

**The New Education Reform: Will It Work?  
Or, From John Dewey to Marc Tucker in One Hundred Years**

© **By Samuel L. Blumenfeld**

You cannot really understand the nature and scope of the present education reform program coming out of Washington unless you understand that it is the culmination of plans initiated by the progressives about a hundred years ago. In other words, what we have today emanating from the U.S. Department of Education and the education establishment in general is the same master plan mapped out by John Dewey and his colleagues at the turn of the century to change America's social order. True, there have been twists and turns, arguments and debates among the educational elite, but all in all the basic plan of the progressives remains intact

Who were the progressives? They were a new breed of educator, members of the Protestant academic elite who no longer believed in the religion of their fathers. They rejected Biblical religion as myth and legend and put their faith in science, evolution, and psychology. Science explained the nature of the material world, evolution explained the origin of living matter -- our original soma emerged from the primordial ooze and through a remarkable series of accidents ended up with us -- and psychology provided the means to study human nature scientifically and to control human behavior. What more could an educator possibly want?

Now the progressives were also socialists. Why? Because they had to deal with the problem of evil and they refused to accept the Biblical view. The Bible tells us that man is a fallen creature, having disobeyed God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that as a result, man is the cause of his own misery. In other words, the origin of evil is man's heart, not the environment or the ozone layer or the stock market. John Calvin characterized fallen man as being innately depraved. Catholics, of course, call it original sin.

What Calvin meant is that when man departs from God he is capable of any depravity he can think of. But the Bible provides a happy solution for all of this. Which means that man can still have a happy, productive and long life provided that he live in accordance with God's law. Indeed, his sins can be forgiven, he can be saved and have eternal life after death if he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. In other words, the Bible presents us with the problem of man's sinful nature, but also provides the solution.

However, the progressives rejected all of that as myth and legend. But they still had to deal with the problem of evil. What caused it? Since they believed that there was no God, there could be no such thing as sin -- which is an offense against God. So where did evil come from? They decided that it came from ignorance, poverty, and social injustice. And what caused social injustice? Why it was this terrible capitalist system of ours, this dog-eat-dog world of economic competition, private property, and

individualism which created selfish people. The solution: socialism, which would replace individualism with collectivism, get rid of private property or at the very least bring private property under the control of government, and finally get rid of religion with its ridiculous notion of sin that so terribly undermined man's self-esteem.

The question then became how do you change America from a capitalist system to a socialist one? The answer was simple: change the curriculum in the education system so that it would produce little socialists instead of little individualists. The progressives realized that adult Americans were not about to give up their individualism or private property or free enterprises or religion. And so they realized that they would have to educate children in such a manner that they as adults would usher in the new socialist utopia through democratic means.

And so, beginning in about 1898 the progressives began their messianic crusade to reform American education in order to bring about socialism. The reason why I call the progressive movement a messianic crusade is because of the spiritual aspects of the crusade. You see, the reason why the crusaders had to bring about socialism is because that was the only way they could prove that they were right and the Bible was wrong. They were convinced that once we had socialism, it would be seen that man was not a fallen creature but was instead imbued with overwhelming benevolence and good will.

These progressives all came from good Christian homes, and they all knew the Bible. If the Bible was right and they were wrong, they knew where they'd be going. And so they were driven by a strong messianic motive to prove their rightness. Incidentally, the progressives for the most part did not get their vision of socialism from Karl Marx, but from an American by the name of Edward Bellamy who wrote a book entitled *Looking Backward*, published in 1888. In that book Bellamy projected the fantasy of a socialist America in the year 2000. If you want to know what that vision was like, read the book.

One can say that this crusade began in earnest in 1898 because that was the year in which John Dewey wrote his influential essay, "The Primary-Education Fetich," in which he singled out high literacy as the great obstacle to socialism because it tended to produce individuals who could stand on their own two feet and think for themselves. (Unstated, but clearly known by the progressives was the fact that high literacy was also a prerequisite for Biblical literacy.) What we needed in the primary grades, Dewey argued, was less emphasis on literacy and more emphasis on socialization. In effect, what he was saying was that the masses had to be dumbed down in order to make it easy for the ruling elite to impose socialism. And he outlined a strategy whereby all of this could be done with the public hardly noticing. He wrote:

Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction.

That's an interesting statement. If the reforms he proposed were so great, why would

they provoke a violent reaction? Obviously, Dewey and his colleagues knew that their reforms would go against the grain of American tradition. Dewey goes on:

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.

So there you already see in 1898 what the role of the psychologists would be. They were to use scientific arguments to discredit the traditional curriculum. On the crucial matter of primary reading instruction, the first psychologist to answer Dewey's call was Edmund Huey, whose book, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, published in 1908, became the bible of the look-say, whole-word advocates. They used Huey's book to provide a pseudo-scientific justification for getting rid of alphabetic phonics and instituting whole-word instruction in its place. Dewey continues:

There are already in existence a considerable number of educational "experiment 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.

And so, what Dewey was saying to his progressive colleagues was that they needed to try all of their new ideas in private experimental schools to see what kind of results they would get before implementing them wholesale throughout the public school system.

Incidentally, one of the experimental schools that was used for this purpose was the Lincoln School at Teachers College of Columbia University, New York. John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave the school \$3 million in 1917 and put four of his five sons in that school. Alvin Moscow, in his book *The Rockefeller Inheritance*, writes:

Unlike private schools of its time, Lincoln was co-educational and non-segregated. The Rockefeller boys mixed with children from all walks of life. . . . Boys studied sewing and cooking with the girls, and the girls took shop courses with the boys. Reading, writing and arithmetic were introduced only when a child was ready and eager to learn. He was expected to pick up these fundamentals out of natural curiosity and desire to learn. . . . Nelson never did learn to spell or master his numbers. . . . Laurence . . . encountered trouble with his three R's. However, he did make Princeton, where, in his freshman year, facing written examinations for the first time, he almost flunked out. Winthrop had the most trouble. He floundered in the freedom and lack of discipline at Lincoln and in the tenth grade was transferred to the Loomis School, a more formal prep boarding school . . . in Connecticut. . . . Unprepared for the higher scholastic standards at Loomis, at the first marking period, where D was the lowest passing mark, Winthrop earned two E's and three F's. But he liked Loomis and was saved there by his high marks for effort.

David, the youngest, was the only son who did well at the Lincoln School. He had no trouble with the three R's and eventually went to Harvard. He then went on to become a leader of the internationalist movement leading to world government. Nelson, who was severely dyslexic, hired Henry Kissinger to do his reading and thinking for him. And Winthrop went on to become Governor of Arkansas. In any case, by the 1920's, it

was already known by the progressives that their kind of education had great academic drawbacks, and they had the Rockefeller boys to prove it. But that didn't faze them because that's what they actually wanted.

Now the reason why I have gone back to the origins of the progressive education movement is because it is important to know the false premise on which the movement was founded, the premise that evil is caused by ignorance, poverty, and social injustice. Twentieth Century history has proven beyond any doubt the falsehood of that premise. Let me give you proof. One of the most evil men of the century was Dr. Mengele, the Nazi doctor at the Auschwitz death camp who performed horrible medical experiments on live human beings. Was he ignorant? No, he had the best education Germany could provide. Was he the victim of poverty? No, he was born in a wealthy family with a silver spoon in his mouth. Was he the victim of social injustice? To the contrary, he was a member of Germany's privileged elite. So where did his evil impulses come from? From his innate sinful nature. He put his faith not in God but in Satanic Adolf Hitler, who gave him the freedom to be as evil as his heart desired.

So we know that the premise of our education reform movement is false. But there is also a second false premise on which the education reform movement is built, and that is the belief that public educators have the moral right, indeed the moral duty, to change the values and beliefs of the children in their charge without the knowledge or consent of their parents. That was very clearly spelled out in Prof. Benjamin Bloom's famous *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* published in 1958 in which he wrote:

By educational objectives, we mean explicit formulations of the ways in which students are expected to be changed by the educative process. That is, the ways in which they will change in their thinking, their feelings, and their actions. . . .

The evidence points out convincingly to the fact that age is a factor operating against attempts to effect a complete or thorough-going reorganization of attitudes and values. . . .

The evidence collected thus far suggests that a single hour of classroom activity under certain conditions may bring about a major reorganization in cognitive as well as affective behaviors. We are of the opinion that this will prove to be a most fruitful area of research in connection with the affective domain.

Thus, when American educators speak of subjecting children to a thorough-going reorganization of their attitudes and values what they really mean is getting children to shed their Biblical values in favor of humanist values, to shed their belief in absolute moral values in favor of moral relativism and situational ethics.

America was founded by people who believed that God was sovereign over our nation and that His law prevailed over the laws of man. Indeed, the U.S. Constitution is a perfect example of man's law being completely compatible with God's law. However, once you reject God, then God's sovereignty and law is replaced by State sovereignty and law. The State, then, becomes God, and the public educators can claim that they now represent the public good and have the moral duty to train children to serve the secular state whose compelling interests override all other interests.

By the way, it is not at all difficult to trace the history of this reform movement from its

very beginning to the present, for the reformers have kept very good records of their progress in the annual yearbooks of The National Society for the Study of Education. The first yearbook was published in 1901. If you study the names of the society's officers, you will find among them the best known advocates of humanism and socialism, including Harold Rugg, William H. Kilpatrick, Ernest Horn, George S. Counts, John Goodlad, Ralph Tyler, Benjamin Bloom, and many others.

What is impressive about the reform movement is its meticulous attention to detail, its continuity, and the way the baton has been passed from one generation to the next so that there is no change in ideology or ultimate goal. What you find out in studying these yearbooks are the names and associations of the individuals who have been working behind the scenes to effect these reforms over many decades. One of the most prominent among them is a professor by the name of Ralph W. Tyler who spent 70 of his 92 years engaged in the ongoing process of education reform. He died in 1994. An article paying tribute to Tyler in *Phi Delta Kappan* of June 1994 states:

An activist -- with a profound belief that demonstration and example are more powerful than ideas that are merely scripted -- he harnessed his theorems to social engineering and participated in an astonishing number of watershed events: his monumental Eight-Year Study, his founding role in the National Academy of Education, his creation and 14-year directorship of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, his part in the formulation of the Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, his attainments as university examiner and dean of social sciences at the University of Chicago, and his service as consultant to five U.S. presidents. In Tyler's calculus, social fragmentation was a challenge education could meet only through collective accomplishments.

That last sentence sums up a very important concept held by the progressives, that reform must be organized in a collective manner so that it is carried out uniformly throughout the entire nation, in all the schools. If reform were left to the localities, it would be fragmented, and fragmentation, although healthy for freedom and local control, would be bad for those who want to reshape the nation according to their own social vision. The article continues:

Intermixed with these achievements, moreover, were his famous rationale on curriculum development, translated into five languages; his advisory work with the Spencer Foundation; his labors on the Armed Forces Testing Program; his tenure as president of Systems Development Foundation; his 15 years as chairman of the National Commission on Resources for Youth.

You can see what one dedicated reformer can do to advance the progressive agenda. The article continues:

A minister's son, Tyler saw bettering the common good as a calling. Over the years, I think, he was increasingly energized by an abiding concern for comity, rectitude, and the public weal, and he sought to serve education -- whether in a formal lecture or in an informal conversation -- in disparate ways. . . . A typical week might include a Monday morning meeting in New York with the Ford Foundation, a banquet speech that evening in Chicago, and then the "redeye" to San Francisco. Tuesday might be spent at the center in Palo Alto, followed by dinner on the evening flight to Denver. Wednesday might begin with national assessment meetings, continue with a lunchtime talk to Colorado school superintendents, and end with another dinner flight back to Chicago -- in order to spend Wednesday evening with the Spencer Foundation Board. By catching the 10:00 p.m. flight to Washington, he could sleep at the Cosmos Club, breakfast with the NEA president, and attend Title III commission meetings on Thursday. . . . He kept this

6

up week after week.

When you understand the kind of obsessive drive these men have to carry out their humanist agenda, you then realize why they couldn't care less about the clamor of parents who want to get back to basics. Who do these parents think they are? The article continues:

One of the less frequently recognized human virtues is that of unfettering talents in others. Here, too, Tyler made a monumental contribution. . . . He aided and abetted the careers of Robert Havighurst, Herbert Thelen, David and Frank Riesman, Benjamin Bloom, Lee Cronback, Philip Jackson, David Krathwohl, Allison Davis, Jacob Getzewls, Nathan Gage, Edgar Friedenburg, Hilda Taba, Thomas James, Louis Rath, Ernest Boyer, John Goodlad, and a host of others.

These are just some of the faceless educators responsible for giving us the education system we have today.

I'm sure that each one of them helped by Tyler would be able to tell a similar story of dedication to education reform. All of them, I suppose, think that they are doing good. Yet, we look at the state of public education today with all of its problems and failings and I doubt that any of these reformers feel responsible for any of this. They don't even take responsibility for the reading problems caused by the look-say method. In fact, they use the failings of public education as the pretext for generating more reforms. They also talk a lot about democracy and freedom, and yet their reforms are inevitably leading us to a more socially controlled, politically correct society. In other words, they are masters of what Orwell called "doublespeak."

These men lead a kind of schizoid existence. They live in the ivory tower of the graduate school, financed by government and private grants, totally insulated from parental pressure, writing books, reports and dissertations for one another, attending professional meetings all over the country and the world, not at all concerned that what they are doing makes no sense to the average citizen and certainly no sense to the parents who put their children in public schools.

And because there is this deafness on the part of this educational establishment, parents are now opting out of the system and putting their children in private schools or homeschooling them. Ninety-six years of committees and yearbooks from the National Society for the Study of Education are totally irrelevant to parents who are truly concerned about the education of their children.

Nevertheless, these reformers are now so powerful that, with the assistance of the White House, they can get the Congress to pass laws mandating these reforms. For example, in 1994, with the help of Pres. Clinton, the U.S. Congress passed Goals 2000, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, and the Improving America's Schools Act. Goals 2000 is raw social engineering, intended to restructure all of American society and not just the schools. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act establishes a formal partnership between the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. The grant money for this education-labor linkup is tied to compliance with requirements outlined in Goals 2000. It also mandates transforming public education into a glorified voc-ed

system, more in line with a planned economy than a free economy. The Improving America's Schools Act is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 through which the Johnson administration opened the floodgates of the U.S. Treasury to the educators. Since then, the educators have been able to extract more and more money from the taxpayers by asserting that money will solve our education problems, while the simple truth is that the more money the educators get, the worse education becomes.

If you think that the Republican victories in November 1994 have changed anything, I'm terrible sorry to disappoint you. In September 1995, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Consolidated and Reformed Education, Employment, and Rehabilitation Systems Act, more simply known as the Careers Act (H.R. 1617), by a vote of 345 to 79. In October, the Senate passed its version of the bill, the Workforce Development Act of 1995 (S. 143) by a vote of 95 to 2. Both bills would federalize public education and bring it under the kind of centralized control that has been the dream of the reformers.

Fortunately, a small group of conservative activists who had read both bills got to their Congressmen in time and were able to temporarily stop their progress in committee. During the last few months the bills have undergone revision, but we are not sure what the Republican Congress will finally give us. One thing we do know is that instead of working to get the Federal government out of the education business, the Congress will no doubt get it more deeply in.

What will be enacted is a Human Resources Development System, authored by one of the latest crop of messianic reformers, Marc Tucker, chairman of the National Center for Education and the Economy, an offshoot of the Carnegie Foundation. Tucker is the Ralph Tyler of today, close friend of Bill and Hillary, coordinating the imposition of a Soviet style education system on America with the help of Congress, a dozen Republican governors, and some of America's largest corporations. Mr. Tucker describes his vision of American education as "a seamless web of opportunities to develop one's skills that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone--young and old, poor and rich, worker and full-time student." When he says it's a system for everyone, he means it, for his vision of America is socialist egalitarianism.

It's easy to trace the growing power of the education reformers from John Dewey to Marc Tucker. Dewey had no access to the White House nor did he need one. What he did need was access to the big foundations and their money to finance the early experiments. But Tucker understands that for the reform program to be imposed universally on American education requires more money than all of the foundations can muster. Therefore, he needs the mandates of the federal government because that's where the billions are.

In a famous letter Tucker wrote to Hillary Clinton in November 1992, he described in detail his concept of what the newly elected president could do to promote education

reform. He wrote:

The object is to create a single comprehensive system for professional and technical education that meets the requirements of everyone from high school students to skilled dislocated workers, from the hard core unemployed to employed adults who want to improve their prospects. Creating such a system means sweeping aside countless programs, building new ones, combining funding authorities, changing deeply embedded institutional structures, and so on. The question is how to get from where we are to where we want to be. Trying to ram it down everyone's throat would engender overwhelming opposition.

Now where did we hear that before? Wasn't it Professor Dewey who said in 1898 that "change must come gradually" because "to force it would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction?" Mr. Tucker continues:

Our idea is to draft legislation that would offer an opportunity for those states--and selected large cities--that are excited about this set of ideas to come forward and join with each other and with the federal government in an alliance to do the necessary design work and actually deliver the needed services on a fast track. The legislation would require the executive branch to establish a competitive grant program for those states and cities and to engage a group of organizations to offer technical assistance to the expanding set of states and cities engaged in designing and implementing the new system. . . .

Radical changes in attitudes, values and beliefs are required to move any combination of these agendas. . . . At the narrowest level, the agenda cannot be moved unless there is agreement among the governors, the President and the Congress.

And so, what is required to implement the new education reform is a radical change in attitudes, values and beliefs, just what Prof. Benjamin Bloom and Ralph Tyler recommended back in the '50s.

With Tucker's program, we shall also get a massive intrusion of government into our private lives through the federal computer data-gathering system developed by the National Center for Education Statistics. The system will gather detailed personal data on every student and teacher in America. To standardize data collecting, the U.S. Department of Education has published handbooks for local use. The first handbook was published in 1964, a second in 1974, and the latest version in 1994 bearing the title *Student Data Handbook for Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education* (NCES 94-303). It runs to about 300 pages. A similar handbook has been prepared for staff.

What kind of information will they be gathering? Under identification, apart from name and address they will want to know your driver's license number, health record number, Medicaid number, school-assigned number, Selective Service number, Social Security number, College Board/ACT number, local education agency number, state education agency number, U.S. Dept. of Education number, etc.

Under religious background the government will want to know if you are: Amish, Assembly of God, Baptist, Buddhist, Calvinist, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopal, Friends, Greek Orthodox, Hindu, Islamic, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Other Christian



denomination, Seventh Day Adventist, Tao, None, Other.

What business is it of the federal government to collect data about your religious affiliation? What about the separation of church and state? What about the right to privacy? What use are they going to make of this information?

In the category of assessments, students will apparently be required to take a whole battery of tests that will reveal just about everything there is to know about you. These tests include an Achievement test, Advanced Placement Test, Aptitude Test, Attitudinal Test, which the handbook describes as "An assessment to measure the mental and emotional set of patterns of likes and dislikes or opinions held by a student or a group of students. This is often used in relation to considerations such as controversial issues or personal adjustments."

What business is it of the federal government to collect data on your attitudes? Who will have access to this information, and for what reason? There is also a Personality Test, a Psychological Test, a Portfolio Assessment, and a dozen other tests. All of these tests will have been devised by the nation's leading behavioral psychologists whose theoretical goal is the control of human behavior. In fact, what we have in this data-gathering system is an instrument for total social control in the making.

The handbook also calls for extensive medical information on each individual. For example, concerning the individual's oral health, the government will want to know: Number of Teeth, Number of Permanent Teeth Lost, Number of Teeth Decayed, Number of Teeth Restored, Occlusion Condition, with subcategories Normal Occlusion, Mild malocclusion, Moderate malocclusion, Severe malocclusion; Gingival Condition, with subcategories Normal, Mild deviation, Moderate deviation, Severe deviation; Oral Soft Tissue Condition with subcategories Normal, Mild deviation, Moderate deviation, Severe deviation; Dental Prosthetics, and Orthodontic Appliances.

Anyone reading your dossier will get a very graphic picture of what's in your mouth! Why should the government, or anyone else beside your dentist, know if you have false teeth, or a bad bite, or once wore braces?

Incidentally, in the new education system, every student will have an Individual Health Plan. In other words, Hillary Clinton will get her socialized medicine plan in through the back door of compulsory public education. Also, there will be a small army of health nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors to help any student who has a problem. By the way, the counselor is described as, "A staff member responsible for guiding individuals, families, groups and communities by assisting them in problem-solving, decision-making, discovering meaning, and articulating goals related to personal, educational, and career development."

Do we really need a paid government employee to "discover meaning" for us? Have Americans become that helpless?

By the way, the only information the public school wanted to know about me back in 1931 when I entered kindergarten was my name, address, date of birth and my parents names and address. That was it, and it was all written down by hand on a card. In those days the idea of limited government still had meaning.

But we and the reformers have come a long way since them. The federal government and the state departments of education are imposing School-to-Work all over the United States. The reform movement marches on and the idea of limited government has gone the way of the gold standard. The government will now plan your life for you, from cradle to grave, and most Americans, ignorant of history, will probably accept the new social order.

Meanwhile, only the homeschoolers seem to know what to do. As for the future of America, it's a big question mark. Will we finally get the socialism that Dewey and his associates longed for? If the data-gathering system doesn't convince you that our government is up to no good, nothing else will. But it certainly should convince concerned parents that they'd better get their kids out of this Human Resources Development System before it reduces them to helpless dependents who can't make a decision without the friendly assistance of a government official. What do you call such a government? Socialist, fascist, communist, totalitarian? Your lesson for today is to think up a fitting label. Thank you.