

What's Wrong With Government Education?

by

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

The enormous failure of our government school system was nicely summed up by a Boston high school teacher in a recent issue of *Education Week* (12/9/98). He said:

"I have about 30 kids in my U.S. history class. They come from nine different countries; most of them can't read. Even if they can read the text, they don't know what it means. How am I supposed to teach U.S. history to kids who can't read? I could come in here every day for 20 years and still not figure out how to do it."

Obviously, this particular teacher had no idea how these kids got into high school without knowing how to read. He had no idea what goes on in primary school that prevents these children from learning to read, and he had no idea what to do with older students who are functionally illiterate. Clearly, the teacher himself is part of the problem. His ignorance of how the system functions prevents him from helping his students get through it in one piece. In other words, the compartmentalization of teachers explains why so many of them have no idea of how the total system works and why the system can lurch from crisis to crisis without any effective change taking place.

The real blame for the system's dysfunction, however, must lie with the professors of education, the state departments of education, and the administrators who have all conspired to create the functional illiteracy that plagues the public schools of America -- once considered the most literate and advanced nation on earth. Deliberately induced illiteracy among students is a vital part of the plan to dumb down Americans so that they will be unable to resist the imposition of social and political control by an arrogant universalist elite determined to create a new world order based on humanist-socialist values.

This "education" plan is part of the utopian socialist agenda set down by the progressives at the turn of the century. The progressives were members of the Protestant academic elite who no longer believed in the religion of their fathers. They put their new faith in science, evolution, and

psychology. Science explained the material world (matter in motion), evolution explained the origin of life (organisms crawling out of the primordial ooze), and psychology explained human nature and provided the elite with the scientific means of controlling human behavior.

These men were also socialists. Why? Because they had to deal with the problem of evil. The Bible tells us that evil is the result of man's innate depravity, his innate sinful nature. But since the progressives did not believe in the Bible, they decided that evil was caused by ignorance, poverty, and social injustice. And what was the cause of social injustice? Why, it was this horrible capitalist system with all of its inequities. Socialism, it was believed, would remove these inequities and thereby solve the problem of evil. By the way, the progressives did not get their model of socialism from Karl Marx. They got it from an American by the name of Edward Bellamy whose book, *Looking Backward*, published in 1888, projected the fantasy of a socialist America in the year 2000.

And so, the progressives, dedicated to their utopian ideal, decided to do all in their power to change America from an individualistic, capitalist, and religious society into a socialist, collectivist, humanist or atheist society. How were they to accomplish that? Through the education system. They would change the curriculum and teaching methods in the public schools so that American children would emerge as young socialists willing to change our way of life into a socialist one.

The socialists realized that the transformation might take as much as a hundred years to complete. In fact, John Dewey wrote in 1898: "Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction." Dewey then outlined the long-range strategy which the progressives were to adopt:

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. Educators should also frankly face the fact that the New Education, as it exists today, is a compromise and a transition: it employs new methods but its controlling ideals are virtually of the Old Education. Wherever movements looking to a solution of the problem are intelligently undertaken, they should receive encouragement, moral and financial, from the intellectual leaders of the community. 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 the 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.

One hundred years later we can see how successful the Dewey plan has been in transforming our educational system into one that serves the needs of the atheist socialist state. Dewey was aided and abetted by a cadre of reformers that included such luminaries as Edward L. Thorndike, James McKeen Cattell, Elwood P. Cubberly, George D. Strayer, Charles Judd, James R. Angell and a host of others. Thorndike, Cattell, and Strayer ran an educational mafia out of Teachers College (Columbia), Cubberly reigned at Stanford, and Angell became president at Yale.

Change in the curriculum of public education has happened so gradually that most parents haven't the faintest idea what is happening to their children, four million of whom are being drugged daily with Ritalin so that they can sit in their classroom seats and be socialized without resistance.

What is truly amazing is the coherence and continuity of the progressive agenda which is as much alive today as it was when Dewey and company were pontificating. For example, *The Whole Language Catalog*, a sort of bible of the whole-language movement published in 1991, has 15 entries for John Dewey in its index. After citing his debt to Dewey, Kenneth Goodman, the leading guru of whole-language philosophy, writes:

Whole language picks up where the progressives left off. . . . [It] takes the philosophy and positive, child-centered view of the progressive educators and adds the knowledge of language, of learning, of child development, and of teaching, and builds a strong scientific base under them. It is this combination of science and humanistic educational and social philosophy that forms the foundation for whole language curriculum. . . . We use the psychological concepts of Piaget and Vygotsky to underscore Dewey's concept of learning as transaction: pupils making sense of their world and being changed themselves in the transactions. (p. 281)

In the early days, the progressives were mainly supported by the major philanthropic foundations. Today the reforms are being underwritten by federal and state governments. Three recent federal programs are funding the massive restructuring of American education in accordance with the progressives' plans: Goals 2000 (enacted 3/31/94), School-to-Work Opportunities Act (enacted 5/4/94), and the Improving America's Schools Act, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (enacted 10/20/94). Thus, the Congress of the United States has become an accomplice in the progressive plan to restructure American

education in the socialist mold.

Apart from needing the funds to carry out their plan, the progressives also realized that coherence and continuity of their agenda over a hundred years was vitally necessary if the plan was to be successful. Thus, in 1901 they created the National Society for the Study of Education, wherein the progressive leaders would be able to formulate their programs of reform, debate their effectiveness, and pass on the baton to their loyal disciples. By studying their yearbooks, the first of which was published in 1902, one can follow the inexorable progress of the socialist takeover of American education.

All of this was accomplished by tenured professors of education and behavioral psychologists, working within a maze of well funded professional organizations, publishing journals, writing textbooks, holding hundreds of conferences, seminars, and conventions each year. None of this has been visible to the average parent who puts a child in a public school. Parents assume that their schools are run by local school boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers. What they don't see is the invisible hand behind this constant pressure for reform that keeps recreating the curriculum.

The average teacher may feel that there is some kind of invisible hand at work, but teachers would rather blame failure on cultural trends, excessive television viewing, dysfunctional parents, and such student disabilities as attention deficit disorder and dyslexia.

Obviously, this is a system of education that cannot be supported by any Christian. Local control no longer exists. It was inevitable that a government education system would become a federal system controlled by those who have been leading us toward totalitarian socialism. Do I exaggerate? To be convinced that the end goal is a totalitarian system, all one has to do is read the *Student Data Handbook for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education* (NCES 94-303). This is the official guidebook for the computerized data-gathering system dreamed up by our totalitarian bureaucrats. The data will include massive information on health, family, religion, attitudes, psychological assessments, etc. For example, the attitudinal test is described as: "An assessment to measure the mental and emotional set or 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."

All of this sensitive, personal data will be housed in a central computer in Washington making it easy for "educators" to control just about everyone.

5.

But the question is simply this: does the government of a free people have the right to collect this kind of information on all of its citizens for its own political or social purposes? Should the government of a free people record the attitudes and opinions of its citizens so that it can engineer their personal adjustment?

The time has come for Christians to realize what has become of the "land of the free and the home of the brave." If Christians want to restore the full measure of our freedoms, they will have to do what they are reluctant to do: remove their children en masse from the public schools. What is needed now is not accomodation to the plans of the American Pharoah but a full-fledged exodus of Christian children. That's the easiest and most peaceful way to put an end to the socialist agenda and return America to its basic constitutional principles. Will Christians have the courage to do what must be done? That test will be upon us sooner than anyone anticipated.