



UNIVERSITY OF  
WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

October 9, 2000

Samuel L. Blumenfeld  
*The New American*  
P.O. Box 8040  
Appleton, Wisconsin 54912

Dear Mr. Blumenfeld:

Every so often I receive a flood of "hate" mail that indicates that I have been misquoted once again since my book *Licensing Parents: Can We Prevent Child Abuse?* appeared in 1994. The most recent burst seems to come from your recent article in *The New American*.

Your quotation about my reference to the state's interest in child rearing is not far off the mark. However, you obviously have not read my book, because I did not advocate that parents should be required to have a federal government license and that their children would be seized if their license was revoked. My thesis was that we should consider setting standards for parenting as we do for other activities that affect other people. My aim was, and is, to stimulate awareness of how vital parenthood is to the survival and prosperity of our society.

I believe that your readers would be better served by affirming the sacrificial role of parenthood, which is attacked from all sides in our society. I believe that your readers would agree that too many people regard children as their personal possessions to do with as they please, rather than as sacred trusts. Children do not belong to the government. They do not belong to their parents. They do not belong to any mortal being or institution. As parents, we have the privilege of raising our children until they reach adulthood when they can be fully responsible for themselves.

Incidentally, I was grateful for your piece "Finding Hope at Home". There is not much information available about home schooling. We need more data about it. Professor Vernon Haubrich of our School of Education and I have been supportive, and admiring, of parents who choose to take on the responsibility of educating their children. We assume that most are doing a good job; however, we also are concerned that some parents are not prepared for the task and are not serving their children well.

I look forward to your reply. If I do not receive one, I will assume that you interpret your citations to serve an ideological purpose.

Sincerely yours,

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# SAMUEL L. BLUMENFELD

73 Bishops Forest Drive Waltham, MA 02452 781-899-6468

October 18, 2000  
Dr. Jack C. Westman  
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry  
1234 Dartmouth Road  
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

Dear Dr. Westman:

Thanks for your thoughtful letter of October 9<sup>th</sup>, which was forwarded to me by The New American. Your book, *Licensing Parents: Can We Prevent Child Abuse?*, was referred to in my article, "It Takes a Global Village," in the July 3, 2000 issue of The New American. The reference to your book and the quote from it were inserted in the article by the editor of the magazine, who thought they would bolster my argument against the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since I know that The New American takes pains to be accurate in quoting sources, I agreed to the insertion even though I had not read the book.

You write that we (the government?) should consider setting standards for parenting as we do for other activities that affect other people. But the whole idea of an enforcement agency "standardizing" parenting so patently flies in the face of a free society, that it must be rejected by anyone who values freedom as highly as did our Founding Fathers. The Founding Fathers were well acquainted with the Bible and knew that the principles of parenthood were well expressed throughout the Bible, particularly in Deuteronomy 6. It was not necessary for the government to meddle into something as sacred as the bond between parents and children. In fact, the whole purpose of the Constitution was to outline in detail what the government could and could not do.

Incidentally, there are loads of secular books in any of our major bookstores on parenting. Dr. Spock set the standard for good parenting for millions of parents. Every day a new book is written on the subject, often by a psychiatrist like yourself, which should provide enough wisdom and guidance to any parent who wants to do a good job of parenting. The idea of government bureaucrats getting involved in this "sacred trust" is totally uncalled for.

However, the issue of child abuse is a serious one, but one very much subject to interpretation. Some people might think that home-schooling is a form of child abuse because it deprives children of public school socialization. Others might think that passing on one's religious beliefs and values to one's children is a form of child abuse because it deprives the child of the freedom to choose his or her own religion. We all recognize that physical child abuse is a crime, and we have laws to deal with that. But is

the mild form of spanking, which parents often resort to in disciplining an unruly child a form of child abuse in your definition of the term?

Life is neither perfect nor perfectible. And that also goes for parenting. Can you imagine what kind of a bureaucracy and army of social workers would be needed to monitor parenting in the United States to carry out your proposed policies? Can you visualize the kind of police state this would lead to? Maybe you can, and the thought doesn't bother you.

I'm forever puzzled by social engineers like yourself who have so little love for the great free society given us by our Founding Fathers, a system of freedom that has produced the most productive and richest nation in history with an unlimited potential for individual achievement and happiness. Of course, freedom has a price. It is not utopia. When people are free, they should exercise their freedom with responsibility. But because there are irresponsible people among us does not mean that we need to give up freedom because of them.

You are right about the sacrificial role of parenthood and that raising a child is a sacred trust. I would prefer to deal with bad parents on the local level by churches and local non-governmental organizations. For example, there are organizations that help unwed mothers, drug addicts, alcoholics, the homeless.

I thank you for your kind remarks about my article, "Finding Hope at Home." But I also notice that you are "concerned" that some parents may not be prepared for the task and are not serving their children well. I hope you are as concerned with the public schools that are lobotomizing millions of children, dumbing them down, turning them into semi-literate moral barbarians.

I hope this letter answers your questions. Incidentally, there is a lot of information available about home schooling. My book, *Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children* is full of interesting information and it has an appendix listing organizations, teaching materials, magazines, books, etc. It's available through Amazon.com. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel L. Blumenfeld". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld