



Is Compulsory School Attendance Compatible With a Free Society?

But when it comes to education, suddenly we are confronted with compulsory school attendance laws, compulsory property taxes to pay for the government schools, compulsory testing, compulsory inoculations, forced busing, restrictions against prayer, forced sex ed, death ed, and drug ed. And now, every day, four to six million children are forced to take Ritalin, or some other powerful mind- and mood-altering drug, if they want to attend public school.



Through the efforts of the Home School Legal Defense Association, the right of parents to homeschool their children without interference from the state has been established by the setting of court precedents and rulings. However, the National Education Association is still determined to put homeschooling out of business through onerous regulation.

Educational freedom means getting the government out of the education business and the idea of compulsion out of education. It means parents providing for their children's education in the same way that they purchase any other service in a free society.

The idea that parents can afford to pay rent, buy a car, feed the kids, and buy their clothes but can't pay for their education is preposterous. If parents had to pay for education, they would budget their finances to include that expenditure. And they would have the money to do so, because they would not have to pay the high taxes that now support the present wasteful government-owned-and-operated system.

That's the kind of educational freedom that existed in colonial times and the early days of our republic. Imagine how different our history would be if King George III had set up a system of government schools, with compulsory attendance laws, and a curriculum that would have brainwashed the children to become loyal and obedient subjects to the King. Would we have had a Declaration of Independence? Would we have had such independent-minded founding fathers as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and James Madison? Probably not.

We've been led to believe that without compulsory school attendance, we'd have illiterate, ignorant children sitting at home and watching TV all day or roaming the streets and committing crimes. But the glaring fact is that, despite compulsory school attendance laws, we now have more illiteracy, more ignorance, and more delinquency among young Americans than before such laws were enacted. In 1993, a survey of adult literacy in America sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, revealed that half the adult population of the United States can barely read or write. That's what 150 years of government schooling have given us!

Indeed, the reading problem is now so severe that the National Endowment of the Arts issued an alarming report, *Reading at Risk*, in November 2007, revealing the precipitous decline of literacy in



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America. According to the report, the number of 17-year-olds who never read for pleasure increased from 9 percent in 1984 to 19 percent in 2004. About half of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 never read books for pleasure.

Endowment Chairman Dana Gioia stated: "This is a massive social problem. We are losing the majority of the new generation. They will not achieve anything close to their potential because of poor reading." The survey found that only a third of high school seniors read at a proficient level. "And proficiency is not a high standard," said Gioia. "We're not asking them to be able to read Proust in the original. We're talking about reading the daily newspaper."

Back in the days of educational freedom we had 99 percent literacy. In 1812, DuPont de Nemours, the Frenchman who founded the DuPont chemical company, published a book entitled *National Education in the United States of America*. He wrote:

The United States are more advanced in their educational facilities than most countries. They have a large number of primary schools; and as their paternal affection protects children from working in the fields, it is possible to send them to the school-master — a condition that does not prevail in Europe. Most young Americans, therefore, can read, write and cipher. Not more than four in a thousand are unable to write legibly — even neatly.... In America, a great number of people read the Bible, and all the people read a newspaper. The fathers read aloud to their children while breakfast is being prepared — a task which occupies the mothers for three quarters of an hour every morning. And as the newspapers of the United States are filled with all sorts of narratives ... they disseminate an enormous amount of information.

Obviously, back in the early days of the republic, education was a family affair closely connected to religious practice. A nation built on Biblical principles had to be a highly literate one. And all of this high level of literacy was achieved without any government involvement, without any centralized bureaucracy, without any professors of education, or accrediting agencies, or teacher certification. And, most significantly, without any compulsory attendance laws.

The fact that millions of young Americans now emerge from twelve years of compulsory schooling unable to read, write, spell, do basic arithmetic, or speak grammatically, means that the purpose of public education is no longer education but something else. What is that something else? It is politically-correct socialization. But even that doesn't work, since so many of these victims of the system become anti-social delinquents.

What our nation needs now, more than ever, is a return to educational freedom, so that the American people can apply their ingenuity and unbounded energies to the creation of alternatives to the present debilitating system. Technology has now made compulsory school attendance obsolete. One can now learn much more at home than in any public classroom, and at less cost to everyone.

The goal of homeschoolers, Christian educators, libertarians, and conservatives in general should be the repeal of all compulsory school attendance laws, which have become the most powerful weapons the education establishment can use to thwart the competition and force parents to do the educators' will.

These laws not only violate the parents' unalienable right to determine how their children are to be educated, but they violate the 13th Amendment, which prohibits involuntary servitude. No child should be forced to serve the state and the interests of the education establishment. No child should be forced to undergo brainwashing and indoctrination by a self-serving monopoly of facilitators and change



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agents.

True individual freedom will never be regained in this country until educational freedom is restored. The nature of a society is determined by the way its children are educated. The present atheistic, immoral education system has produced the Columbines, the violence and vandalism than now plague our public schools. The ultimate aim of the system is to lead us into a New World Order in which parents will be deprived of the right to control the education of their children.

If you're not sure what the New World Order will be like, just read the yearly resolutions of the National Education Association and get hold of the Student Data Handbook (NCES 94-303) which describes the scope of information that will be gathered on each child and put into the federal computer in Washington for the purpose of social control.

The compulsory attendance laws are the linchpin of the whole totalitarian plan. Such laws have been used by every modern dictator and tyrannical government to control their people and mold the minds of the children. Such laws are not only not needed in a free society, but ultimately lead to its demise.

Only when Americans get themselves solidly back on the road to freedom will they be able to transfer to the next generation the true legacy of liberty left to us by our founding fathers.



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