

What Were They Teaching at Dartmouth in 1828?

By Samuel Blumenfeld

Recently, a friend of mine, an antiquarian book dealer, bought a box of early 19th century pamphlets at a book auction, among which was an 1828 Catalogue of Dartmouth College. I had an opportunity to examine this fragile 24-page catalogue and was quite intrigued by the Course of Study students were required to take in those days.

Dartmouth College, at Hanover, New Hampshire, as my readers may know, is one of America's prestigious Ivy League liberal arts universities. It was founded in 1769 by Eleazar Wheelock, a Puritan minister, with a charter signed in behalf of King George the Third of Great Britain. Indeed, it was the last colonial college to be chartered by the King of England. By the way, that ancient charter, encased in glass, is on display at the college library.

In 1816, the State of New Hampshire tried to convert the college into a state university by amending its charter. The college objected, and it engaged Daniel Webster, an alumnus of the Class of 1802, to argue their case against the State of New Hampshire before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court decided that the state's amendment to Dartmouth's original charter was "an illegal impairment of a contract by the state" and thereby reversed New Hampshire's takeover, thus permitting Dartmouth to retain its independence as a private institution, which is why it is still called Dartmouth College instead of Dartmouth University, even though it confers all of the degrees of a university.

But my real interest was not so much in the history of this institution but rather in what the students were expected to learn in their four years at Hanover. I shall simply record what is in the Catalogue. Freshmen, in their First Term, studied: Titus Livius, Lib. V. priores. Xenoph. Cyrop. & Anab. Adam's Roman Antiquities. Aelianus, Polyaeus and Theophrastus. Collectanea Graeca Majora. Danzel, 2 vols. Herodotus.

In the Second Term they studied Homer, Q. Horatius, and Porter's Analysis. In the Third Term they studied Hesiod., Arithmetick, and Algebra. In addition, there were exercises in Reading, Declamation, Translation, and English Composition, through the year.

Sophomores, in their First Term, studied Thucydides, Demosth., Lysias. Tyler's Elements of General History. Cicero de Oratore. Euclid's Elements of Geometry, 6 Books. Second Term: Xenophon, Phil., Isocrates, Dionysus, & Plato. Excerpta Latina. Plain Trigonometry. Mensuration of Superf. and Solids. Guaging. Mensuration of Heights and Distances. Third Term: Surveying. Navigation. Campbell's Rhetorick. Logick. Plus Composition and Declamation.

Juniors, in their First Term: Taciti. Historia. Conick Sections and Spherick Geometry and Trigonometry. Chemistry. Second Term: Eurip. Med. and Oed. Tyr. Natural Philosophy

and Astronomy. Paley's Natural Theology. Third Term: Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.

Seniors First Term consisted of: Locke's Essay's. Butler's Analogy. Stewart's Philosophy. Second Term: Cicero de Officiis. Greek Testament Reviewed. Edwards on the Will. Say's Political Economy. Paley's Evidences of Christianity. Third Term: Federalist. Plus Dissertations, Forensick, Disputes, and Declamations. Private Instruction is permitted in the French and other Modern Languages.

Incidentally, tuition was \$27.00. Room \$7.00. Board for 38 weeks \$54.72. Wood, Lights, and Washing \$9.75. Ordinary Incidentals \$2.40. Total \$100.87.

As you can see, not only has the dollar been incredibly inflated by now, but also the kind of education today's college students get has also been devalued. In some universities, the first year is spent learning to read and write, which so many students were not taught in their public schools. I was delighted that back in 1838 they were studying Say's Political Economy, which is one of the libertarian classics studied today by free-market oriented students. And I wonder how many of today's college students have read the Federalist.

I have not seen Dartmouth's current catalogue, but I assume that this great college has also succumbed to political correctness, like so many other of our Ivy League schools. But from reading this rigorous course of study that Dartmouth students in 1838 were required to undergo, I can see how the great ancient Greek and Latin classics played an important role in the development of the American intellect.

And today, few students are taught Logic, or how to think rationally. Left wing American intellectuals have swallowed the poison pill of Marxist socialism and think nothing of trashing Christianity, the religion upon which this great nation was built.

But the Tea Party movement indicates that things are changing. Even though we have the most anti-American president sitting in the White House, there is hope that he will be removed in the next presidential election.

Back in 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected President. His fight against the Bank of the United States was an important issue in his reelection in 1832. You can be sure that the students and faculty at Dartmouth had much to say about presidential politics. The fact that they were reading the works of Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1832) indicates they were interested in the nation's economy.

Say emphasized the importance of sound economic principles. He believed that freeing the market was the best way to reduce poverty and eliminate the inequalities created by state regulation. In a lecture given in 1832, he said:

"In general, it results from the study of political economy that it is best in most cases for men to be left to themselves because it is thus that they reach a development of their

faculties. Only political economy makes known the true ties that bind men in society [the benefits from free exchange]. It sets property on its true foundations, and shows its relation to personal abilities [and] new inventions.... Instead of founding public prosperity on brute force, political economy founds it on the well-understood [peaceful] interests of human beings."

That economic philosophy today is considered extreme, laissez-faire, libertarianism. But in 1828, it made sense and was responsible for the enormous growth and development of the American economy, which by 1928 had made America the richest, most technically advanced, and powerful nation on earth.

Today, laissez-faire economics is considered passe. Government has grown so large, so intrusive in our lives, that most Americans have become addicted to government control of their very existence. Public employee unions have become our masters instead of our servants. Every company and corporation in the country is at the mercy of environmental regulators, and the value of our money is being manipulated and inflated by government policies.

The students of 1828 had much to look forward to. But all that the students of 2011 can look forward to is a mountain of government debt, trillions of dollars, that is beyond the average mind to comprehend. And any attempt to return to sound economic and political policies is met by howling public employee demonstrations, demagogic Congressmen, and cowardly business CEOs.

With a revolutionary socialist in the White House, America is being ruled by a leader whose very ideology calls for the destruction of everything that has made America the greatest and freest nation on earth. Will we survive his destructive work? The presidential election of 2012 will provide the answer.