

## **NO CHILD'S BEHIND LEFT: THE TEST**

**By Greg Palast**

**New York -- Today and tomorrow every 8-year-old in the state of New York will take a test. It's part of George Bush's No Child Left Behind program. The losers will be left behind to repeat the third grade.**

**Try it yourself. This is from the state's actual practice test. Ready, class?**

**"The year 1999 was a big one for the Williams sisters. In February, Serena won her first pro singles championship. In March, the sisters met for the first time in a tournament final. Venus won. And at doubles tennis, the Williams girls could not seem to lose that year."**

**And here's one of the four questions:**

**"The story says that in 1999, the sisters could not seem to lose at doubles tennis. This probably means when they played**

- "A two matches in one day**
- "B against each other**
- "C with two balls at once**
- "D as partners"**

**OK, class, do you know the answer? (By the way, I didn't cheat: there's nothing else about "doubles" in the text.)**

**My kids go to a New York City school in which more than half the students live below the poverty line. There is no tennis court.**

**There are no tennis courts in the elementary schools of Bed-Stuy or East Harlem. But out in the Hamptons, every school has a tennis court. In Forest Hills, Westchester and Long Island's North Shore, the schools have nearly as many tennis courts as the school kids have live-in maids.**

**Now, you tell me, class, which kids are best prepared to answer the question about "doubles tennis"? The 8-year-olds in Harlem who've never played a set of doubles or the kids whose mummies disappear for two hours every Wednesday with Enrique the tennis pro?**

**Is this test a measure of "reading comprehension" -- or a measure of wealth accumulation?**

**If you have any doubts about what the test is measuring, look at the next question, based on another part of the text, which reads (and I could not make this up):**

**"Most young tennis stars learn the game from coaches at private clubs. In this sentence, a club is probably a**

- "F baseball bat**
- "G tennis racquet**
- "H tennis court**
- "J country club"**

**Helpfully, for the kids in our 'hood, it explains that a "country club" is a, "place where people meet." Yes, but WHICH people?**

**President Bush told us, "By passing the No Child Left Behind Act, we are regularly testing every child and making sure they have better options when schools are not performing."**

**But there are no "better options." In the delicious double-speak of class war, when the tests**

have winnowed out the chaff and kids stamped failed, No Child Left results in that child being left behind in the same grade to repeat the failure another year.

I can't say that Mr. Bush doesn't offer better options to the kids stamped "failed." Under No Child Left, if enough kids flunk the tests, their school is marked a failure and its students win the right, under the law, to transfer to any successful school in their district. You can't provide more opportunity than that. But they don't provide it, the law promises it, without a single penny to make it happen. In New York in 2004, a third of a million students earned the right to transfer to better schools -- in which there were only 8,000 places open.

New York is typical. Nationwide, only one out of two-hundred students eligible to transfer manage to do it. Well, there's always the Army. (That "option" did not go unnoticed: No Child has a special provision requiring schools to open their doors to military recruiters.)

Hint: When de-coding politicians' babble, to get to the real agenda, don't read their lips, read their budgets. And in his last budget, our President couldn't spare one thin dime for education, not ten cents. Mr. Big Spender provided for a derisory 8.4 cents on the dollar of the cost of primary and secondary schools. Congress appropriated a half penny of the nation's income -- just one-half of one-percent of America's twelve trillion dollar GDP -- for primary and secondary education.

President Bush actually requested less. While Congress succeeded in prying out an itty-bitty increase in voted funding, that doesn't mean the extra cash actually gets to the students. Fifteen states have sued the federal government on the grounds that the cost of new testing imposed on schools, \$3.9 billion, eats up the entire new funding budgeted for No Child Left.

There are no "better options" for failing children, but there are better uses for them. The President ordered testing and more testing to hunt down, identify and target millions of children too expensive, too heavy a burden, to educate.

No Child Left offers no "options" for those with the test-score mark of Cain -- no opportunities, no hope, no plan, no funding. Rather, it is the new social Darwinism, educational eugenics: identify the nation's loser-class early on. Trap them then train them cheap.

Someone has to care for the privileged. No society can have winners without lots and lots of losers. And so we have No Child Left Behind -- to produce the new worker drones that will clean the toilets at the Yale Alumni Club, punch the cash registers color-coded for illiterates, and pamper the winner-class on the higher floors of the new economic order.

Class war dismissed.

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See a clip of the actual practice test at [www.GregPalast.com](http://www.GregPalast.com)

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