

the bilingual programs surveyed.<sup>17</sup> Again, the whole thrust of the policy was toward maximizing enrolments.

Hispanic youngsters are not spared in the ruthless sacrifices of school children to the interests of the bilingual lobby. American-born, English-speaking students with Spanish surnames have often been targeted for inclusion in bilingual programs. Forced to speak Spanish during so-called bilingual classes, such youngsters have been observed speaking English among themselves during recess.<sup>18</sup> A bilingual education teacher in Massachusetts reported speaking to Puerto Rican children in Spanish and having them reply in English.<sup>19</sup> Research in several California school districts showed that children classified as "limited English proficient" ranged from being predominantly better in Spanish than English in districts closer to the Mexican border to being predominantly better in English than in Spanish in districts farther north, with about two-thirds being equally proficient (or deficient) in the two languages in the intermediate city of Santa Barbara.<sup>20</sup> A large-scale national study of bilingual programs found that two-thirds of the Hispanic children enrolled in such programs were already fluent in English, and more than four-fifths of the directors of such programs admitted that they retained students in their programs after the students had mastered English.<sup>21</sup>

While the rationale for so-called bilingual programs has been presented to the public in terms of the educational needs of children whose native language is not English, what actually happens in such programs bears little relationship to that rationale. It bears much more relationship to the careers and ideologies of bilingual activists. A study of Hispanic middle-school students in Boston, for example, found that 45 percent had been kept in bilingual programs for six years or more.<sup>22</sup> The criteria for being taken out of such programs are often based on achieving a given proficiency in English, so that students are retained in bilingual programs even when their English is better than their Spanish. A bilingual education teacher in Springfield, Massachusetts, reported her frustration in trying for years to get such students transferred into regular classrooms:

Each year we had the same disagreement. I argued that the students, according to test scores and classroom performance,

had made enough progress in English to be able to work in a regular classroom, with some further attention to their reading and writing skills. The department head argued that they must remain in the bilingual program as long as they were not yet reading at grade level. It did not matter when I countered that many American students who speak only English do not read at grade level, or that after six or seven years of heavy instruction in Spanish without achieving good results it was probably time to try a different approach.<sup>23</sup>

Students retained in bilingual programs for years, without mastering either English or Spanish, have sometimes been characterized as "semi-lingual," rather than bilingual. The bilingual label is often grossly misleading also in terms of the token amount of time spent on English—perhaps a couple of hours a week—in programs which are predominantly foreign language programs, where students may spend years before taking a single subject taught in English.<sup>24</sup>

The great majority of Hispanic parents—more than three-fourths of Mexican American parents and more than four-fifths of Cuban American parents—are opposed to the teaching of Spanish in the schools at the expense of English.<sup>25</sup> Many Asian refugee parents in Lowell, Massachusetts, likewise declared their opposition to bilingual education for their children.<sup>26</sup> In Springfield, Massachusetts, the Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers themselves put their own children in private schools, so that they would not be subjected to bilingual education.<sup>27</sup> Parents in Los Angeles who did not want their children enrolled in bilingual programs have been pressured, deceived, or tricked into agreement or seeming agreement. By and large, ethnic activists oppose giving parents an option.<sup>28</sup>

That the wishes of both majority and minority parents have been over-ridden or circumvented suggests something of the power and the ruthlessness of the bilingual lobby. Much of this power comes from the U.S. Department of Education, where ethnic activists have been prominent among those writing federal guidelines, which go much further than the courts or the Congress in forcing bilingual programs into schools and forcing out alternative ways of dealing with the language problems of non-English-speaking children.<sup>29</sup> However, bilingual activists have also been active in state and local agencies, and have been