U.S. education chief abandons praise, prods Jersey on ills

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that of the Reagan administration.

Bennett often reveled in his public quarrels with educational groups, organizations he collectively characterized as "the blob" or the "educational establishment." During his three years as chief spokesman for Reagan educational policy, Bennett publicly criticized unions for resisting reform, and blamed college and university leaders for the escalating costs of higher education.

The new secretary, who also once served as dean of the Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, insisted his job was to bring "all elements" of education together, and even offered an oblique criticism of the man he replaced:

"If you're going to bring about meaningful change, you've got to involve everybody. You can't leave somebody out, otherwise you're not going to pull it off.

"Maybe that's been part of the problem we've had in the past. We spent too much time saying, 'We're not going to deal with that person or that group.'"

Cavazos rejected specific initiatives pressed by the Reagan administration. While Bennett campaigned vigorously—but unsuccessfully—for months to promote a bill creating educational vouchers that would have enabled parents to choose between public and private schools, Cavazos flatly rejected the idea.

"The federal government is not going to be looking at vouchers. I'm not about addressing that. I'm not proposing that."

Bennett angered Hispanic groups by seeking to limit bilingual education in the nation's schools. Cavazos, whose mother spoke only Spanish in the family's Kingsville, Texas, home, suggested a radically different attitude. He pointed out that some parents might be reluctant to become involved in their children's schools because they don't speak English.

"I know a lot of parents who just won't go to their schools because they don't speak the language. So, then I think the schools should provide people who speak the same language as the parents, so they can understand each other and hear their ideas."

While Bennett doubted the utility of sharply higher salaries for teachers, Cavazos said he wants to make increased pay for teaching one of the main points of the reform effort he terms "restructuring."

"Pay is a piece of restructuring," he said, praising new labor contracts in New York that offer annual salaries to teachers of up to $70,000 in exchange for increases in workload.

"I really think you ought to pay them more. I call it the professionalization of the profession. When you start paying a decent wage, respect for the profession starts to move ahead."

Cavazos does share Bennett's belief that many of the nation's schools are failing. The new education secretary's answer is to "bring people together" to persuade them to press for reforms.

"There's not anyone in this country who is satisfied with the education system we have today. There is this disquietude about it."

He cited recent international surveys showing math achievement of American students last among a number of industrialized nations; science achievement was near the bottom.

"How much longer can this nation be battered by numbers like that and not do anything about it? Restructuring has to start with people becoming more aware of the problem. They're not."

Despite his opposition to vouchers—a system that would allow parents to choose among public and private schools—he insisted that some sense of competition must be created among public schools.

The education secretary even urged parents to demand the elimination of chronically failing schools.

"I really think local communities should look to making these schools better—or closing them down. Why do we permit schools that are not of the highest quality to exist?"

Cavazos, who served in the last four months of the Reagan administration and then was asked by President Bush to stay on, said he viewed a strong emphasis on early childhood education as a major element of restructuring.

He called on communities with declining enrollments to open their empty schools and classrooms to programs for children younger than the traditional school-starting age. He urged businesses to provide financial support for such efforts.

The education secretary declined to offer specific solutions beyond urging competition among schools, strengthening early childhood instruction, using school time more effectively and "professionalizing" teaching.

"I don't think there's any one approach," he said. "The problems we're facing in education are so multi-faceted, I think you're going to have to approach them in many different ways.

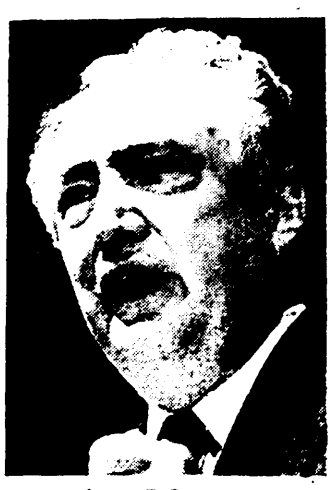
"I know some people have a vision that we're going to do one thing and that's going to change it all. But this (problem) is so difficult, you're going to have to go at it in a lot of different ways."

Cavazos, however, did emphasize the need for parents and teachers to insist on change if they are dissatisfied with their schools. Parents, he said, should both seek change and then be prepared to help run the schools.

"In restructuring, you have to make sure parents and teachers really have a say in what goes on in the schools. That's different from the way most schools are structured now. Now it comes down from the superintendent's office that this is the way to do things.

"I would place the call to parents, to teachers, to everyone: If it is so that you don't want to let this go on, then why don't you do something about this? It must come from parents and teachers who just say this system doesn't work."

The education secretary cautioned against believing the Bush administration—he routinely calls Bush the "education president," a designation the President has sought—would return the federal government to a time when it provided nearly 10 percent of all funds spent on education.



Lauro F. Cavazos
'A ways to go'

Cavazos noted that the federal government provides between 6 and 7 percent of all money spent on the schools, and he called that the "right balance."

Money, the education secretary said, is not the answer. He pointed out that the country already spends $330 billion on education.

"The money is there. The question is, what are you going to do with it?

"When you spend as much money as this nation does on education and you're still dissatisfied with it, more billions are not going to help. Some fundamental changes have to come about."

Orange slows 'drug shop center'

Orange police arrested 17 people yesterday and charged them with possession of cocaine after staking out a public housing project where 16 people had been arrested in a previous raid.

Orange Police Director Charles Cobbertt said his department and the Essex County Sheriff's Department Narcotics Bureau will continue to arrest drug buyers and sellers at the Dr. Walter G. Alexander Court housing complex on Parrow Street and Wilson Place.

Cobbertt termed the corner a "drug shopping center" and said drug trafficking is so prevalent that "we could go out there right now and arrest another 17 more."

On Jan. 12, 16 people were arrested at the same site, he said.

Cobbertt said 16 police officers worked at the location yesterday, watching drug buyers come and go and arresting them after they had purchased cocaine from street dealers.

Cobbertt and acting Police Chief Anthony Benevento have pledged to rid the area of drugs. Cobbertt said yesterday's arrests were slowed down only by a lack of cell space.

Authorities said the buyers are white, black and Hispanic and many come from suburbs like Maplewood, Millburn and South Orange.

Residents at the complex banded together during the summer of 1987 to stand watch at their building doors and keep out dope pushers, users and other undesirables.

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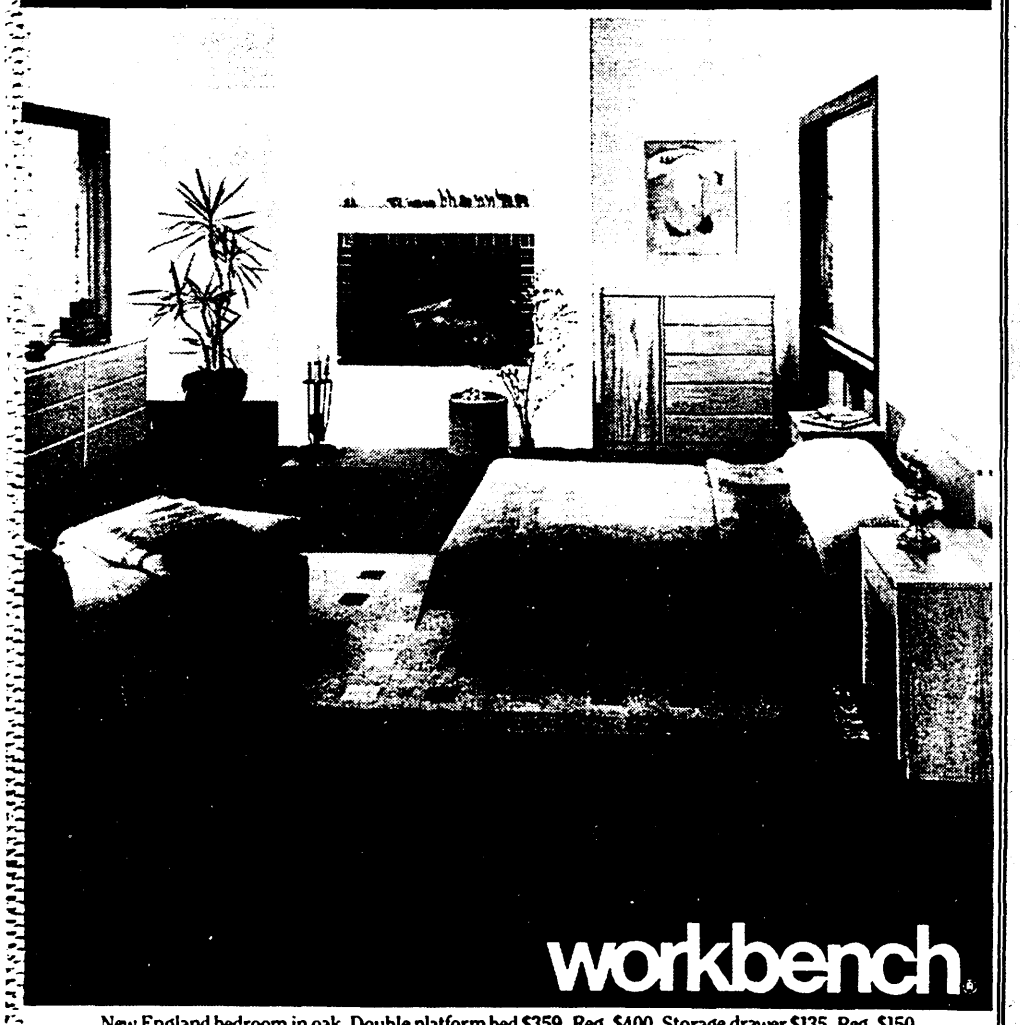

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