

# Conservative-Liberal Factions Battle Over Education In Hot State Campaign

By Bob Barnes

Los Angeles (AP). — Neither side admits it, but California's liberal-conservative fight has slopped over into a battleground that could keep it reverberating for years.

In one of the state's strangest campaigns: ever, two skilled orators rampage about in an ungentlemanly scrap for the right to head the soon-to-be most populous state's public school system.

At issue: the tame-sounding, nonpartisan job of superintendent of public instruction.

Their face-to-face debates, one every day or two, are reminiscent of the famed Lincoln-Douglas debates—and just as rough. They've met about 40 times in three months, and the tempo's picking up.

Each implies, without quite saying it, that his opponent plans to mold 4,250,000 future citizens in his own political image.

The voters' choice, if each side is to be believed about the other:

Teaching tomorrow's citizens in the pattern of the Republican party's extreme right, or the Democrat party's liberal philosophies.

If each is to be believed about himself, on the other hand, they are out only to give youngsters the finest education in history.

And impartial observers doubt they're as far apart as they say they are.

They play to packed houses. Each draws big hands. Both drew surprised gasps from audi-

ences overwhelmingly filled with parents by their bare-knuckled charges at the other:

Accusations of falsehoods, misrepresentation, low blows, discourtesy and incompetence. Their supporters are stridently partisan.

And still they can't get the general public aroused — or decided. The Nixon-Brown race for governor has the public's eye.

A poll showed voters about evenly split between gangling, roughcut Dr. Ralph Richardson and mild-appearing, hard-talking Dr. Max Rafferty.

And Rafferty genially nods in agreement when Richardson says:

"Despite over 700 speeches we both have made and two score debates up and down California, 45 per cent of the electorate is either unaware of the existence of the office itself, or undecided on whom to vote for!"

And he adds, with Rafferty concurring: "Time after time, a voter will tell me, 'I sure hope you get that construction job.'"

Rafferty, 45, won a Freedom foundation award a couple of years ago with a speech, reprinted in Reader's Digest, attacking progressive education. He said it taught trivia and debunked heroes in textbooks "to make room for the jerk." He pledges overhauling of California schools, which he says have skidded to 35th nationally.

Richardson, 44, says California's schools are good but not good enough. He says Rafferty is running against "the ghost of John Dewey," creator of progressive education, and contends he himself wants to train students "how to think—not what to think."

Says Rafferty: "I've spent my life in school administration and

teaching, he has spent his teaching speech." He adds: "Education, not dictation, is my goal."

Says Richardson: "He has never held a position of responsibility in any school district with even as many as 100 teachers, except for a brief period in a job he resigned."

Rafferty quit as superintendent at suburban La Canada to run. Richardson headed the Los Angeles city board of education until the campaign, was once an educational aide to Democratic Gov. Edmund G. Brown.

"I've been studying public speaking under him," says Rafferty, of their debates. "And he's been studying school administration under me! In his last job, he hired professionals to handle the administration: men — pause — like — pause — me."

As listeners chuckle, Richardson retorts: "In all the years I've served, I can't recall we ever had to hire men — pause — like — pause — him!"

Official endorsements, including state teachers' groups and retiring Supt. Roy Simpson, lean heavily toward Richardson. Rafferty says that's partly because his opponent defends the status quo, says he could "trout out

list too" but the top issue is:

"The present statewide philosophy of education which does not recognize there are any lasting universal values and that the prime goals of education are things like making students adjusted, happy members of their environmental group."

He would stress such things as economics and patriotism; plus "solid training in fundamentals."

Richardson calls himself an educational conservative committed to the three R's not as the end of education but as tools of education. "Our children must be taught to think for themselves and to live in a complex and changing society," he says.

He insists progressive education isn't an issue.

Perhaps indicative of public reaction, the Los Angeles Times said it felt neither nominee was fully equipped for the \$20,000 post. Expressing regret at what it called the "unmistakable partisan aspect" in the supposed nonpartisan race, the paper said:

"The present statewide philosophy of education which does not recognize there are any lasting universal values and that the prime goals of education are things like making students adjusted, happy members of their environmental group."