

The Blumenfeld Education Letter



"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce those risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

Revolution Via Education

Why do so many young Americans emerge from our schools hostile to traditional values and in favor of the social and political agenda of the Left? To find out, all one has to do is read the textbooks they've read, listen to the leftist professors who indoctrinated them, study the courses they took. The fact that the academic world is largely dominated by the Left is no accident. Revolution via education has been the chief strategy of modern socialism since its inception in the nineteenth century. The following essay describes how that strategy was implemented by socialist educators in the United States.

It is impossible to speak of the revolution that has taken place in American education since the 1930s without invoking the name of John Dewey. While it is true that many other important and influential personalities helped plan and carry out that revolution, their names are virtually unknown to the public. Who remembers James McKeen Cattell or Edward L. Thorndike or Charles H. Judd? But everyone remembers John Dewey, whose memory has been kept alive by an army of devoted disciples. Why? Because

John Dewey is the Lenin of the American socialist revolution, honored and revered by his followers very much in the way that Lenin is worshipped by the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

Dewey and Lenin

Indeed, there are interesting similarities between John Dewey and Lenin. Both men have been deified by their disciples. Neither man is ever blamed for the failures of the system he helped bring into existence. And just as Lenin did not invent communism, John Dewey did not invent socialism. In fact, Dewey seldom used the word socialism. He preferred the word democracy, which he defined in his own special way. And that is why it is so easy for Dewey's disciples to constantly refer back to their revolutionary mentor in the name of democracy.

Another great similarity between Dewey and Lenin is that both men were master strategists who studied closely the social systems they wanted to overthrow and came up with far-reaching plans whereby their respective revolutions could be carried out. Of course, Russia and the United States differed

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greatly as societies, and therefore the revolutionaries were faced with different realities. However, both Dewey and Lenin shared basic philosophical premises. They both rejected belief in God, both became materialists, both believed in evolution, and both believed in behavioral psychology as the means of studying human nature and controlling human behavior.

Both men belonged to the world socialist movement which by the 19th century had diverged into two separate movements based on differing strategies: the Social Democrats chose to use the legislative, parliamentary means to achieve socialism; and the communists advocated violent overthrow of the existing capitalist system and the establishment of a dictatorship by the proletariat.

The Fabians

In Great Britain the socialist movement made little headway until the formation of the Fabian Society in 1884 by a small group of young intellectuals and professionals. With their religious beliefs virtually demolished by Darwinism and science, these young idealists needed some greater cause to live for, and many of them found it in socialism. The uniqueness of the Fabian Society was in its *modus operandi*. As Rose Martin writes:

"The Fabian Society's originality lies in the techniques it has developed for permeating established institutions and penetrating political parties in order to win command of the machinery of power. Historically speaking, perhaps its most remarkable feat has been to endow social revolution with an aura of lofty respectability."

The Society had been named after the Roman general and dictator, Quintus Fabius Maximus, who became known as the Delayer, because of his delaying tactics used against Hannibal in the second Punic War during the third century B.C. By avoiding all-out battle at a time when Rome was weak, Fabius won time to build up Rome's military

strength. When Rome was finally ready, Hannibal was decisively vanquished and Carthage destroyed.

And so the Fabians stressed the value of delayed action. Fabian Tract No. 1 put it in these words: "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes, you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain and fruitless."

New Machiavellians

The three legendary leaders of the Fabian Society were Sidney and Beatrice Webb and George Bernard Shaw. Other important members were Theosophist Annie Besant, sexologist Havelock Ellis, Graham Wallas, who later taught at Harvard where he recruited Walter Lippmann to the cause, and H. G. Wells who eventually defected, calling the Fabians the New Machiavellians.

In 1887, the Fabian Society published its credo, to which every member was obliged to subscribe. It read:

"The Fabian Society consists of Socialists. . . . It aims at the reorganization of society by the emancipation of land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. . . . The Society accordingly works for the extinction of private property in land. . . . The Society further works for the transfer to the Community of such Industrial Capital as can conveniently be handled socially. For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks to the spread of Socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon. . . ."

The main strategy of the Society was to develop, through permeation of the educated class, a Socialist elite. Fabians insisted from the start that in advanced capitalist countries, socialism must begin at the top and meet the working masses half way. Hence, great emphasis was put on the development of

leadership, particularly among academics. In 1894, the Fabians established the London School of Economics and Political Science, which was to become the training ground for the Socialist elite.

Gradualism in America

The Fabian idea was not unique to Great Britain. In the United States a similar strategy was outlined in a book entitled The Cooperative Commonwealth, written by a socialist lawyer named Laurence Gronlund and published in 1884, the very year the Fabian Society was founded. Gronlund, a Danish immigrant who was educated in Europe, had come to the conclusion that neither European methods nor an alien terminology could ever succeed in making socialism acceptable to most Americans. Social revolution had to be disguised, he said. It had to be a gradualist movement for social reform. To the average American of the 1880s, the word socialism was synonymous with atheism, revolution, and free love.

But among the academic elite, where sympathy for socialism was far greater than among the common folk, it was a different story. Among those sympathetic to socialism was Professor Richard T. Ely of Johns Hopkins University. It was Ely who organized the American Economic Association in 1885, recruiting a host of other professors, who then made the association into a vehicle for promoting socialism.

Bellamy's Utopia

In 1888, there appeared a book that was to give a tremendous boost to the socialist movement in America. It was a utopian fantasy written by a Unitarian journalist, Edward Bellamy, and entitled Looking Backward. It became a best seller and one of the most influential books of its time. It is the story of Julian West, a Bostonian, who falls asleep in 1887 and wakes up in the year 2000 to find that a bloodless socialist revolution has taken place in America

and that now the government owns everything through nationalization. The entire economy is organized around an Industrial Army, in which every citizen must serve from the age of 21 to 45. Everyone is paid equally, but not in money, for money had been abolished. "A credit corresponding to his share of the annual product of the nation is given to every citizen on the public books at the beginning of each year, and a credit card is issued him with which he procures at the public storehouses whatever he desires." No buying or selling among private citizens is permitted, for "buying and selling is essentially anti-social in all its tendencies."

And, of course, in Bellamy's utopia, evil and crime have virtually disappeared. Bellamy writes: "The ten commandments became well-nigh obsolete in a world where there was no temptation to theft, no occasion to lie either for fear or favor, no room for envy where all were equal, and little provocation to violence where men were disarmed of power to injure one another. Humanity's ancient dream of liberty, equality, fraternity . . . at last was realized. . . . It was for the first time possible to see what unperverted human nature really was like. . . . Soon was fully realized, what the divines and philosophers of old would never have believed, that human nature in its essential qualities is good, not bad, that men by their natural intention and structure are generous, not selfish, pitiful, not cruel, sympathetic, not arrogant, godlike in aspirations, instinct with divinest impulses of tenderness and self-sacrifice, images of God indeed, not the travesties upon Him they had seemed." Paradise indeed had been achieved!

As ridiculous as all of this sounds today, Bellamy not only believed in what he wrote but considered it to be "a forecast, in accordance with the principles of evolution, of the next stage in the industrial and social development of humanity, especially in this country."

The Nationalist Clubs

And countless Americans shared his belief. So great was their enthusiasm that they organized the Nationalist Club -- nationalist standing for nationalization -- a kind of American Fabian Society dedicated to promoting the principle of the "Brotherhood of Man" and the nationalization of private industry. Their credo stated:

"(T)hose who seek the welfare of man must endeavor to suppress the system founded on brute principles of competition and put in its place another based on the nobler principles of association

"We advocate no sudden or ill-considered changes; we make no war upon individuals who have accumulated immense fortunes simply by carrying to a logical end the false principles upon which business is now based.

"The combinations, trusts and syndicates of which the people at present complain demonstrate the practicability of our basic principle of association. We merely seek to push this principle a little further and have all industries operated in the interests of the nation -- the people organized -- the organic unity of the whole people."

The movement grew rapidly and by 1891 there were 165 Nationalist clubs throughout the country. Particularly drawn to the movement were the followers of Theosophist occultists Annie Besant and Helena Blavatsky. Of Looking Backward, Blavatsky wrote in 1889 that it "admirably represents the Theosophical idea of what should be the first great step towards the full realization of universal brotherhood."

American Fabians

However, by 1893 most of the Nationalist clubs had disappeared, with their hard-core socialist members becoming active in any number of educational enterprises. One of these enterprises was a new monthly journal which made its appearance in 1895, The American Fabian, published by the

Fabian Educational Company of Boston. The editors wrote:

"We call our paper 'The American Fabian' because our politics must in a measure differ from those of the English Fabians. . . . England's (unwritten) Constitution readily admits of constant though gradual modification. Our American Constitution does not readily admit of such change. England can thus move into Socialism almost imperceptibly. Our Constitution being largely individualistic must be changed to admit of Socialism, and each change necessitates a political crisis."

Thus, by the 1890s it had become apparent to American socialists that the United States Constitution represented a formidable obstacle to the creation of a socialist America.

In April 1898, Sidney and Beatrice Webb arrived in the United States where they were wined and dined by the socialist elite. In Chicago the Webbs stayed at Hull House as guests of its legendary founder Jane Addams, pioneer in the settlement house movement.

It was probably at this time that John Dewey, then professor at the University of Chicago, met the Webbs. Dewey had close relations with Hull House, founded in 1889 by Addams. He was on its first board of trustees and even conducted courses there. According to biographer George Dykhuizen, "Dewey owed much to the influences he encountered at Hull House. His contact with people with more radical and extreme views than his deepened and sharpened his own."

Becoming a Socialist

Eventually Dewey was to become America's leading strategist for socialism, and it is obvious that he took his cue from the Fabians. How did Dewey become a socialist? The story is interesting.

John Dewey was born in Vermont in 1859 and was raised in a Christian family of Puritan heritage. He attended a liberal-leaning Congregational

Church and taught Sunday School. In 1875 he entered the University of Vermont. Max Eastman writes of a crisis in Dewey's junior year that marked a turning point in the young man's life: "The crisis was a short course in physiology with a textbook written by Thomas Henry Huxley. That accidental contact with Darwin's brilliant disciple, then waging his fierce war for evolution against the 'impregnable rock' of Holy Scripture, woke John Dewey up to the spectacular excitement of the effort to understand the world. . . . He was swept off his feet by the rapture of scientific knowledge."

In 1881 Dewey began studies for his doctorate at Johns Hopkins University. There, encouraged by George Sylvester Morris, his professor, he became a Hegelian. The powerful attraction of Hegel's philosophy was that it permitted an individual to embrace science and evolution, discard the notion of sin, but still retain some notion of God. Eastman writes: "Hegel invented a most ingenious disguise, a truly wondrous scheme for keeping deity in the world. . . . His scheme was, in brief, to say that all reality, good and bad together, is the Divine Spirit in a process of inward, and also onward and upward, struggle toward the realization of its own free and complete being. Many years before natural science began to see the world as in process of evolution, Hegel was ready for them with his theory that God himself is a world in process of evolution. Nothing more prodigiously ingenious was ever invented by the mind of man than this Hegelian scheme for defending soulfulness against science."

Hegel, Dewey and Psychology

It was also at Johns Hopkins that Dewey was introduced to the New Psychology by G. Stanley Hall, who had studied in Leipzig under Wilhelm Wundt. Dewey took all of Hall's courses in psychology.

In 1884, Dewey was brought to the University of Michigan as instructor in

philosophy by Professor Morris, who was then head of the department. The two men, steeped in Hegelianism, enjoyed a rich personal and intellectual friendship. It was also at Michigan that Dewey met Alice Chapman, a strong-minded young lady from a family of radicals and freethinkers. Dewey fell in love, and they married in 1886.

In 1887, Dewey published his textbook, Psychology, which was his fullest and most successful articulation of his Hegelian approach blended with the new experimental psychology. In 1888, Dewey went to the University of Minnesota as head of the philosophy department. Most probably Dewey read Looking Backward in that year, because it was then that he also wrote his essay, "The Ethics of Democracy," in which he formulated a new collectivist concept for American democracy. He rejected the notion that America was made up of individuals who expressed their political will through a constitutionally established elective and legislative process. He claimed that such a notion inferred that men "in their natural state are non-social units . . . a mere multitude." On the contrary, he argued. Society is organic and "the citizen is a member of the organism, and, just in proportion to the perception of the organism, has concentrated within himself its intelligence and will."

This was simply another way of phrasing Bellamy's concept of the nation, as described in Looking Backward, "not as an association of men for certain political functions affecting their happiness only remotely and superficially, but as a family, a vital union, a common life, a mighty heaven-touching tree, whose leaves are its people, fed from its veins, and feeding it in turn."

The Organic Society

Dewey, in his essay, expanded on this organic concept: "But human society represents a more perfect organism. The whole lives truly in every member, and there is no longer the appearance

of physical aggregation, or continuity. The organism manifests itself as what it truly is, an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of will. . . . In conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organizations: that in which the individual and society are organic to each other."

And how did this organic and rather Platonic-Hegelian view of society affect individual liberty? Dewey wrote: "Nothing could be more aside from the mark than to say that the Platonic ideal subordinates and sacrifices the individual to the state. It does, indeed, hold that the individual can be what he ought to be, can become what, in idea, he is, only as a member of a spiritual organism, called by Plato the state, and, in losing his own individual will, acquiring that of this larger reality. But this is not loss of selfhood or personality, it is its realization. The individual is not sacrificed; he is brought to reality in the state."

Now you see it, now you don't. Dewey was quite adept at this sort of intellectual shell-game. He argued quite passionately that we had to stop looking at the individual in isolation. "Liberty is not a numerical notion of isolation; it is the ethical idea that personality is the supreme and only law, that every man is an absolute end in himself. . . . but the chief stimuli and encouragements to the realization of personality come from society. . . . Equality is not an arithmetical but an ethical conception. . . . Equality, in short, is the idea of humanity; an ideal in the consciousness of which democracy lives and moves. . . . And there is no need to beat about the bush in saying that democracy is not in reality what it is in name until it is industrial, as well as civil and political."

Dewey's View of Democracy

And finally Dewey wrapped it up with, "The idea of democracy, the ideas

of liberty, equality, and fraternity, represent a society in which the distinction between the spiritual and secular has ceased, . . . the divine and the human organization of society are one."

These are the terms in which Dewey was to argue in the years ahead, that in the democratic state God and man were one, a blend of Hegelian idealism, utopian fantasy, and Platonic dialectics.

Dewey's rejection of 18th century individualistic liberalism, with its notion of unalienable rights, was complete and irrevocable, and in time he was to remove God from his political equation, substituting Humanism for religion. But his admiration for Edward Bellamy never waned. In 1934, in a tribute to Bellamy entitled "The Great American Prophet," he wrote that Bellamy was "imbued with a religious faith in the democratic ideal. . . . But what distinguishes Bellamy is that he grasped the human meaning of democracy as an idea of equality and liberty. No one has carried through the idea that equality is obtainable only by complete equality of income more fully than Bellamy."

In 1889, Dewey was brought back to Michigan to head the philosophy department. He left Michigan in 1894 to join the faculty at the University of Chicago as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy. The new university, only four years old, and endowed by John D. Rockefeller, was directed by President William Rainey Harper, a theological liberal. By then Dewey had come to the conclusion that the only road to socialism in America was the long persevering one of education. Dewey's formal connection with organized religion ended when he left Ann Arbor. He had by then become a pragmatic materialist, having shed the Hegelian concept of the Absolute and adopted a more comfortable concept of moral relativism.

Dewey's Experimental School

It was now as Chairman of the Department of Pedagogy that Dewey began to concentrate his efforts on education. Dewey realized that if the scenario in Bellamy's Looking Backward were ever to be realized, it would have to be done by preparing the young not only to accept a socialist way of life but to want to bring it about. The situation at Chicago afforded Dewey the opportunity to put his educational ideas into practice by creating an experimental school. The school would serve as a laboratory for psychology and pedagogy in the same manner that labs were used for experiments in the physical sciences. In fact, it came to be known as the Laboratory School.

The purpose of the school was to find out what kind of curriculum was needed to create that social individual who would fit easily into a socialist society. The question for the radical educator was how to socialize children so that they became the kind of selfless egalitarians who would serve the organic state as willingly and uncomplainingly as the citizens of Bellamy's utopia and would work assiduously to create such a utopia.

Dewey decided that the best way to achieve this new collectivist personality was to turn the classroom into a place where these desirable social traits could be developed. He wrote: "Since the integration of the individual and the social is impossible except when the individual lives in close association with others in the constant free give and take of experiences, it seemed that education could prepare the young for the future social life only when the school was itself a cooperative society on a small scale."

The New Curriculum

What kind of curriculum would fit the school that was a mini-cooperative society? Dewey's recommendation was indeed radical: build the curriculum not around academic subjects but occupational activities which provided

maximum opportunities for socialization. Since the beginning of Western civilization, the school curriculum centered around the development of academic skills, the intellectual faculties, high literacy. Now Dewey wanted to change all of that. Why? Because high literacy produced that abominable form of individualism which was basically, as Dewey believed, anti-social. Thus, from Dewey's point of view, the school's primary commitment to literacy was indeed the key to the whole problem. In 1898, he wrote an essay, "The Primary-Education Fetich," in which he explained exactly what he meant:

"There is . . . a false educational god whose idolators are legion, and whose cult influences the entire educational system. This is language study -- the study not of foreign language, but of English; not in higher, but in primary education. It is almost an unquestioned assumption, of educational theory and practice both, that the first three years of a child's school life shall be mainly taken up with learning to read and write his own language. If we add to this the learning of a certain amount of numerical combinations, we have the pivot about which primary education swings. . . .

"It does not follow, however, that because this course was once wise it is so any longer. . . . My proposition is, that conditions -- social, industrial, and intellectual -- have undergone such a radical change, that the time has come for a thoroughgoing examination of the emphasis put upon linguistic work in elementary instruction. . . .

"The plea for the predominance of learning to read in early school life because of the great importance attaching to literature seems to me a perversion." Dewey then argued how important it was for the child to experience life through classroom activities, projects and social interaction before learning to read about them. And the reading materials themselves had to be relevant to the child's needs. He wrote:

"Every respectable authority insists that the period of childhood,

lying between the years of four and eight or nine, is the plastic period in sense and emotional life. What are we doing to shape these capacities? What are we doing to feed this hunger? If one compared the powers and needs of the child in these directions with what is actually supplied in the regimen of the three R's, the contrast is pitiful and tragic. . . . No one can clearly set before himself the vivacity and persistency of the child's motor instincts at this period, and then call to mind the continued grind of reading and writing, without feeling that the justification of our present curriculum is psychologically impossible. It is simply superstition: it is a remnant of an outgrown period of history."

A Long-Range Strategy

Finally, Dewey, the master strategist, set forth what must be done:

"Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction. What is needed in the first place, is that there should be a full and frank statement of conviction with regard to the matter from physiologists and psychologists and from those school administrators who are conscious of the evils of the present regime. . . . There are already in existence a considerable number of educational 'experimental stations,' which represent the outposts of educational progress. If these schools can be adequately supported for a number of years they will perform a great vicarious service. After such schools have worked out carefully and definitely the subject-matter of a new curriculum, -- finding the right place for language-studies and placing them in their right perspective, -- the problem of the more general educational reform will be immensely simplified and facilitated."

Here was, indeed, a master plan, involving the entire progressive educational community, to create a new socialist curriculum for the schools of America, a plan that was indeed carried out and implemented. However, it was

in Dewey's famous statement of belief, "My Pedagogic Creed," written in 1897, that he spelled out quite clearly that the school was to be the vehicle of America's socialist revolution. In it he put forth his collectivist concepts of an organic society, the social individual, the downgrading of academics, and the need to use psychology in education.

The Disastrous Results

Ninety years have gone by since Dewey set American education on its progressive course. The result is an education system in shambles, a rising national tide of illiteracy and the social misery caused in its wake. Bellamy's vision of a socialist utopia in the year 2000 is even more remote today than it was in 1888. The worldwide disillusionment with socialism is so great that the Communists must use terror and deception to capture the unwary.

In 1899 Dewey published School and Society, his blueprint for socialism via education. It clearly established him as the leader of progressive education. In 1904 he left Chicago and joined the faculty at Columbia University and Teachers College in New York. There he grew in stature as the moral interpreter of American progressivism. And the reason why Dewey comes across as so distinctly American is because he took his socialist vision from Bellamy, not Marx. Meanwhile, America must live with the disastrous consequences of the Dewey-inspired curriculum.

Vital Dates

PURE Seminar: Syracuse, NY. Sat., Nov. 12. Speakers Samuel L. Blumenfeld, Sharon Pangelinan, Sharon Grimes. Quality Inn, Exit 35 off NY Thruway. Contact: Carol Fisher (716) 496-5758.

Second Annual PURE Convention: Christian Liberty Academy, Arlington Heights, IL. Fri-Sat, Apr 28-29, 1989. Contact: Owen Haney (806) 359-7048.