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HEADLINE: After 25 Years, ED Is Here to Stay.

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BODY:

Based on interviews with some of the major players of the past quarter century and on research going back to the days shortly after the Civil War, Mr. Mollison tells the story of the department that would not die.

ON THE silver anniversary of the U.S. Department of Education, participants on all sides of the perpetual debate over the proper role of the federal government in education are taking its survival for granted. The Cato Institute this year issued its customary biennial call for Congress to demolish the department. But an education analyst at the libertarian think tank murmured, "I don't know. Maybe next time we'll refashion our message."

"The department's here to stay," says Dale Listina. He and Gail Bramblett were the chief lobbyists on Capitol Hill for the National Education Association during a legislative war that stretched from 1977 to 1979. The NEA's coalition won the war, and in 1980, the new department was born.

"It's not going away," concedes Chester Finn, Jr., who was an aide to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan during the New York Democrat's unsuccessful attempt to block the decision. Moynihan worked with a coalition of opponents led by Al Shanker, president of the NEA's organizing rival, the American Federation of Teachers.

The senator and the AFT leader argued that programs that helped families would receive a more consistent supply of money if their funding all flowed through one wide spigot into a single Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The secretary of HEW could make sure that the programs didn't overlap or leave gaps in service, they said.

The AFT's losing coalition included other AFL-CIO unions, defenders of local control of schools, and fiscal conservatives who predicted that the new department would inevitably seek more money and jobs. It also swept in Head Start employees and Catholic bishops, who feared that public school teachers from the NEA would dominate a separate education department.

Business and university leaders were split or neutral on the issue. And many who did take sides weren't

very passionate about the pros and cons of rearranging bureaucratic boxes on the U.S. government's organizational charts.

The NEA's victorious alliance included most national associations of elementary and secondary educators, many state officials, some child advocacy and civil rights groups, and vocational rehabilitation specialists. The independent union's permanent teams of volunteers -- thoroughly briefed and willing to take the time to visit their representatives in Congress -- were well organized in every state and almost every congressional district. Most important, the NEA had the help of President Jimmy Carter, an engineer by training, who genuinely enjoyed reorganizing government.

Carter had pledged to seek a separate, Cabinet-level department of education during his 1976 campaign. That promise won him the first endorsement ever given by the NEA to a Presidential candidate. And he wanted that endorsement again to help fend off a looming Democratic challenge by Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, who was anticipating strong support from AFL-CIO unions in the 1980 caucuses and primaries.

At that time, the Office of Education was tucked deep within the bowels of HEW, four layers below the secretary. HEW also housed the Office for Civil Rights, whose enforcement of antidiscrimination laws in schools and colleges was limited by its need to devote some of its resources to noneducational duties. The extraction of those two offices from the humongous department was the primary aim of the coalition formed by the NEA.

"When you talked to someone [in HEW's Office of Education], it was like punching a pillow. You could never get a decision," Dale Listina said in a recent interview. "And at the top, there was always some horrible national crisis in health or welfare that took their minds off education."

"Take the E out of HEW," chanted proponents with red, white, and blue "Department of Education/YES" buttons pinned on their lapels. Their coalition included not just those who thought education might get more attention and money outside of HEW, but also those who thought that the change would make HEW smaller and easier to manage.

"On the Senate side, getting approval was easy," Listina recalled. The fight for the change was led there by Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.), who impressed colleagues with horror stories about how hard it had been to find out what was going on in the Office of Education when he was President Kennedy's first secretary of HEW.

"The House was the real battleground," Listina went on. "We had 44 separate floor votes, and the bill was pulled from the floor three times, which is tantamount to defeat."

In one key showdown, the legislation would have died without the votes cast for it by two feisty young Republicans, Newt Gingrich of Georgia and Trent Lott of Mississippi. Years later, as leaders of House and Senate majorities, both would try to sink the department that they had helped to launch.

Secretary of HEW Joseph Califano was so upset by the prospect of losing the E in HEW that he was still lobbying against the President's legislation the day before Carter finally fired him for insubordination. The outnumbered opponents tried to delay final action by demanding roll-call votes on amendments like the one that would have dubbed the new agency the Department of Public Education and Youth, so that its acronym would be DOPEY. (In the end, its official acronym became ED, to avoid confusion with DOE, used by another of Carter's creations, the Department of Energy.)

Opponents also loaded the House version with amendments that they hoped would simultaneously

appeal to conservative voters and force liberal legislators to vote against the entire bill. Some of the controversial amendments stayed in, including the "one-house veto" clause that allowed either chamber in Congress to veto any regulation issued by the new department, a provision that was later invalidated by the Supreme Court. leg
veto

Other add-ons promoted school prayer and local control and opposed abortion, busing, and the use of quotas for racial, ethnic, or gender-related purposes. These amendments were gutted or eliminated by Senate and House conferees. Oddly, except in rhetorical flourishes, there was virtually no discussion of what the establishment of the new department would mean to students, parents, or educators.¹

In the final Senate vote on 24 September 1979, the conference report was approved 69-22. Two days later, President Carter made his last concession, a promise to Catholic members of the House of Representatives that the department's office of nonpublic education would be headed by an assistant secretary, rather than by a mere director or administrator.

Pat Gwaltney, the weary White House education specialist who witnessed Carter's final deal, had a baby boy the next day. A few hours later, on the afternoon of 27 September, the House chamber was packed as Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill (D-Mass.) exercised his privilege of delivering the final remarks. Recapping arguments for Carter's proposal, Rep. O'Neill said that the secretary of HEW presided over so many programs that some, including education, necessarily got short shrift. He said a new department would reduce the workload of HEW and increase the number of discussions of education issues at Cabinet meetings. The House voted 215-201 for the final bill.

After months of denying that the department that they had lobbied for since 1923 was the President's political payoff for their support, ecstatic NEA leaders threw subtlety to the winds and endorsed Carter for reelection the very next day.

ED's First Boss

The President pleased minority and women's groups by assigning Vice President Walter Mondale to direct the search for a suitable secretary of education. Plans to appoint a black or Hispanic secretary fell through when the personalities of the prime prospects failed to mesh with President Carter's.

Mondale had a call placed to Shirley Hufstedler, a Californian on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit who was the senior woman in the federal judiciary. She read newspapers, of course, and had followed the three-year fight over the formation of the new department. But she was startled to be told that she was on the short list to be its first leader.

Usually bearing the media-created label of "moderate liberal," Hufstedler was often included in news articles about potential Supreme Court nominees. But by 1979 it was clear that President Carter wouldn't get a chance to name any justices during his first term. Judge Hufstedler had been quoted in Parade magazine as saying that she had "participated in the women's rights renaissance all my life." Her nuanced selection of the word "renaissance," rather than "movement," was precisely the kind of risk-reducing approach the President was looking for as he prepared to fend off the Kennedy challenge in the Democratic primaries without irritating Republicans in the general election.

"By the time I got there on Friday and started meeting with [Mondale's] people, I realized I wasn't just on the short list, I was the short list," Hufstedler recalled this year as she sat at her desk in the Los Angeles law firm where she is a senior counsel. From Washington, she recounted, she phoned her husband Seth in Pasadena and said, "Please come out. We have to make a major decision on what's going to happen in our life."

On Monday, Hufstedler met with Mondale in the morning and with the President in the afternoon. Their personalities clicked, and the President's decision was disclosed to key members of Congress, who swiftly leaked it to the news media. The official announcement came the next day.

Hufstedler said she believes her prime qualification was that "I hadn't had any political dealings of any kind with anybody in education." Thus she couldn't be attacked as a pawn of the NEA. On the other hand, she knew little about federal education programs.

Her nomination was approved 81-2 by the Senate, where Democrats were glad to have another moderate liberal in the Cabinet, and Republicans had the consolation of knowing that her new assignment would remove a moderate liberal from the federal courts. She was sworn in at the White House on 6 December 1979.

The law that authorized the creation of the new department gave Secretary Hufstedler six months to consolidate and staff a motley collection of more than 150 education-related programs from five departments, 6,000 staff members, and a budget of \$ 13 billion -- the equivalent of more than \$ 23 billion today.

Cora Beebe, a number cruncher from the President's Office of Management and Budget, spent three 18-hour days guiding Hufstedler through thick loose-leaf binders listing and describing each of the more than 150 programs in her budget, explaining what each did, how much each was supposed to cost, and how much each would have to spend to keep up with inflation.

Before the month was over, Secretary Hufstedler had assembled, submitted, defended, and appealed White House budget decisions for the following fiscal year, without the array of issue-identification papers and reactions from staff and program offices that usually smooth the process. "But I was not a novice," she said. The final version kept the figures low by calling for cuts in some programs, such as vocational education, "because we knew that Congress would put the money right back in."

Secretary Hufstedler and the staff she assembled from friends, civil servants, and educational administrators from outside Washington borrowed office space in several government buildings, including one partly occupied by NASA and another in a part of Washington inauspiciously called Buzzard's Point.

"We were sitting in each other's laps, desk to desk," recalled Liz Carpenter, who flew in from Austin to help out. In an interview, the former press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson said, "If you wanted to stand up, you had to ask someone else to move."

The departments that had to give up programs tried to transfer as few employees and job slots as possible to the new department. But, Hufstedler said, "Liz knew the ins and outs of Washington, and where the bodies were buried."

Donna Shalala, an up-and-coming assistant secretary of HEW who years later would become secretary of health and human services under President Bill Clinton, helped put together a policy development process and screen job applicants.

Education associations were aghast at being sidelined while Hufstedler's inner circle put together an organizational chart. Finally, the secretary agreed to a grueling series of meetings with more than 100 delegations, many from Washington-based associations she'd never heard of. "They'd ask what would happen to this or that program, and I'd say, 'That hasn't been decided yet,'" she recalled.

Poking, prodding, improvising, and persisting, Hufstedler handily beat her 180-day deadline by a month and two days. The department was formally established on Sunday, 4 May 1980.

A Salute to ED

The weeklong "Salute to Education" that surrounded the opening of the U.S. Department of Education in 1980 was scheduled to conclude May 7 on the South Lawn of the White House with two events -- a commencement-like ceremony for 1,200 people in the afternoon and a concert for a select portion of the guests that night.

Wednesday dawned warm and hazy, with the temperature on its way to the day's high of 81 degrees. Liz Carpenter reminded colleagues to tell curious reporters that the week's activities had cost "less than \$ 100,000."

An errand brought President Jimmy Carter back into the family quarters on the second floor of the White House. He heard his wife Rosalynn giving a violin lesson to Amy, then 12 years old. In another room, a TV set was murmuring. The President paused to watch country singer Loretta Lynn and her mother, Clara Webb, being interviewed on a morning news show.

The country superstar's formal schooling had ended when she graduated from eighth grade and married Mooney Lynn; she was barely 14. But she had risen to become one of the most prominent of the entertainers, artists, teachers, officials, and advocates who had accepted White House invitations to bring their "most significant teacher" to the ceremony to witness history in the making. Her rags-to-riches autobiographical movie, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, starring Sissy Spacek, was playing in theaters that spring.

Describing the interview that afternoon on the South Lawn, President Carter said, "And Loretta Lynn pointed out that she and her brothers and sisters in Butcher Hollow were inspired as much by her own mother in the home as even the classroom teachers, who changed quite often in that one-room schoolhouse, because the big boys quite often beat up on the female teachers." The new department would help mothers, schoolteachers, and job trainers pass along "a tradition of educational excellence and equal opportunity to Americans of the 21st century," the President declared.

The guests sat on folding chairs on the grass. The Carters and Hufstedler stood on a platform backed by a giant reproduction of a new first-class, 15-cent stamp that proclaimed, "Learning Never Ends." Carter led the throng in singing along with a grade school chorus piping "America the Beautiful."

Congratulating those who won the rugged, arm-twisting legislative fight, the President told them: "Because of you, today, there is a full-fledged, Cabinet-level department of education and a chair in the White House, not many yards from here, in the Cabinet Room, marked Secretary of Education." Carter predicted the new department would help education in three ways:

It will make education programs more responsive. It will make those who administer and who carry out those programs more accountable to the students and to our people. And most important of all, it will heighten attention to education and the challenges it and we face today.

Amy, a public school student introduced as standing in for all the children ever raised in the White House or in America, then pulled the cord that unfurled the departmental flag. It was based on an official seal chosen by Secretary Hufstedler, working with the U.S. Army Heraldry Directorate. Hufstedler described the symbols as an acorn (the seed of knowledge and the never-ending renewal of life and

learning) beneath an oak tree (strength and shelter) in front of the sun's rays (the light of learning). She warned that the tree also served as "a gentle poetic lesson on natural limits."

"None of us can really educate a child any more than we can make a tree," Hufstedler said. "A child's education is a natural process of growth and interaction, which begins at home first, with his family, . . . [and] continues long after school days are over."

That evening, signs of the limits of all human endeavors filled the sky. Sporadic showers forced the guests to move at 8:10 p.m. from the lawn to the shelter of Constitution Hall for the evening's program -- tributes to their "most significant" teachers by Lynn and other artists and entertainers, ranging from opera baritone Robert Merrill to sculptor Louise Nevelson.

The rain ceased during the show. Mrs. Carter invited everyone to walk two blocks back to the White House, where she served strawberry shortcake and champagne.

ED's Acorn

The acorn that grew into Hufstedler's new department was planted shortly after the Civil War. Called the Department of Education, but in reality a low-level agency headed by a commissioner, that original agency was established by a law steered through Congress by a reform-minded Ohioan, Republican Rep. James Garfield. A Civil War general who had been a classics professor and president at Hiram College, Garfield would later be elected President of the United States.

Rep. Garfield acted after receiving a petition for the formation of an education bureau from state school superintendents in the nine-year-old National Education Association, which had been formed to promote professional teaching, information exchanges among educators, improvements in existing public schools, and the spread of publicly funded school systems to all states and territories. Garfield's bill was passed by the House in 1866. It was approved without change by the Senate the following year and was signed into law by President Andrew Johnson on 2 March 1867.

The act spelled out the department's official mission, which remained in place even after Congress cut its budget and downgraded it to an office and then to a bureau of the Department of the Interior within two years. The bureau was put in charge of "collecting such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several States and Territories, and of diffusing such information respecting the organization and management of school systems and methods of teaching as shall aid the people of the United States in establishing and maintaining efficient school systems, and otherwise promote the cause of education."

why would he do such a thing?

✓ The suggestion in the NEA petition that the bureau be empowered to find out whether states had wasted the land grants they received for educational purposes under the Morrill Act didn't make it into the bill. The legislation sped through Congress partly because the 1860 Census results, which were published over the next six years, showed rising illiteracy within the all-male electorate, according to Answers to Inquiries About the U.S. Bureau of Education, Its Work, and History, a pamphlet published by the bureau in 1883.

By 1866, the recent Civil War had "upset the social laws and systems of 11 lately rebellious and five loyal States by causing the freedom of the African to be accomplished, and enfranchising at least one million colored male adults, who from their past training, intellectual, moral, and physical, were but poorly furnished with the experience or the knowledge necessary for the discharge of the grave duties to which their new citizenship called them." Furthermore, wrote Charles Warren, the physician chosen by Education Commissioner John Eaton to write the pamphlet, "The white population of the country has

get bit of him

been seriously modified during the war by the casualties of that condition and the great immigration of foreign men tempted by large bounties to enlist in the armed service of the Union or by high wages to engage in the numerous industries which were producing food, clothing, ammunition and equipage for its use."

Henry Barnard, the first federal education commissioner, had spent three decades agitating for such education reforms as blackboards, age grouping of students, and publicly financed schools. After three years of conflict in Washington with politicians who sensed his disdain for politics, he resigned under fire. His vigorous efforts to spread public education throughout the defeated South and burgeoning western territories had fanned charges of federal intrusion into state and local affairs. HC

Barnard was succeeded by Eaton, a politically savvy former minister who had impressed President Ulysses S. Grant when Eaton was a general organizing care for slaves who slipped past the Union lines to seek freedom during the Civil War. Named commissioner in 1870, Eaton adopted low-profile tactics that extended his tenure through 1887 and fostered the apolitical timidity that kept the bureau (or office, as it was called during some periods) alive for more than a century. Eaton assigned the responsibility for evidence collection and analysis to mature "schoolmen" who could be trusted to avoid writing anything that could be interpreted as an attempt to control any schools.

Most of the reports from the bureau were bland. One schoolman thanked Eaton profusely for a report that, when decoded, amounted to a recommendation against seating students so that they faced directly into the sun, because this made them squint. The thickest publication of the new bureau was the Annual Proceedings of the NEA -- hundreds of pages of observations and theories addressed by NEA members to one another. ★★

President Calvin Coolidge assured the NEA's annual meeting in 1924 that he wanted Congress to create a Cabinet-level Department of Education and Relief. But that plan died when the enthusiasm of the NEA and other supporters failed to match the panic of the Catholic, anti-tax, and patriotic groups that testified against the change.

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt tucked the education office in alongside Social Security and some other New Deal agencies in his new Federal Security Agency. The FSA was then folded into the new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1953. And there the office floundered amid the desegregation tensions that followed the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The office's duties included distributing checks for federal impact aid, which helps public schools that lose tax revenue or gain students because they are near untaxable federal property. The office continued to send impact aid to segregated schools.

Then came the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It not only empowered the victims of discrimination, it convinced many white Southern legislators that they had lost the fight to keep segregated public schools. Many decided that, rather than kill school-aid bills by adding anti-desegregation amendments, they'd try to get federal funds to carry out the federal mandate.

During a striking 10-year period between 1965 and 1975, federal support for education exploded under the prodding of Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford. Congress agreed during that decade to create huge new programs that spent millions (and then billions) of dollars to facilitate desegregation, to help disadvantaged students in the elementary and secondary schools, to subsidize loans and award grants to low-income college students, and to assist states in meeting their constitutional duty to provide a free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities.

HEW's office had not been prepared for this load. Francis Keppel, who had been dean of the Harvard

Graduate School of Education, was its commissioner from 1962 to 1965. He found its structure more Byzantine than his university's.

He had no say in education-related programs housed outside of HEW -- or even some of those within it, such as Head Start or vocational rehabilitation. Keppel couldn't even find out how much his subordinates were spending, because each program kept its own set of books -- sometimes in handwritten ledgers. One sardonic auditor described its cash controls as "the honor system."

As the office's missions started to grow, Keppel shuffled programs and created central controls for finance, policy, and personnel. But the reforms were complicated by a culture clash between the traditional education professionals, some of whom weren't even recruited until they were older than 50, and the young generalists hired to manage the new programs.

Education at the federal level limped along under a long string of short-term commissioners, until it was frog-marched into the newly created U.S. Department of Education in 1980. Two old-timers claimed gleefully in separate interviews this year that, during the transition from an office to a department, some of Hufstedler's newcomers found that the education expert who had been moved out to make room for them had nailed shut his old office's doors.

ED's Future

A week after helping Hufstedler launch ED, Carter presided over a ceremony at which HEW lost not just its E, but its W. The department was renamed Health and Human Services, thanks to an amendment to the education department law by Sen. Muriel Humphrey (D-Minn.). She had argued successfully that "welfare" had acquired negative political connotations.

Carter did fend off Kennedy's preconvention challenge, but he was trampled in the fall by Ronald Reagan, a Republican whose platform included the abolition of the U.S. Department of Education.

Clearly, forming new departments isn't a guarantee of reelection. But that doesn't mean that the bureaucratic box-shifting in 1980 wouldn't affect the real world over the next 25 years.

"With the movement of OCR [the Office for Civil Rights] from HEW to the Education Department, it developed specialists in education enforcement and won some important precedents," said Bernice (Bunny) Sandler, a senior scholar at the Women's Research and Education Institute. "On the other hand, they're almost as slow as ever, and they've neglected enforcement of Title IX rights for girls in the elementary and secondary schools."

Chester Finn, the former Moynihan aide, became an assistant secretary under William Bennett, the second of President Reagan's three secretaries of education. Finn doesn't think the change from HEW to ED mattered. He pointed out that a department, like a bureau, can be inefficient at times, unwieldy, faction riven, even ill staffed or poorly managed. But, he said, civil servants in either type of organization will try to do what Congress and the President command.

"I don't think Cabinet status mattered. It's essentially a cupboard in which a bunch of federal programs are located, some of which are effective and some of which are a waste of money," Finn said in an interview. "Bush wanted Rod Paige to be an effective implementer and salesman for No Child Left Behind, and Paige gave every sign of enjoying his chance to carry out that assignment."

But in a separate interview, President Reagan's third secretary of education, Lauro Cavazos, demurred. "I never did support the concept of getting rid of the department. Even a Cabinet secretary has a hard

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time gaining enough visibility to make sure there's a national focus on education," said Cavazos, the only secretary to serve under two presidents (Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush).

President Bush eased out Cavazos in order to bring in former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, an enthusiastic supporter of the America 2000 goals that grew out of the historic education summit that involved Bush and the nation's governors in 1989.

But Cavazos said that even his own brief stint in the Cabinet gave him a chance to influence not just the Presidents under whom he served but those who have followed as well. Programs set up during his 27-month tenure continue to remind policy makers of the unique educational needs of Hispanic Americans and American Indians, Cavazos said.

Two secretaries of education, Republican Terrel (Ted) Bell, appointed by President Reagan, and Democrat Richard Riley, appointed by President Bill Clinton, valued the department so much that they fought tooth and nail against dismantling it. Bell, a former U.S. commissioner of education, was convinced by Reagan to return to Washington from Salt Lake City to become secretary of education until the demolition of the department was complete. Bell immediately announced that it was the department, not its programs, that had to go. He commissioned astoundingly complex and lengthy studies of where to put the programs after his department went down the tubes. The only option he ruled out was the simplest -- voiding the 1979 law and sending most of ED back into a department like HEW. Bell had been there, done that, and never wanted to return.

By the time the investigations of options petered out, the matter was moot, thanks in part to a jeremiad called *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. It was the official report of a "National Commission on Excellence in Education" that Bell created after President Reagan's staff turned down his suggestion for a "Presidential commission" on the same topic.

White House staff members were told in April 1983 that the report would criticize education without calling for more federal spending. They decided to give it maximum exposure by having the President accept it at the White House.

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war," thundered the report. "As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves." Suddenly, on the strength of such impassioned rhetoric, education shot to the top of the public agenda. Harvard historian Patricia Albjerg Graham once said that, of all the reports that analyzed American education during those years, "it was the only one that caught the public imagination."

Educators protested that schools weren't that awful. Researchers dissected and refuted the pedagogical assumptions of the report's authors. Scholars scoffed at its selective use of statistics. "Things were bad, but they weren't that bad," Jay Sommer, the only teacher on the commission, would concede 20 years later. "We thought we could improve education if we caught people's attention."

Few of the cures proposed by *A Nation at Risk*, among them calls for a longer school day and a longer school year, were ever widely adopted. But the report's diagnosis still resonates in poll after poll: while parents almost always praise their own child's public school, they think many of the others are in sad shape.

Members of Congress carefully monitor public sentiment. Finn said that, during Reagan's second term, the President "couldn't even find a single member of Congress to introduce the elimination bill on his behalf."

"I thought then, and I think now, that the department was important and worthwhile," says Riley, a former governor of South Carolina whose eight years under Clinton made him the only Democrat among Hufstedler's seven successors. He and Clinton fought off the most recent flurry of attempts to abolish the department, which came after the 1994 elections gave Republicans control of the House of Representatives for the first time in half a century. Clinton's veto threats stymied the abolitionists, and they lost credibility during a series of government shutdowns over budget disagreements.

The effort fizzled out when Clinton won reelection in 1996, after a campaign in which he could orchestrate choruses of indignation merely by declaring in an incredulous tone, "Would you believe it? They even want to abolish the Department of Education!"

Rod Paige, the first African American to become secretary of education and a graduate of racially segregated schools, had the unenviable task of explaining and enforcing the most demanding and complex K-12 education law in the department's history, the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The former Houston superintendent of schools did so with gusto, but without much high-profile backing from President George W. Bush, who was preoccupied with the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.

President Bush's pugnacious secretary's four years in office were punctuated by his penchant for unproductive controversies, including lashing out at NEA leaders as "terrorists" in off-the-cuff remarks, making misleading claims that all states were complying with the new law, and contracting with a public relations firm that slipped money to conservative pundit Armstrong Williams to plug the new law and that created video news releases that were aired on news programs without being identified as government propaganda.

On the other hand, Paige undercut attacks on the department by fiscal conservatives. Under his direction, the department conducted an extensive investigation that scotched suspicions of financial corruption under the Democrats, completed Riley's multi-year plan for more efficient methods of issuing and tracking student loans, launched a system of weekly reports on the performance and spending of each program, and earned three consecutive "clean" annual reports from outside auditors.

This year, the department has about 4,400 employees (down 1,600 since 1980) and a budget of just over \$ 71 billion (up some \$ 48 billion in real terms since 1980). It operates more than 200 programs (up by about 50 since 1980) and has been directed by Congress to fund a list of more than 1,000 one-time, local projects that together cost more than \$ 390 million.

Margaret Spellings, a former lobbyist for Texas school boards, was plucked by President Bush from his White House staff to succeed Paige in enforcing the law that she and other longtime associates of the President helped to draft. "I think it will be administered more sensibly under the new secretary," said Susan Frost, president of Education Priorities and a former senior advisor to Riley. Spellings endorsed the President's request that Congress stop earmarking pork-barrel projects and cut spending on 42 regular education programs in order to free up money for others.

In Johnson County, Kentucky, where Loretta Lynn was raised, Orville Hamilton, superintendent of schools, said that 70% of the public school students are poor enough to qualify for federally supported free or reduced-price lunches. Children from Butcher Hollow now start out at the recently expanded, computer-equipped Porter Elementary School. It has more than 30 classrooms for the 460 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, and it also houses a federally funded Head Start program.

Dropout rates among students 14 and older have diminished, partly because all students spend their first

year at the high school in the more personal atmosphere of a freshman academy housed in a separate wing. Title I aid for the disadvantaged helps, but, Hamilton says, "I've got to tell you: cutting federal education programs and putting unfunded federal mandates out there without the money to implement them doesn't make sense to me."

Meanwhile, Lynn's yellow, one-room schoolhouse was abandoned long ago. Reached at his hardware store in Butcher Hollow, Herman Webb, her brother, said, "It's still sitting there, but it's about to collapse."

1. For detailed accounts of the legislative and lobbying confrontation, see Baryl Radin and Willis Hawley, *The Politics of Federal Reorganization: Creating the U.S. Department of Education* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1988); and **Robert V. Heffernan**, *Cabinetmakers: Story of the Three-Year Battle to Establish the U.S. Department of Education* (Lincoln, Neb.: Writer's Showcase, 2001). Radin and Hawley were members of President Carter's reorganization team; Heffernan was on Sen. Ribicoff's staff.

ANDREW MOLLISON has been a Washington correspondent since 1974.

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