

'SECRETARY OF?'

By James Wallace

It's a sad day for the nation with politicians showing up for work wrapped in the flag, while proceeding on a partisan basis to strip out the rights and hopes of school children- our nation's future. Only one voice was needed to stop the candidacy of Betsy DeVos. Will this be one final, malignant act for our public school system, to be looted by "for-profits?" Can we be forging a confederacy of "dunces?"

The problems we collectively face are larger than the consideration of any one candidate. But the candidacy is symbolic of the difficulty we will face going forwards improving the lives of school children. Where is the comprehension of existing laws? Where is the actual demonstrated proficiency for the work at hand? What is the personal experience and connection empathically?

Friends speak up about allowing space and providing time for a new team to be effective and that, "They're all the same." But I ask, effective- and the same- for precisely what? And why this newly discovered appeal to decency and openness in discourse? I am not uncharitable as a former private teacher in the arts, having found myself helping kids in subjects often no longer covered by the public schools, and recently helping with a years-long campaign for achieving arts recognition and revision in the school curriculum (see my article, "4R's"). The idea that somebody who doesn't believe in public education is now "at the helm," may seem like a personal affront, but is more significantly a challenge to our collective futures.

And what about the vouchers, being offered to people who are economically marginalized? The people inventing ideas like this typically don't use the public education system themselves- just ask representatives where they send their kids to school. Vouchers- in lieu of proper funding, staffing and training for existing schools- is an express ticket for taking kids out-of-town, built on a toll-road of privatization. It's an approach to education where "somebody" is going to profit (not necessarily the kids).

So, to those who may continue to espouse/support a spiteful electoral choice(s)? Ms. DeVos, a member of the trust fund "elite"- the very type of person vilified who now represents all our American children- contributed two hundred million dollars in campaign funds. Folks, \$200,000,000.00 buys a lot of pencils. But not at the schools she now represents. Undoubtedly there will be funds made available for additional in-school guards.