

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### **"Everybody Counts: A Report to the Nation on the Future of Mathematics Education"**

National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418. 114 pp. \$7.95. A report by the National Research Council.

Of the familiar "three R's," reading and writing have aroused the most concern in today's debates over school reform. Yet "numeracy" is no less important than literacy, notes the U.S. National Research Council (NRC).

"No longer just the language of science, mathematics now contributes in direct and fundamental ways to business, finance, health, and defense."

Yet, from elementary schools to universities, today's dismal mathematics education acts as a "filter" rather than a "pump." On the path from

high school through college, the number of students taking courses in math drops by 50 percent each year. Outmoded curricula are partly to blame; so is the uniquely American attitude that success in math is more a matter of innate ability than hard work. Bad teaching hurts. Of the nation's 200,000 high school math teachers, more than half do not meet professional standards.

The trends are discouraging. During the 1970s, U.S. colleges graduated some 27,000 math majors annually; the number is now down to 16,000. The num-

ber of math Ph.D.'s awarded annually in the United States has dropped by nearly 50 percent since 1970, and more than half of today's recipients are foreigners.

Needed to reverse the trend, says the NRC, is reform in local schools. Mathematics teachers (not, as in the past, education theorists) have already created a new set of national curriculum standards. To make them work, however, public officials, teachers, and parents will have to demonstrate a new seriousness about mathematics education.

### **"The Ideology of Illiberalism in the Professions: Leftist and Rightist Radicalism among Hungarian Doctors, Lawyers, and Engineers, 1918-45."**

A paper presented at the Wilson Center on December 12, 1988.

Author: *Mária M. Kovács*

During the early 20th century, the emerging professions of medicine, law, and engineering were widely regarded in the West as the bulwark of liberal, democratic values.

That notion was dealt a blow in Germany, where many professionals became early followers of Adolf Hitler. But the German experience was not unique; notes Kovács, of Hungary's Institute of History. In England and America, the 1920s and '30s saw physicians and technocrats incubating a variety of far-Right and far-Left schemes, from eugenics to a world of Soviet Engineers.

Such notions had their greatest impact in lands where the

political and economic disorder was most severe after World War I, such as Hungary.

Hungary's engineers moved Left during World War I, as a spurt of technological growth and wartime controls on business opened vistas of a planned economy. The engineers "came to look upon the forces of the market as irrational . . . preventing mechanization from yielding its full benefits," writes Kovács. By 1919, when Béla Kun's communist regime ruled briefly, about half of the nation's engineers belonged to the Socialist Union of Engineers.

Thereafter, Hungary was governed by a succession of

conservative and right-wing leaders. In 1920, radical rightist engineers formed an anti-Semitic group called the Hungaria; within a decade, 4,000 of the nation's 10,000 engineers were members.

Like their socialist predecessors, they decried capitalism and longed to be summoned into service as a technocratic elite to govern the nation. In 1933, one writer pleaded for a Hungarian "Mussolini who would lock up all the experts, not to allow them to leave until they present the modern concept of this country."

The engineers were active in parliament; under Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös (1932-36),

several held cabinet jobs.

After Gömbös died in 1936, the engineers increasingly concentrated on purging the profession of Jews. Yet, even as Hungary became a reluctant ally of Nazi Germany after 1939, the radical engineers

were relegated to the margins of power

Much the same pattern was followed by Hungary's doctors, says Kovács: the swing from far Left to far Right, the inability to compromise, ultimate political impotence. Only Hun-

gary's lawyers clung to their liberal ideals. After World War II, the legal profession was virtually abolished by the Communists; most physicians and engineers, however, were assimilated into the new order "with impressive ease."

---

### "Where We Live"

Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020. 319 pp. \$18.95.

Author: *Irving Welfeld*

"Subsidized rental housing in the United States has come a long way," writes Welfeld, an official of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). "Starting as a solution to a problem, it became a problem."

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Housing Act of 1937, which inaugurated public housing in the United States, was perhaps "the most radical piece of legislation passed in American history," according to Welfeld. Unlike other aid to the poor, public housing "raises the prospect of leaving the recipient better off than the donor," since many taxpayers, sometimes little better off than the recipients, remain in older, less desirable dwellings. This contradiction, says Welfeld, has haunted the politics of public housing ever since.

In 1937, Congress partly sidestepped the problem by limiting public housing largely to the "deserving" poor; local administrators were told that "the families to be selected had to be reasonable rent risks." The formula was relatively successful. But in 1949, in part out of fears that government was competing with the private sector, Congress redirected the

program toward the very poor. No longer would local administrators be permitted to keep welfare recipients out of public housing.

As more and more "high risk" tenants were admitted to "the projects," subsidy costs soared; the apartments deteriorated. The 1949 program authorized construction of 810,000 apartments in six years; it took 20 years to meet the target.

During the 1960s, as part of the Great Society, Lyndon B. Johnson launched a variety of programs; now the subsidies were provided chiefly to private sector builders, in the form of mortgage subsidies to build houses and apartments for "low- and moderate-income" families. However, Congress, says Welfeld, understood neither the powerful leveraging effects of the mortgage subsidies nor the tax incentives of depreciation, which allowed developers to ignore high construction costs. By 1970, Washington found itself subsidizing nearly 25 percent of the nation's new housing construction. Ironically, most of the new dwellings were too expensive for the very poor.

In 1973, the Nixon adminis-

tration suspended most of the Great Society programs, plagued by developers' defaults and rising costs, and pegged all its hopes to HUD's so-called Section 8 program. Section 8 offered subsidized rents to encourage developers to build housing for the poor.

Again neglecting to do some simple arithmetic, Washington failed to realize that, because of peculiar subsidy formulas, inflation doomed HUD to rapidly growing outlays. By the time the Reagan administration killed the Section 8 program—and virtually all federal efforts to build new housing for the poor—the federal government was committed to paying hundreds of billions of dollars over 20 years for 800,000 units.

What next? Welfeld favors voucher-like subsidy "certificates" for poor families renting existing housing. He recommends limited incentives for developers of new housing for the poor. By providing rent subsidies for the first tenants to move into new subsidized housing but not for subsequent tenants, Washington could expand construction for the poor without committing itself to costly long-term financing.