

The *majority (conservative) view* assumes that most administrative recommendations are well-conceived and deserving of ratification. This assumption is based upon recognition of the pro-

A Superintendent's View of Education in California

Jim Slezak

Public education in California may be at the edge of a precipice. Will it survive?

Proposition 13 generated serious problems for education in our state. A total of 2.8 billion dollars was eliminated from school district budgets. SB 54, the one-year "bail-out" financing bill, kept school districts in operation, but left them 800 million dollars underfinanced, so cutbacks had to be made.

Those cutbacks were mostly in nonclassroom areas, but if the legislature does not finance public education adequately, the cutbacks in 1979-80 will be in the education program itself. And the situation will get worse each year, because to balance their budgets, school districts will have to make more and more cuts.

A crisis sometimes brings about significant change for the better. Proposition 13, along with the proposed voucher initiative that could be on the ballot in June 1980, has at least brought education to the attention of every citizen in California. They realize we have reached the point at which public education could be severely damaged or even lost, and many of them are working to save it.

We have the opportunity in California to recognize the essence of democracy and the part public education has played in providing equal opportunity to all our citizens.



Jim Slezak is Superintendent, Mt. Diablo Unified School District, Concord, California.

fessional experience, expertise, and competency of the administration. Thus, policy is the outcome of the board ratifying administrative recommendations. There is little or no board initiative, and input is limited to the district administration and school principals. Teacher involvement is minimal, and student participation usually nonexistent. Policy may be a response to a particular complaint or concern, or to state or federal legislation. Implications of these policies are not usually anticipated until implementation has occurred.

The probable *minority (progressive) view* of decision making assumes that school board members as elected representatives are accountable to the citizenry, that input at all levels should shape decisions, and that decisions must come from broad participation. This perspective sees the philosophical implications of a decision as essential; thus, philosophical implications are taken into account *before* a decision is made. Issues, problems, and needs are identified and discussed by all constituencies. Involvement of the community, teaching staff, and students is expected. Initiative may take place on any level: community, schools, board, administration. Implementation of policy usually occurs without substantial problems.

Certainly in California, and probably elsewhere throughout the nation, the majority view prevails, but in the light of the new demands by the people, changes seem inevitable. It is also clear that if school boards, administrators, and site councils were to follow the above seven directions, then the prospects of enhancing and improving education appear great. In this year of crisis, the people must meet the challenge of financial constraints and school reforms with enthusiasm, creativity, and involvement. School boards and educators must assume leadership and ensure that we can cope with the changing needs of our schools.



Ronald H. Chilcote is Professor of Political Science, University of California, Riverside, and a member of a local board of education.

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