

*Launch of the Education Forum Vision Piece*

**A New Deal:  
Making Education Work for All New Zealanders**

Norman LaRocque  
Policy Advisor  
Education Forum  
*[www.educationforum.org.nz](http://www.educationforum.org.nz)*

**The New Zealand Portrait Gallery  
Bowen House  
Wellington, New Zealand**

14 October 2003

---

## **A New Deal: Making Education Work for All New Zealanders**

Honourable Dr Nick Smith, Honourable Brian Donnelly, Deborah Coddington, Bernie Ogilvy, members of the Education Forum, ladies and gentlemen: welcome to the launch of the Education Forum vision piece.

Thank you John. And thank you to our hosts tonight. Welcome ladies and gentlemen.

We are grateful to Nick, Brian, Deborah and Bernie for their willingness to host this event. I want to point out once again that your presence does not necessarily represent an endorsement of the reforms set out in the document. But, rest assured, we'll keep working on you!

I want to speak briefly about the broad themes that underpin the vision piece.

A central premise of *A New Deal* is that there is much good in the New Zealand education system. It serves many New Zealand families well – including mine. And for that it should be applauded.

At the same time, it fails far too many families – especially those in lower socio-economic groups, Maori and Pasifika students. The existence of an educational gap between the haves and the have-nots in New Zealand is clear. That gap needs to be addressed.

*A New Deal* sets out our strategy to lift education standards across the board and to address the significant gap in educational performance.

In general, people propose three strategies for education: more choice, more spending, or more regulating. Because extremists have captured the debate, you would think that these options are mutually exclusive of each other, and that each might be the silver bullet.

But a key theme of this report is that there are no silver bullets in education – whether regulation, more spending or school choice by itself. We at the Education Forum believe that the real solution comes from finding the right balance between these three strategies.

We have identified what we believe is the right balance, which establishes choice and competition as the central force in the system, combined with smarter spending and better regulation.

Any reform must be comprehensive. That is why *A New Deal* sets out a strategy that aims to use all the tools at government's disposal to address the weaknesses in the system.

What is required is a new way of thinking about the role of government and communities in education. The document does not propose a dismantling of government or the removal of all government regulation. Rather, it proposes a new and more appropriate level of smarter regulations. Instead of adding more rules, we are evaluating the current ones.

We propose changes to the way schools are funded and regulated, to the way the teaching profession is regulated and to the way schools are held accountable.

Tinkering with current policies will not suffice. The answer does not lie in piecemeal reforms. The return of bulk-funding, the Targeted Individual Entitlement (TIE) scheme and the removal of zoning – while useful – won't address the fundamental problems with the system.

What is needed is A New Deal. A New Deal For Children, who will be given more choice, more freedom and more opportunities. A New Deal for Parents, who will be empowered with more decision-making authority and better information. And A New Deal for Teachers, who will be shown the trust they deserve, as well as being treated and paid as the professionals that they are.

I would also like to reassure the politicians with us tonight that the Education Forum is not alone in holding these views, nor are they somehow part of a new right agenda.

In the UK, Tony Blair believes in school choice, and is introducing more competition into schooling – witness his recent speech to the Labour Party conference.

Bill Clinton and parties of all political stripes supported and continue to support choice through charter schools in the United States. A voucher proposal is moving forward in Washington, DC, with the support of a cross section of politicians.

The Progressive Policy Institute, a Democratic Party affiliated think-tank in the United States supports an accountable choice model for funding schools, which would see funding following students no matter whether the school was public, private, for-profit or not-for-profit.

These ideas are tested, and they work a lot better than New Zealand's current model does.

Before our hosts reflect on the powerful ideas that have brought us here tonight, I would like to thank the people that made *A New Deal* possible.

First, I want to thank John Morris and the members of the Education Forum for their hard work and dedication. They are all busy people and being a member of the Education Forum is not always the easiest of jobs – especially in the current environment.

Nonetheless, these 11 people (and their predecessors) have been willing to stand up for what they believe in and to provide a forum for discussion of the critical issues facing the education sector. They don't always agree with one another (you should see our debates on the NCEA!) – but they are at least willing to ensure that the debate happens.

Second, I want to thank Michael Irwin, my predecessor at the Education Forum, who prepared the initial drafts of the vision piece – and stuck to the 10-page limit that John mentioned.

Third, a number of people reviewed and edited the document. I would like to thank Andy Rotherham of the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington DC, who reviewed the document and Siobhan Gorman of the National Journal in Washington, DC, who reviewed and edited the document. Jenny Heine of Daphne Brasell Associates provided the copy editing.

Finally, a number of people contributed to the editing and preparation of the document and to the organisation of tonight's event:

- David Young, the Business Roundtable communications manager coordinated the preparation of the document and the brochure, provided considerable editing, and communicated with the media and MPs;
- The children who provided the artwork for the report;
- Rick Marshall and his colleagues at Awaroa Partners planned and organised this wonderful event, and invited you all here; and
- Lisa Nimmo and Chris Jones at Graphetti Ltd designed and printed this wonderful looking document.