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Eagle Scout and Cub Scout Punished under 'Zero Tolerance' Rules

Bizarre discipline incidents in New York State and Delaware this fall highlighted the problems with "zero tolerance" policies that impose strict punishments on students who accidentally commit technical violations of school policies.

Matthew Whalen, a senior at Lansingburgh High School in Troy, New York, kept a two-inch-long utility knife in his car, as part of a survival kit including a sleeping bag, water, and a ready-to-eat meal. Whalen is an Eagle Scout and the recipient of a Life-Saving Heroism award from Boy Scouts of America. As a Boy Scout, he is well-schooled in knife safety and the practical uses for knives in camping and other outdoor activities. The tiny knife, which never left his locked car un-



Matthew Whalen

til a school official asked Whalen to get it, earned Whalen a 20-day suspension which will remain on his permanent record.

Another student told a school administrator that Whalen had a knife in his car. Whalen immediately acknowledged that he had the knife when the administrator asked him about it. Whalen's initial five-day suspension was lengthened by another 15 days when Lansingburgh Central School District Superintendent George J. Goodwin reviewed the case. In a written statement, Goodwin said that the school district has "an established policy of zero tolerance with respect to the possession of weapons of any kind on school property or in school buildings."

The district's "zero tolerance" policy,

however, appears nowhere in its written policies. Instead, the district's rule book is silent on zero tolerance, and the high school's policies say that "students may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from school," for engaging in violent conduct, which can include merely "possessing a weapon." Clearly, this rule allows suspensions but does not mandate them, and leaves the length of the suspension to the superintendent's discretion. (Fox News, 10-13-09, 10-18-09)

Supt. Goodwin told the *Albany Times Union* that he believed the punishment was "appropriate and fair." "Sometimes young people do things they may not see as serious. We look at any possession of any type of knife as serious."

In November, the local school board officially refused Matthew's family's request that his suspension be removed from his record. The Whalens plan to ap-

peal the decision to the state Board of Education, a process that will probably take about a year. Happily for Matthew, an admissions official from his dream school, West Point, told the Whalens that West Point is unlikely to weigh his "zero-tolerance" suspension very heavily when they decide whether or not to admit him, given the details of the case. (*Troy Record News*, 11-20-09)



Zachary Christie

The other recent incident, in Newark, Delaware, concerned a six-year-old boy who brought a Cub Scout camping utensil to school. The boy, Zachary Christie, recently joined Cub Scouts and was so excited about his new utensil that he wanted to use it to eat school lunch. The utensil folds out and serves as a combination spoon, fork, and knife. School officials charged Zachary with violating the district's zero-tolerance policy, and sentenced him to 45 days in the district's reform school.

Christina School District's policy instructs school officials to suspend students who bring "weapons" onto campus, "regardless of the possessor's intent." George Evans, president of the district school board, defended the school's decision to suspend Zachary. "There is no parent who wants to get a phone call where they hear that their child no longer has two good seeing eyes because there was a scuffle and someone pulled out a knife," he said. Zachary's mother called the school's actions "out of control" and argued that her son is "not some sort of threat to his classmates."

Debbie Christie chose to homeschool her son instead of sending him to reform school. After the story received national media attention and Mrs. Christie collected tens of thousands of signatures on a petition asking the school board to relent, the board voted to reduce the mandated punishment for kindergarteners and 1st-graders. These young students will now receive suspensions of three to five days, instead of 45. Zachary was allowed to return to school, but his mother, along with other parents, still believes the school's policies need to change. Zachary told the *New York Times* that he learned from the incident "to always ask before taking something new into school." (*New York Times*, 10-11-09, MSNBC.com, 10-14-09)

Soon after the Matthew Whalen and Zachary Christie incidents, the *New York*

Obama Administration Wants a Longer School Day, School Year

"The challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom," President Obama said earlier this year. He and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, have since reaffirmed that a longer school day and year-round school are among their policy goals for American children. "Young people in other countries are going to school 25, 30% longer than our students here," Duncan told the Associated Press. "I want to just level the playing field."

In fact, children in the Asian nations with outstanding performance on international math and science tests do not spend more hours in school than American children. American children spend 1,146 instructional hours per year in school, on average. Children in Singapore, usually the highest-performing nation in mathematics, spend just 903 instructional hours per year. Instructional hours in other top-performing nations are also lower than in the U.S.: 1,050 in Taiwan, 1,005 in Japan, and 1,013 in Hong Kong.

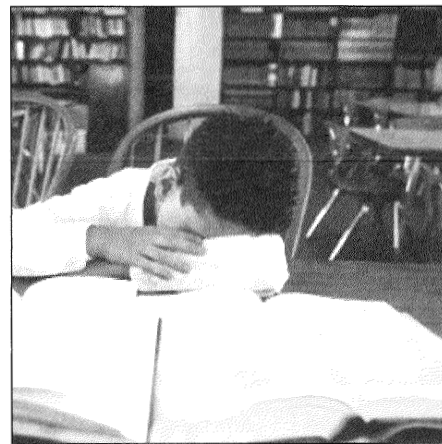
Children in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong do show up for more school days than children in the U.S., although those days are shorter. American public schools in most states spend a minimum of 180 days in school, while the school year in the other three nations runs between 190 and 201 days.

The performance of students in nations outside of Asia also fails to demonstrate a simple correlation between time spent in school and learning. Italian children spend more time in school than American children, yet fare worse on math assessments. Finland, where students spend just 861 hours a year in school, placed first on one of the other interna-

tional tests.

Some American school districts and some charter schools have already experimented with lengthening the school day and year. The KIPP charter school network of 82 public charter schools observes a 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. school day, more than three hours longer than the average. These schools also require students' attendance every other Saturday, and for three extra weeks during the summer. Advocates of the longer school day point out that KIPP students perform better than the averages for their school districts on standardized tests; but opponents add that the difference is actually quite small, and represents a surprisingly low yield from what amounts to more than a 50% increase in the hours students spend in school. It is also difficult to disentangle the results of the extra instructional hours from other factors at play in KIPP schools. Many charter schools with average school days and years also outperform other schools in their districts.

Secretary Arne Duncan favors restructuring American society to position government schools as community centers, open 24 hours a day and meeting needs from health care to extracurricular activities to job training for adults. In discussing the alleged benefits of the longer school day and year, Duncan is quick to cite the child care problems working parents face. "Those hours from 3:00 to 7:00 are times of high anxiety for parents," he said. "They want their children safe. Families are working one and two and three jobs now to make ends meet and to keep food on the table." (As-



sociated Press, 9-28-09)

Peter Berger, a Vermont public school teacher and columnist, directly countered Duncan's reasoning in a recent editorial (*Education Week*, 11-4-09). As Berger notes, the hugely influential 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* warned policymakers that asking schools to solve problems that "the home and other institutions either will not or cannot resolve" exacts a crippling "educational cost." Berger adds that while he tries to keep his own students safe daily, that is not the purpose of public education. "If American homes aren't safe places for children, that's a problem school reform can't fix," he writes.

Berger also incisively critiques the way Duncan and others have dismissed summer vacation as unnecessary and unproductive, a mere relic of yesterday's "agrarian economy." This complaint "ignores a few facts," says Berger:

First, farms are busy places, even when it isn't July and August, like during spring planting and autumn harvest. Second, it's been a hundred years since most Americans lived in the country, let alone on farms. Summer vacation remained a positive aspect of American life even after most

(See *Longer School Day*, page 4)

(See *Zero Tolerance*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Education Secretary Arne Duncan touts preschool as the solution to America's education crisis. In a speech delivered to the National Black Child Development Center, Duncan said he wants the government to offer preschool programs to every child. (*Associated Press*, 10-26-09).

A recent study claims children are less responsible due to minimal household duties. In her examination of more than 300 parenting magazines, Markella Rutherford found that pre-adolescents and adolescents between the 1930s and 1970s were expected to make meaningful contributions to their families, including planning and preparing meals, caring for ill relatives, and even keeping household accounts. In the 1980s, most children were only asked to do trivial chores, such as cleaning their rooms or clearing the dinner table, and were often paid for their efforts. Rutherford notes that "until very recently, greater autonomy and responsibility were emphasized as antidotes to teenage listlessness and rebellion." (*The Observer*, 11-15-09)

Nurses gave swine flu vaccine to at least three students without parental consent in New York public schools. One six-year-old with epilepsy went to the hospital after receiving the shot. School officials at Public School 335 in Crown Heights explained that the child's teacher mistakenly sent the wrong child to the nurse, who did not check the student's name before administering the shot. (*New York Daily News*, 10-30-09)

Los Angeles Unified School District's English learner classes fail to move 29% of students into mainstream English classes by the 8th grade. A new study found that more than half of these students were born in the U.S. and have been in the English learner classes for more than eight years. The proportion of Latino students in the country's second-largest school district is growing, with Latinos comprising about 69% of 12th-graders and 79% of 1st-graders. (*Associated Press*, 10-28-09)

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5, 4, 3, 2, 1: New Grading Scale to Measure Student 'Competencies'

A new grading scale at Concord High School in New Hampshire is just one result of a trend affecting students across New England and the nation. The New Hampshire Department of Education has overseen a state-sponsored effort to move toward "competencies," which proponents have described as having more to do with "what students can do," as opposed to "what students know." This approach to education attempts to promote and measure such areas as "ability to get along with others" and "self-management," which are two of the ten competencies New Hampshire officials want students to master. So far, at least 30 New Hampshire schools have signed up as Competency-Based Assessment Schools.

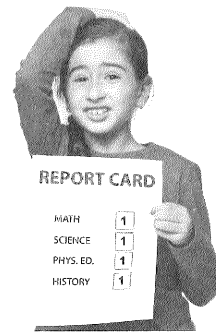
The competency-based assessment movement affects other states, as well. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), a regional accrediting association, has urged New England schools to move away from traditional academic standards and toward competencies. New Hampshire's state-sponsored effort is just one response to NEASC's promotion of this educational trend.

As part of the shift from "standards"

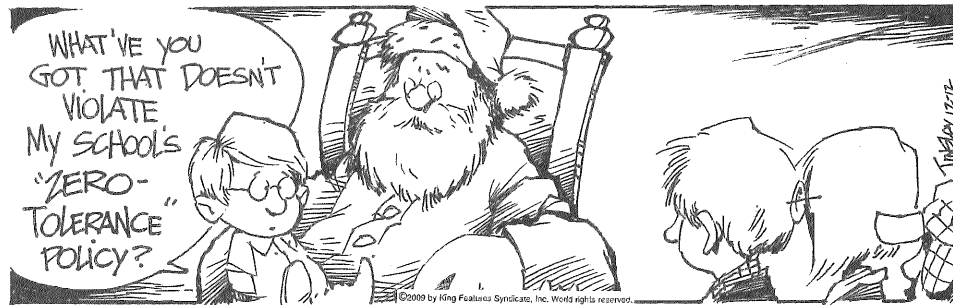
to "competencies," some New Hampshire schools are replacing the traditional A-to-F grading scale with a 5-to-1 scale. Teachers at Concord High School, for example, will mark students' report cards with grades ranging from 1, for students who show no grasp of a given competency, to 5, for students who have mastered it. The school will continue to use a 100-point scale on students' transcripts, used primarily for college admissions. For conversions between the two systems, a 5 counts as 100, a 4 as 92, a 3 as 80, a 2 as 65, and a 1 as 50.

"I'm really excited about the competencies," said Tom Crumrine, director of assessment at Concord High. Crumrine spoke to a group of concerned parents at a meeting in October. "The shift is intended to strip grades of association with judgment, so they become a tool of com-

(See *Grading Scale*, page 4)



MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Campus Reform Website Bolsters Conservatives' Voice on Campus

A new website is equipping conservatives on college campuses for more effective activism and leadership. The website, CampusReform.org, is an effort by the Leadership Institute, which has worked since 1979 to strengthen the future of conservative leadership in America.

The site describes itself as a "one-stop resource, networking, and instruction center for conservative activists to take back their campuses from leftist domination."

Connecting up-to-date communications technologies to a principled stand for limited government, the free market, national defense, and traditional values, CampusReform.org makes possible a new generation of student activism to identify, expose, and combat the radical left.

A frequently updated national blog page displays posts and links to articles of special interest to campus

conservatives. In November, the national blog covered Obamacare and

Climategate very actively, especially the debate on these two issues on campuses. Conservative group leaders use

the national blog to report on successful events and share other information that leaders will find useful. Users can also access subpages for all 2,376 American four-year colleges. Each subpage contains information about that college's conservative groups, as well as blog pages and discussion forums that conservatives on that campus can use to discuss issues specific to their own locations.

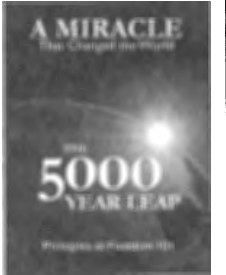
Campus Reform connects young conservatives not only to each other, but also to other national groups and resources that many will find useful. For example, the site offers information about 34 different legal defense groups that currently work to protect free speech on campus and to cry foul when

(See *Campus Reform*, page 4)

Book of the Month



The 5000 Year Leap, by Cleon Skousen, National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1981, 7th printing June 2006, 337 pp, \$19.95



A remarkable book was published back in 1981 called *The 5000 Year Leap: A Miracle That Changed the World* by Cleon Skousen. It had a fair sale, then for many years just gathered dust on bookshelves. This year, the television commentator Glenn Beck recommended reading this book, and it suddenly rose to the top three of Amazon book sales.

The title explains the author's belief that the U.S. Constitution was a miracle that brought about more human progress than was made in the previous 5,000 years. Skousen explains the Founders' problem: how to avoid setting up another tyranny in place of the one they had shaken off. Political thinkers had advocated separation of powers since the time of the ancient Greeks, but the United States was the first country to separate the power of government into three branches.

Author Skousen explains the 28 principles of freedom that inspired our Constitution, and became the foundation of our great nation. Many books have been written on these subjects, but *The 5000 Year Leap* distinguishes itself by its systematic presentation and explanation of the Founders' political philosophy.

A free people cannot survive under self-government unless they remain virtuous and morally strong. The only reliable basis for sound government and just human relations is Natural Law. The most promising method of securing a virtuous people is to elect virtuous leaders. Without religion, the government of a free people cannot be maintained. The proper role of government is to protect equal rights, not to provide equal things. The God-given right to govern is vested in the sovereign authority of the whole people.

Life and liberty are secure only so long as the rights of property are secure. The highest level of prosperity occurs when there is a free-market economy and a minimum of government regulations. Only limited and carefully defined powers should be delegated to government, all others being retained by the people. Strong local government is the keystone to preserving human freedom.

Based on these principles, the United States Constitution turned out to be a dynamic success formula that gave America a 5,000 year leap and enabled our nation to become a land of liberty and prosperity that is the envy of the world.

FOCUS: Is the Family Court System Totalitarian?

by Jennifer Roback Morse, Ph.D.

In 2007, the media had a feeding frenzy around a voice-mail message actor Alec Baldwin left his daughter. He screamed at her for not answering her phone. The public was shocked: many assumed that he was yet another self-absorbed celebrity, with neither control over himself nor regard for his daughter. But in fact, Baldwin had been caught in the web of the totalitarian nightmare known as the American family court system. His book, *A Promise to Ourselves*, tells his particular story, while Stephen Baskerville's book, *Taken Into Custody*, presents the general problem of which Baldwin's story is a particular case.

Alec Baldwin is a divorced father, who had been fighting for six years to have some semblance of a normal relationship with his child. Baldwin's estranged wife, actress Kim Basinger, had been using the family court system to prevent him from doing what most fathers take for granted: seeing his child, talking with his child, and watching her grow up. *A Promise to Ourselves* chronicles in sickening detail how the court system serves the most vindictive and ruthless parent.

Even without the book, astute observers of this case realized that something was slightly strange about the claims that Baldwin should be denied access to his child. For instance, who released the tape of the call to the public? None other than Basinger and her attorney, in an attempt to smear Baldwin. What kind of mother would use her daughter as a pawn in a spiteful power game with the child's father? And, what was the "back story" to this particular phone call? Despite having court authorization for phone contact with his daughter, her cell phone would be turned off for long periods of time. On this particular occasion, she was on spring break with her mother and her phone had been turned off for ten days. Moreover, isn't this odd all by itself that a father who has committed no crime has to have court permission to speak to his own child?

Now, what the media made Baldwin out to be is conceivable: an abusive, out-of-control father who has inflicted irreparable harm on his daughter through verbal abuse. Yet even if the worst about Baldwin were true (by the way, he offers no excuses for yelling at his daughter), his portrait of the Los Angeles County Family Court remains imminently valuable, as it reveals the extent of power that family courts wield over ordinary citizens. His account cannot be easily dismissed, given the extent of detail that he provides and the fact that it accords with too many other reports of family courts. As he tells his story, the leading character and the true villain is the Los Angeles Family Court

system: Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Shylock all rolled into one. Even from the viewpoint of a wealthy and famous man, Baldwin generates plenty of sympathy for the obscure and the less wealthy of both sexes who are caught in the grip of the family court.

He first noticed the financial intrusion. During "financial settlement conferences," both husbands and wives must reveal all their assets. While Baldwin accepts the necessity of preventing people from hiding their true net worth, he noticed this side effect: "The lawyers on both sides now know, inarguably, how much money you have and, therefore, how deeply into this hole you can go. And they do not hesitate to throw you down as deeply as they possibly can." Throughout the rest of the story, the lawyers extract as much money as possible from him.

But money isn't the half of it. Baldwin had to continually look over his shoulder at the court and its representatives to ensure that he did not run afoul of their requirements. He tells of the menagerie of minions appointed by the court to manage the divorcing process and the inevitable post-divorce conflict: forensic accountants, custody evaluators, therapists, visitation supervisors, parenting class instructors, anger management instructors. These are all professionals that most people normally never see, but who have abnormally large impacts on the lives of divorcing families. Think of this: the courts and their appointees are controlling the day-to-day lives of a man innocent of any wrongdoing. A negative report from any one of these professionals can jeopardize a father's chances of having more time with his own child.

Baldwin does not discuss the ease of divorce ushered in by the no-fault divorce revolution. Like most Americans, Baldwin has probably made peace with no-fault divorce, believing easy divorce to be an enhancement of individual liberty. But Baldwin's story of his life after Basinger decided she had no use for him illustrates that the opposite is more true. Easy divorce opens the door for an unprecedented amount of government intrusion into ordinary people's lives. This unacknowledged reality is the subject of *Taken Into Custody*, by Stephen Baskerville. With penetrating insight, the political scientist exposes the truly breathtaking consequences of no-fault divorce for the expansion of state power and the decline of personal autonomy.

First, no-fault divorce frequently means unilateral divorce: one party wants a divorce against the wishes of the other,

who wants to stay married. Kim Basinger dumped Baldwin for no particular reason, unleashed the power of the Los Angeles Family Court system to inflict pain on him and, in the process, inflicted untold damage on their child. Second, the fact that one party wants to remain married means that the divorce has to be enforced. Baldwin wanted to stay married and to continue to be a husband and father. Yet, the coercive and intrusive machinery of the state must be wheeled into action to separate the reluctantly divorced party from the joint assets of the marriage, typically the home and the children.

Third, enforcing the divorce means an unprecedented blurring of the boundaries between public and private life. People under the jurisdiction of family courts can have virtually all of their private lives subject to its scrutiny. If the courts are influenced by feminist ideology, that ideology can extend its reach into every bedroom and kitchen in America. Baldwin ran the gauntlet of divorce industry professionals who have been deeply influenced by the feminist presumptions that the man is always at fault and the woman is always a victim. Thus, the social experiment of no-fault divorce, which most Americans thought was supposed to increase personal liberty, has had the consequence of empowering the state.

Some might think the legacy of no-fault divorce is an example of the law of unintended consequences in operation. That assumes its architects did not intend for unilateral divorce to result in the expansion of the state. But Baskerville makes the case in this book — as well as his 2008 monograph, "The Dangerous Rise of Sexual Politics," in *The Family in America* — that at least some of the advocates of changes in family law certainly have intended to expand the power of the state over the private lives of law-abiding citizens.

Who are these people? They are the Marxists, who call themselves advocates of women: the feminists. Unbeknownst to the general public, the Marxists have had marriage in their cross-hairs from the very beginning. Frederick Engels, Karl Marx's closest collaborator, dreamt of the mythic, pre-historical, pre-capitalist time in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884). Not only was there primitive communism in which property was owned in common, but there was also group marriage, in which the collective raised the children. Men and women lived together in harmony in groups, having sex without becoming possessive and without caring about the biological relationship between parents and children. Sin entered this Garden of Eden, not through a serpent and an apple, but through the rise of private property and capitalism, monogamous marriage, and patriarchy.

This background ideology explains why the Left — whether the Bolsheviks

in Russia in 1917 or the Socialist government of Spain in 2005, both of which placed the liberalization of divorce law among their first items of business — has spent so much effort attacking the family in general and

marriage in particular. The goal is to return women into "social production" outside the home, where they can be completely independent of the oppression of men. This, of course, requires the collective rearing of children. It also requires the obliteration of the distinction between the private sphere of the home and the public reach of the law. Many conservatives, who otherwise are very alert to Leftist ideology, have no idea about this entire effort at centralizing power and insinuating the control of the state into the lives of ordinary people.

Baldwin closes his book with an interview with Jeannie Suk, author of an important 2006 *Yale Law Journal* article entitled, "Criminal Law Comes Home." In this article, Suk expresses second thoughts about some consequences of feminist jurisprudence. For this reason, Baldwin thought the young Harvard law professor would have some sympathy for his situation. Nonetheless, even this relatively sensible law professor has drunk deeply from the feminist fountains. As Baldwin comments after his discussion with her family law class of 80 students:

I was surprised to hear a number of women and men — many more than I would have expected — say that women generally are at risk of male violence. A few students, male and female, even thought the law should view the sex act as subordinating of someone and should assume that sex is rape unless women explicitly and verbally give their consent.

Note the Marxist undercurrent here: the sexual act is a special case of class conflict, with the man as the presumed oppressor and the woman the presumed victim.

More troubling is what Professor Suk admits in her interview with Baldwin:

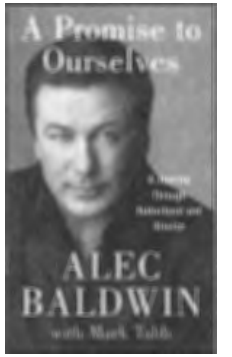
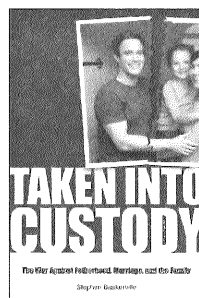
- Governance feminism is the idea that feminism, which once criticized the law from the outside, is today actually in charge in many places in the law — among police, prosecutors, lawmakers, judges and other legal actors. The feminism that often 'governs' today is that strand developed by legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon and that focuses on the subordination of women by men, particularly in intimate and sexual relationships. Her influence on our legal system's understandings of men and women cannot be overstated.

- The overwhelming majority of do-

(See Focus, page 4)



Alec Baldwin and daughter Ireland



Guidance Counselor Could Lose His License for Supporting Marriage

Don Mendell, a guidance counselor at Nokomis Regional High School in Maine, publicly advocated traditional marriage during the controversial Question 1 campaign this fall. Opponents of homosexual marriage gathered 100,000 signatures, twice the required number, to place the issue on the ballot after Maine legislators passed a law creating same-sex marriage in the state.

Guidance counselor Mendell appeared in an ad paid for by the grassroots group Stand for Marriage Maine. In the ad, Mendell asks Maine voters to “vote yes on Question 1 to prevent homosexual marriage from being pushed on Maine students.”

In October, soon after the ad first appeared, a guidance counselor at another school filed an official complaint against Mendell with the state agency that licenses social workers. The complaint calls on the agency to revoke Mendell’s social work license because of his opposition to homosexual marriage.

In her written complaint, the other guidance counselor accuses Mendell of violating the code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. According to the code of ethics, social



workers “should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate in any form of discrimination” based on sexual orientation. Social workers should “act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of and discrimination against” any group of people.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) will represent Mendell in the complaint case. Austin Nimocks, ADF’s senior legal counsel, contends that Mendell “can be completely professional and not discriminate against anyone based on their sexual orientation and still believe that marriage is a union between one man and one woman.” Nimocks said further, “For this man to be threatened with his livelihood because of his beliefs is absolutely ridiculous and frankly unconstitutional.”

The Yes on 1 campaign succeeded, with 53% of Maine voters agreeing in November to overturn the recent same-sex marriage law. Before that victory, Scott Fish of Stand for Marriage Maine said Mendell’s situation demonstrated that the same-sex marriage law posed a serious threat to freedom of conscience. “This latest attack highlights the true agenda of those who demand that marriage be redefined,” said Fish. (*Bangor Daily News*, 10-30-09)

Longer School Day (Continued from page 1)

of us had moved to suburbs and cities, and while we were becoming a superpower.

Berger takes issue with the larger assumption that Duncan and others make about children’s time in and out of school. “Giving children the summer away from school isn’t a waste of their time. Unless we’re saying that being home is a waste of their time.” This appears to be exactly what some proponents of year-round and day-long school are saying.

Berger’s insightful article recommends specific alternatives to solve the problems he doesn’t believe longer school days and years can fix. “If some students need remedial help beyond current school hours, schools can offer it to them, as many already do. But we shouldn’t compel every child to stay just because some

may need to,” he writes. He points out that truancy is a serious problem nationwide, with about 10% of 1st-graders chronically absent from school. In districts where many students are poor, the truancy rate often rises above 50%. Chronically absent students cannot learn. Addressing the problem of truancy would be a practical step for districts and policymakers to take.

Berger continues:

We can also address how many minutes and hours teachers are compelled to spend on classroom management, and how much chaos their students are forced to endure at the hands of a disruptive few because perverse regulations, the threat of litigation, and pipe-dream behavior theories continue to rule in our schools.

Campus Reform (Continued from page 2)

liberal bias invades the classroom at publicly funded universities. Other parts of the site help young conservatives with fundraising, publicity, and creative activism ideas.

“CampusReform.org will dramatically increase the number of battles fought against leftist abuses on college campuses this year,” says conservative activist Morton Blackwell, Leadership Institute’s president and founder. “And based on long experience, conservative students will win most of those new battles as they identify, expose, and combat leftist abuses and bias.”



Grading Scale (Continued from page 2)

munication,” the local paper summarized Crumrine’s explanation of the 1-to-5 scale. (*Concord Monitor*, 10-19-09)

Jonathan Flower, facilitator of the school’s guidance department, was also enthusiastic about the new grading scale. “It’s not just a change in grading but a change in the philosophy of grading,” said Flower. “It’s really trying to get away from value judging a student and getting toward where a student is at that time.”

Flower and Crumrine appear to be saying that students who struggle with class material will be less likely to give

up if they initially receive a grade of “1” rather than a grade of “F.” Decades of research on self-esteem, however, have failed to indicate that teachers can encourage students to learn anything simply by using euphemisms to tell them that they haven’t learned it yet. Concord High School students, presumably, are smart enough to know that an A by any other name still represents mastery of the material — unless, of course, the trend away from traditional subjects and standards goes so far that there is no tangible material left to master.

Zero Tolerance (Continued from page 1)

Times ran a story on another zero-tolerance incident, under the headline, “25 Chicago students arrested for a middle-school food fight.” *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist Michael Smerconish reminisced about a very different headline from 33 years ago: “35 students reprimanded in food-throwing incident.” Smerconish was one of the 35.

In his recent editorial, Smerconish linked the recent food-fight arrests to Zachary Christie’s story, and called for a

return to common sense. “While protecting kids post-Columbine and Virginia Tech is serious business, no would-be school shooter has been deterred by the arrest of two dozen kids tossing mystery meat across a Chicago cafeteria or the tough love dispensed to a 1st-grader who put a Cub Scouts tool in his backpack. School districts would be better served by separating the high jinks from high crimes,” said Smerconish. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11-29-09)

Focus (Continued from page 3)

mestic violence arrests are for misdemeanor crimes, which, by definition, do not involve serious injury. . . . The definition of violence itself has expanded to include a lot of conduct that is not physical violence.

- Family law is an area where we’ve seen feminist developments that prefer wives over husbands and mothers over fathers. . . . The legal vision of the home has increasingly become that of a man being violent toward his wife.
- The legal system has little means to distinguish (protective) orders that actually protect endangered women from those sought for strategic reasons.

Suk doesn’t seem to realize how indicting these statements sound to someone outside the Feminist Legal Theory Game Preserve. In fact, her *Yale Law Journal* article reveals that feminists specifically attack the lines between public and private in the interests of protecting women from domestic violence.

She at least recognizes that the law has gone too far. But her principle complaint is that women’s autonomy interests are compromised. Once the Domestic Violence Machinery has been set into motion, even the victim herself cannot stop it. She reports that approximately 80% of domestic violence victims recant or refuse to cooperate after initially filing criminal charges. But she can’t bring herself to point out the injustice to men of being excluded from their own homes, often with minimal evidence. She has absolutely nothing to say about the harms done to children from being pawns in their parents’ quarrels with each other and with the state. The inertia of 40 years worth of Marxism posing as champions of women is so strong that even someone like Professor Suk cannot bear to distance herself from the term “feminism.”

Likewise, despite the explicit ideologi-

cal position of the Harvard law students, Baldwin cannot bring himself to be angry:

I was fascinated to hear some of these law students talk about the world as though men inevitably have the upper hand in relationships and women’s fear of sexual violence is prevalent and normal, not unusual. This picture was so interesting and so foreign to me. In my own experience, women have lots of power of various kinds, and sexual power works both ways.

Baldwin seems reluctant to conclude that the feminist worldview is not based upon verifiable facts or empirical evidence. The strongest description Baldwin can conjure against the law students is “fascination” and “interesting.” He is so mesmerized by the terminology of “feminism” that he cannot see that the attitudes of Suk’s students are the very toxins that poisoned his life.

Fortunately, we have Professor Baskerville as the great theorist of the feminist influence within the divorce-industrial complex. He sees Marxist feminism for what it is: a totalitarian movement that seeks power and control over every aspect of people’s personal lives. The claim of its foot soldiers to be the sole authentic advocates for women has been questionable for some time. But until Americans see that the goal of modern feminism is raw power, even its victims like Alec Baldwin will have trouble freeing themselves from its iron hand.

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, Ph.D., is the founder of the Ruth Institute, a project of the National Organization for Marriage. The Institute promotes lifelong married love to college students by creating an intellectual and social climate favorable to marriage. Visit RuthInstitute.org and sign up to receive the Ruth Institute’s free newsletter updates on their campus organizing and the latest news from the marriage movement.