

Dumbed-Down Brits Victims of Progressive Education

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Jay Leno, in his amusing Jay Walking adventures, interviews young Americans whose appalling ignorance of history, geography, and other areas of basic knowledge, has become the subject of great hilarity. Many of them couldn't tell you who was buried in Grant's tomb.

But now we learn from across the pond that young Brits have been so dumbed-down that 23 percent of them believe that Winston Churchill was a mythical figure, and 58 percent believe that Sherlock Holmes was a real person.

According to the Boston Herald (2/6/08), seventy-seven percent of these clucks readily admit that they don't read history books, and three out of five never watch historical programs on television. Of course, the reason why they don't read history books is because they are functionally illiterate.

In fact, a new book, *The Great Reading Disaster*, has just recently been published in England exposing the fact that young Brits are taught to read with the dyslexia-producing Whole Language method, which has also become the present ruin of American education.

The authors, Mona McNee and Alice Coleman, write: "Forcing children to read whole words by the look-say method is like telling young piano learners to play a piece in the correct tempo, without being taught the individual notes or the significance of their stave positions....It is cruel to inflict such frustration on children and the cruelty is not restricted to childhood. It is even more cruel and humiliating when it leaves people illiterate for life."

Even Margaret Thatcher couldn't get the educators to change their ways, though she appointed a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the teaching of reading in the schools. Apparently, the Progressives were clever enough to pay lip-service to phonics, ridiculing their advocates, but meanwhile continuing to support the whole-word method.

We've experienced the same situation here in the U.S. where No Child Left Behind was supposed to change the way reading is taught in American schools. In fact, a special billion-dollar reading initiative was passed by Congress to get phonics back into the schools. But the educators charged the government with a bias in reading instruction, which was discriminatory against Whole Language educators. And from what I have been told by teachers in the field, Whole Language is still the dominant way reading is taught in American schools.

The two British authors write: "It took 40 years to produce the first six million adult illiterates but only another ten to increase the total to nine million. The annual rate has doubled."

And the reason why nothing will change despite the alarm sounded by this new book is because of the tight control that the Progressives have over the entire British education system. According to the Sunday Telegraph of June 27, 1993, the controlling cabal is called the All Souls Group, which holds its “clandestine thrice-yearly meetings” in an oak-paneled room at Oxford University.

No minutes are kept of the meetings and no papers or public statements ever emerge. The discussions over evening sherry or dinner are protected by Chatham House Rules which dictate proceedings are off the record. Chatham House is the British equivalent of our Council on Foreign Relations. Membership is by invitation and the criteria are shrouded in mystery.

Does such a secret education establishment exist in the United States? It does. It is called the Cleveland Conference and was organized in 1915 by Prof. Charles Judd, head of the University of Chicago School of Education, where William Scott Gray concocted the Dick and Jane look-say, whole word, reading program. In his book, *Managers of Virtue*, David Tyack writes:

[Judd] had a vision that both the structure of the schools and the curriculum needed radical revision but that change would take place “in the haphazard fashion that has characterized our school history unless some group gets together and undertakes, in a cooperative way, to coordinate reforms.”

It is easy enough to follow the machinations of the Progressives by simply reading the annual reports of the National Society for the Study of Education, founded in 1901. This is the gathering place of the educational elite, and their annual reports can be found in any university library.

For American parents, the only way to free themselves from the stranglehold of the Progressive elite is to remove their children from the government schools and either educate them at home or place them in a private school based on traditional principles and teaching methods. As for the Brits, we hope that the new book awakens enough of them to break the hold of the All Souls Group. But don't hold your breath.