but for Paige to place the blame squarely on teachers unions misses the point and ignores many other factors that have contributed to the failure of many of our public schools. Nonetheless, the book is well written, correct on many points (whether teachers or their unions like it or not), and very insightful. It is definitely worth the read for anyone holding a stake in the education of our children.

Something is terribly wrong with America's public school system. For decades, we have seen test scores slide or stagnate (today fewer than twenty percent of our nation's twelfth graders are proficient in math, and our students rank near the bottom in science and math among the industrialized nations of the world) and achievement gaps persist or widen. So who's responsible for the ongoing failure of our education system? In *The War Against Hope*, former

Secretary of Education Rod Paige pulls no punches in his critical analysis of America's crisis in the classroom. Without question, the greatest impediment to meaningful school reform is the enormous, self-aggrandizing power wielded by the teachers' unions. In this vital, well-documented book, Paige takes an unflinching look at the power-hungry union leaders who have consistently placed their ambitions ahead of the needs of the teachers and the students whom they claim to serve. He also traces the history of the National Education Association (NEA) from its humble beginnings as an advocate of education excellence to its early radicalization by left-wing ideology. *The War Against Hope* is a disturbing account of the corruption, greed, and skewed values that have assaulted our schools, betrayed our teachers, and forsaken our children for far too long.

About the Author Rod Paige, P.Ed., former U.S. Secretary of Education (2001-2005), has assembled a team of independent, strategic advisors to co-found the Chartwell Education Group, LLC. In addition to his time at Chartwell, Dr. Paige, in his quest to improve the quality of education for all students, is an active member of several highly respected boards, including the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, News Corporation, The Broad Foundation and the National Council on Economic Education's Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. As Secretary of Education, Dr. Paige was an unstinting advocate of student achievement, employing "best of breed" solutions to achieve results towards the Department's goal of raising national standards of educational excellence. He earned his reputation for seeking out and implementing innovative approaches to systemic academic improvement when he served as Dean of the College of Education at Texas Southern University, where he established the university's Center for Excellence in Urban Education. He has also shown a knack for inclusive leadership first as a trustee and then as Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, the nation's seventh largest district. Dr. Paige, who served as a Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, brings a global perspective to his work and a desire to export the best practices and products for education that the U.S. has to offer and to import those that have been successful in other countries in an effort to improve the state of education for all.