

The Blumenfeld Education Letter



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

Vol. 9, No. 12 (Letter # 100)

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December 1994

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 these risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

An Open Letter to Republican Congressmen: It's Time to Get the Federal Government Out of the Education Business!

If the recent election indicates anything, it is that the American people are sick and tired of a bloated federal government that is taxing them into economic oblivion and doing more harm than good wherever it intrudes itself. This is particularly true in the field of education where, since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, we have had nothing but unprecedented academic decline, and none of the education bills passed by the last Democrat-controlled Congress will improve anything. The simple truth is that nothing the federal government has done in education has actually improved it.

In 1979, Paul Copperman wrote a book entitled *The Literacy Hoax* in which he showed the correlation between the federal government's intrusion in education and the academic decline that immediately followed. In 1962, the average SAT verbal score was 478. But five years after the enactment of the ESEA, that score was down to 460. By 1980, it had fallen to 424, and in 1994, it was down to 423 — 55 points lower than in 1962!

Federal Dollars Produce Academic Disaster

In other words, all of the billions of dollars that the federal government has spent on public education have produced nothing but an academic disaster for the students. This is a dumbing down process if there ever was one. What we are witnessing is the atrophying of the American brain. This was corroborated in 1971 by John Gaston, former director of the Human Engineering Laboratory in Fort Worth, who told a columnist from the *Dallas Morning News* (8/26/71):

"The present generation knows less than its parents. All of our laboratories around the country are recording a drop in vocabulary of 1 percent a year. In all our 50 years of testing it's never happened before. . . . Can you imagine what a drop in knowledge of 1 percent a year for

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30 years could do to our civilization?"

Well, we know what it is doing. In September 1993, Education Secretary Richard Riley revealed the results of a study on "Adult Literacy in America" ordered by the Congress at a cost of \$14-million. It was found that half the adult population of this country — some 90 million individuals — have inadequate reading and writing skills, that 40 million of them have the most rudimentary literacy skills, and that only 20 percent — 34 to 40 million — have what the survey called "middle level" skills. A mere 25 percent of American adults can be considered as highly literate. And we have had compulsory school attendance in America for over a hundred years!

Even the very smart are getting dumber. For example, in 1972, the number of students who scored highest, between 750 and 800, on the SAT verbal test was 2,817. In 1994 that number was down to 1,438 even though about 28,000 more students took the test in 1994. Where we see the biggest increase is at the very bottom of the scoring chart. In 1972, 71,084 students scored between 200 and 290 on the verbal SAT. In 1994, the number in that lowest category was up to 136,841, almost double of what it was in 1972. Even our college graduates are sorely lacking in literacy skills. According to a report released by the Educational Testing Service on Dec. 9, 1994, more than half of the college graduates tested could not read a bus schedule or write to a creditor about a billing error. "Their levels of literacy range from a lot less than impressive to mediocre to near-alarming," the report says.

The Dismal Failure of Title One

How could this have happened when we were told that Title One of the ESEA was supposed to help the socially disadvantaged learn to read through compensatory education? After spending about \$116-billion on Title One for the last 29 years, what do we have to show for it? More illiteracy, not less. In fact, we now have an underclass of people, all of whom attended government schools but emerged at the end of the process with no employable skills.

And this last Democrat Congress reauthorized the ESEA despite its incredible record of academic failure. And that failure was known as far back as 1974 when a Rand Corporation analysis of Title One reported:

"Without exception, all of the large surveys of the large national compensatory education programs have shown no beneficial results on average as measured by achievement tests or IQ scores."

Can any Congressman point to any federal education program that has actually improved education? The simple truth is that there are none. But the proponents of federal aid to education will scream, "What about Head Start!" Yes, what about Head Start? Paul Copperman writes:

"The first major independent evaluation of compensatory education was an analysis of Head Start in 1969 by Westinghouse Learning Corp. and Ohio State University. Their study showed that Head Start produced virtually no long-term effects in the students' learning abilities or attitudes toward school. Results for the summer school version of Head Start were

so negative that the Westinghouse authors recommended its immediate discontinuation. Some short term gains were recorded as a result of the full-year program, but these gains disappeared by the time the students had completed second grade. Students who had participated in Head Start displayed the same pattern of deficits in reading and arithmetic as comparable students who had not participated."

So there we have it: nothing has changed since 1969, and there are plenty of test scores to prove it.

Nevertheless, the reauthorization of the ESEA, known as the "Improving America's Schools Act," will pump about \$7.4-billion into Title One in 1995. They call it the "new" Title One, the goal of which is to "improve the teaching and learning of children in high-poverty schools to enable them to meet challenging academic content and performance standards." But we know that education reform means "whole-language" reading instruction, which will produce even more illiteracy, and "outcome-based education," which uses Pavlovian-Skinnerian conditioning techniques and does away with every last vestige of traditional education still remaining in the public schools.

The Reading Scandal

In case you're not familiar with whole language, here's a good description of it by several of its proponents in a book entitled, *Whole Language: What's the Difference?*, published in 1991. The authors write:

"From a whole language perspective, reading . . . is a process of generating hypotheses in a meaning-making transaction in a sociohistorical context. As a transactional process reading is not a matter of 'getting the meaning' from the text, as if that meaning were in the text waiting to be decoded by the reader. Rather, reading is a matter of readers using the cues print provide and the knowledge they bring with them (of language subsystems, of the world) to construct a unique interpretation. Moreover, that interpretation is situated: readers' creations (not retrievals) of meaning with the text vary, depending on their purposes for reading and the expectations of others in the reading event. This view of reading implies that there is no single 'correct' meaning for a given text, only plausible meanings."

No wonder children are having such a hard time learning to read. This revolutionary new concept of reading is even reflected in the reauthorized ESEA law (H.R. 6) which states in its section on Title One, Declaration of Policy and Statement of Purpose, page 20:

"The disproven theory that children must first learn basic skills before engaging in more complex tasks continues to dominate strategies for classroom instruction, resulting in emphasis on repetitive drill and practice at the expense of content-rich instruction, accelerated curricula, and effective teaching to high standards."

What utter **nonsense**! Two thousand years of educational experience has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that children learn best when you start with the simple and proceed in measured steps to the more complex. For example, if you want to teach a child to read, you

must first start with the alphabet. But believe it or not, the writers of H.R. 6 believe that children should first read books before they learn the alphabet. If we applied that principle to driver ed, the student would be required to drive in heavy traffic before being taught how to start a car. This is the kind of nonsense one finds throughout federal education programs that are literally destroying education.

Toward Federalized Public Education

What is also important about H.R. 6 is that the objectives in Goals 2000 have been integrated with H.R. 6. In fact, during this last session of Congress, the federal government got so much more deeply involved in education, that it will take a literal revolution to undo it all. And sad to say, Republicans were willing accomplices. But the new conservative Congress must come to grips with this problem. It must start the process of abolishing the U.S. Department of Education and repealing the ESEA and Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The fact that the inspiration for Goals 2000 came from former President George Bush doesn't make the program any better.

You may recall the much-heralded Education Summit held in Charlottesville, Virginia, in September 1989 attended by President Bush and 50 state governors. That's where it was decided to federalize public education by setting National Education Goals. Back in 1989 it sounded like a lot of symbolic hot air, but in March 1994, the Congress magically transformed that hot air into statute. Recently, a Community Action Toolkit was published by the government to help sell the new Goals to an increasingly skeptical public. It states:

"The Goals 2000: Educate America Act is considered to be the most sweeping federal education legislation in decades." The Goals offer "clear, concise and ambitious targets" stating the education results we seek to achieve. The Goals span a lifetime of learning." In case you're unfamiliar with the eight Goals, here they are in brief:

By the year 2000, (1) all children in America will start school ready to learn; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%; (3) American students will have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter and will be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment; (4) U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science; (5) every adult American will be literate and ready to compete in a global economy; (6) every school in America will be free of drugs and violence; (7) teachers will have access to more professional development; (8) parents and families will form partnerships with their schools.

Inasmuch as the year 2000 is only five years away, how realistic are these pie-in-the-sky goals? Our legislators seem to be living in a fantasy world. But for the American taxpayer this fantasy is going to cost billions of dollars. Does Congress have the right to squander billions on programs that are doomed to failure?

Back in the 1970s, President Nixon launched a "Right to Read" program that was supposed to wipe out illiteracy in America in ten years. After an expenditure of many millions, the program failed. Why? Because it refused to face the reading instruction controversy head-on.

Brainwashing Americans

Meanwhile, the Toolkit will be used by community change agents to brainwash Americans into accepting fantasy instead of reality. The kit states: "Only by changing the attitudes and behavior of community members will it be possible to reach the National Education Goals." If these Goals are so great, why must the government embark on a campaign to "change the attitudes and behavior" of our citizens? Isn't such a federal propaganda campaign a bit out-of-order in a free, democratic republic? The kit even contains canned speeches and letters to the editor to be used by local change agents to persuade the public to accept the Goals. Mind you, the government is now in the business of composing model letters to the editor. What kind of a government is that?

What is even more disturbing is that this Toolkit was authorized and published by the National Education Goals Panel which is made up of 8 state governors, 2 members of the federal executive branch, 4 members of Congress, and 4 state legislators. Five of the eight governors are Republicans, including John R. McKernan, Jr., of Maine, Arne H. Carlson of Minnesota, Jim Edgar of Illinois, John Engler of Michigan, and Michael Leavitt of Utah.

If the new conservative Republican members of Congress are to be true to their principles, they must reject this federalization of public education and let the fifty states deal with education as they did before the federal government got involved.

Government Monopoly Education and Politics

But, of course, we know that in America education is a political issue. Government education — which not only includes the elementary and secondary public schools, but also the state universities, community colleges, and the many private institutions that receive federal grants — represents the largest single river of taxpayer cash flow in America. That's why the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have become the powerful lobbies that they are. The education establishment depends on the taxpayer to maintain its comfortable lifestyle. And so, its grip on the levers of government is vital to its subsistence and survival. But in this last election, the voters overrode the NEA and the AFT, whose leaders are now in a state of shock.

For years we have been advocating the privatization of education in this country, because government monopoly education has failed miserably. It has failed because a socialist education system can no more succeed than a socialist government. And it has failed because monopolies are intrinsically bad. Why? Because (1) they rely on government force for their existence; (2) they can set prices arbitrarily, and the consumer (taxpayer) has no choice but to pay; (3) they do not reflect market values; (4) they distort the marketplace for the services they offer; (5) they create vested interests in the status quo; (6) they protect the inefficient; (7) they stand in the way of any improvement that would make them obsolete; (8) they attract lovers of power rather than lovers of efficiency; (9) they create artificial values the consumer is forced to pay for; (10) they resent and try to eliminate competition; (11) they become self-serving; and (12), as their productivity and usefulness decline, they are driven to gain control of the very government that created them in order to ensure their continued existence. In short, their tendency is to become the public's master rather than the public's servant. And that's why

public educators act in the arrogant way they do.

The Cry Is Always for More Money

Despite the fact that more taxpayer money is going to public education than ever before, the educators are crying for still more. But the truth is that they are getting more than enough money to carry out their functions if those functions were carried out rationally. But there are more deconstructionists, socialists, new agers, and charlatans in government education today than ever before. And their overlapping sociopolitical agendas require huge amounts of money.

For example, there is the matter of "educational research," which employs thousands of graduate students and doctors of education in regional education labs and universities, all of which costs the taxpayers billions of dollars. I dare anyone to find a single piece of research produced by this group that has actually improved education in America. The only thing these researchers do is produce contradictory papers and reports, since the usual purpose of their research is to justify some group's social agenda or pet theories. Rarely do they produce anything of objective value.

Let the Private Foundations Do It

There is no reason whatever for the federal government to subsidize educational research. Let the private foundations pay for it. Also, these regional education labs should be closed down. Not only was the Community Action Toolkit produced in one of these labs, but Outcome-Based Education itself has been produced in these labs at government expense. The following letter from Utah Superintendent of Education G. Leland Burningham to former Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell indicates how federal money is being used to create a national curriculum, which is forbidden by law. The letter is dated July 27, 1984:

Dear Ted:

I am forwarding this letter to accompany the proposal which you recommended Bill Spady and I prepare in connection with Outcome-Based Education.

This proposal centers around the detailed process by which we will work together to implement Outcome-Based Education using research verified programs. This will make it possible to put outcome-based education in place, not only in Utah but in all the schools of the nation. For those who desire, we will stand ready for regional and national dissemination of the Outcome-Based Education program.

We are beginning to see positive, preliminary results from some of the isolated schools in Utah which have implemented Outcome-Based Education. These positive indicators are really exciting!

We sincerely urge your support for funding the proposal as presented.

Warmest regards, Lee.

Dr. Spady got his federal grant of \$152,530. By the way, all of this insider manipulation of the grant process is supposed to be illegal. But the insiders can get away with it because there is no one to blow the whistle and, until now, it has been impossible to get Congress to investigate. It's easy enough for Pentagon whistle blowers to find out the real price of a toilet seat. But how do you find out the real price of "educational research"?

An Orwellian Nightmare in the Making

That the education establishment is fast becoming an octopus can be confirmed by the fact that Outcome-Based Education, which is now being adopted in state after state in a variety of guises, expands the role of government into every facet of family and vocational life. In sum, if we were to describe the instrument most likely to create totalitarianism in America, it would be the government education system. Its concept of lifelong learning, written into federal law, expands education far beyond the school building into prenatal care, child rearing, medical social services, job training, psychological counseling — all helped by a Big Brother computerized data-collection system run by the National Center for Education Statistics. This monster computer will monitor the attitudes, beliefs, and mental health of every American citizen from the womb to the tomb. Should the government of a free people have detailed psycho-socio dossiers on all of its citizens in a huge central computer in Washington? What for?

Close down this data-collection system! It is a threat to every American's freedom and privacy. When the federal government first got involved in education back in the 1880s, it was merely as a collector of education statistics. Today, the federal government has become the brainwasher of the American mind, setting national education goals, concocting phony assessment tests, monitoring citizens' attitudes, deciding what industries children should be trained for, deciding what should be taught and how it should be taught.

If this new Congress does not put a stop to all of this, then it will have failed to carry out the mandate given it by the voters of this country.

Restore Educational Freedom to America!

Americans want their freedoms restored and the federal government downsized. The new Congress can achieve this if the conservatives decide it must be done.

To sum up this letter, the federal government should be gotten out of education because: (1) It is destroying true education. (2) It is subsidizing a liberal academic elite with its secular humanist, socialist agenda. (3) It is costing the taxpayers billions and gives little or nothing of benefit in return. (4) It has created the institutional basis for a totalitarian society. (5) It supports a monopoly that is detrimental to economic freedom. (6) It perpetuates the myth that education is possible without religion. (7) It is destroying family and individual privacy. (8) It is undermining parents rights to control their children's education. (9) It has perverted education by supporting unsound educational theories and practices. (10) It has institutionalized educational malpractice. (11) It has become the tool of special interests, primarily the teachers' unions and professional organizations. (12) It has corrupted higher education by encouraging overexpansion and overspending, resulting in skyrocketing tuitions.

If conservative Republicans do not do what has to be done when they have the power to do it, they will have proven themselves not only to be impotent, but also incapable of acting on principle when principle cries out for action. It became apparent during the Reagan administration that as long as the liberals and radical left controlled the educational and cultural institutions of this country, no true conservative counter-revolution could succeed. Now, at last, we have a chance to do what must be done.

May God bless the Congress of the United States. May it live up to the principles of the Founding Fathers and the expectations of all Americans who love freedom and learning.

Fifty Percent of College Grads Have Low Literacy

Although college graduates are generally more literate than high school graduates, most of them would have trouble understanding a bus schedule or writing to a creditor about a billing error, says a new report released 12/9/94 by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, N.J.

Forty-two percent of the college grads participating in the study were able to write about an argument made in a long newspaper article or contrast the views expressed in two editorials about technologies available to make fuel-efficient cars. Only 11 percent of four-year graduates and 4 percent of two-year graduates reached the highest levels of literacy, where they were likely to be successful at summarizing two ways lawyers may challenge prospective jurors.

Half could not read a bus schedule or use a pamphlet to calculate the yearly amount a couple would receive in supplemental security income.

College graduates "are certainly more literate, on average, than those who do not go to college or do not graduate," the report states, "but their levels of literacy range from a lot less than impressive to mediocre to near-alarming." (*Boston Globe*, 12/11/94)

Comment:

The alarming decline of literacy is easily the most important cultural phenomenon in America in the second half of the Twentieth Century. And it can all be attributed to our education system which has embarked on a deliberate program to dumb down the American people. It was John Dewey who wrote in 1896 (*School and Society*, p. 26):

It is one of the great mistakes of education to make reading and writing constitute the bulk of the school work the first two years. The true way is to teach them incidentally as the outgrowth of the social

activities at this time. Thus language is not primarily the expression of thought, but the means of social communication. . . . If language is abstracted from social activity, and made an end in itself, it will not give its whole value as a means of development. . . . It is not claimed that by the method suggested, the child will learn to read as much, nor perhaps as readily in a given period as by the usual method. That he will make more rapid progress later when the true language interest develops . . . can be claimed with confidence.

Of course, Dewey has been proven wrong. If reading is not taught by the proper phonetic method in the first two years of school work, the child falls behind and, unless assisted, remains permanently behind. This is how the underclass is made. These children do not catch up "when the true language interest develops," because reading failure causes frustration, and frustration causes regression and violence. But our educators prefer to follow Dewey instead of their own common sense and observations of what actually takes place. Dewey also wrote in *My Pedagogic Creed* (1927):

I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, or correlation, in all his training and growth I believe, therefore, that the true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's social activities. I believe, therefore, in the so-called expressive or constructive activities as the center of correlation.

The purpose of that socially oriented curriculum was to create a collectivist mind-set in the child, to produce the kind of individuals who would bring about socialism in America. The downgrading of literacy and the upgrading of socialization became the basis of the new progressive curriculum. After a good 75 years of it, we have the literacy disaster that is destroying the American intellect. Nevertheless, the progressives remain true to their goal of creating a socialist society in America.