



## 19th Century Communists and the Origin of American Public Education

Communism as an economic and political philosophy was created by Robert Owen (1771-1858), a British manufacturer, who believed that all of man's ills were caused by religion. He became a social messiah when he "discovered" what he considered to be the basic truth about human character: that a man's character is made for him by society through upbringing, education and environment and not by himself as the religionists taught. Children in a cannibal society grow up to be adult cannibals. Children in a selfish, competitive society grow up to be selfish and competitive. No one is innately depraved or evil. An infant is a glob of plastic that can be molded to have whatever character society wants him to have.



Owen started publishing his ideas in 1813, and in 1816 to prove that he was right, he established his famous Institution for the Formation of Character at New Lanark in Scotland. Through a secular, scientific curriculum coupled with the notion that each pupil must strive to make his fellow pupils happy, Owen hoped to turn out little rational, cooperative human beings, devoid of selfishness, religious superstition, and all of the other traits found in capitalist man.

In 1825, Robert Owen came to America to establish his communist colony at New Harmony, Indiana. The experiment received a great deal of newspaper publicity and attracted a large number of utopian followers. It was called "an experiment in social reform through cooperation and rational education." But in less than two years it failed. The problem, Owen decided, was that people raised and educated under the old system were incapable of adapting themselves to the communist way of life, no matter how much they professed to believe in it.

Therefore, the Owenites decided that rational, secular education would have to precede the creating of a socialist society. They subsequently launched a strong campaign to promote a national system of secular education. Owen's son, Robert Dale Owen, and feminist Frances Wright set up headquarters in New York City, helped organize the Workingmen's Party as a front for Owenite ideas, published a radical weekly paper called *The Free Inquirer*, and lectured widely on socialism and national education.

Their anti-religious views turned so many people away from Owenism, however, that they were forced to adopt covert techniques to further their ends. One of the men attracted to their cause was Orestes Brownson, a writer and editor, whose remarkable religious odyssey took him from Calvinism to Universalism to Socialism to Unitarianism and finally to Catholicism. Years later, describing his short experience with the Owenites, Brownson wrote (as documented in his article "The Convert" in *The Works of Orestes A Brownson*, AMS Press, Inc., vol. V, p.56):



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But the more immediate work was to get our system of schools adopted. To this end it was proposed to organize the whole Union secretly, very much on the plan of the Carbonari of Europe, of whom at that time I knew nothing. The members of this secret society were to avail themselves of all the means in their power, each in his own locality, to form public opinion in favor education by the state at the public expense, and to get such men elected to the legislatures as would be likely to favor our purposes. How far the secret organization extended, I do not know; but I do know that a considerable portion of the State of New York was organized, for I was myself one of the agents for organizing it.

Thus we know that as early as 1829, the communists and socialists had adopted subversive techniques to further their ends in the United States, techniques they would continue to use right up to the present.

Public education was the result of an unholy alliance between Owenites, who wanted public schools to promote socialism, Unitarians who wanted public schools to get rid of Calvinist influence, and Protestants who wanted public schools to counter increasing Catholic immigration. The system we now have is anti-Christian, pro-socialist, and owned lock, stock, and barrel by behavioral psychologists. It is a training system designed to treat children as little animals in conformity with the educators' prevailing belief in evolution.

This is clearly not an education system for a free society, and thus it must be gotten rid of. How? American parents still have the freedom to educate their children outside this corrupt government system. The faster they exercise this freedom, the better off we all shall be.

**Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld** is the author of nine books on education including *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, *The Whole Language/OBE Fraud*, and *The Victims of Dick & Jane and Other Essays*. Of *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, former U.S. Senator Steve Symms of Idaho said: "Every so often a book is written that can change the thinking of a nation. This book is one of them." Mr. Blumenfeld's columns have appeared in such diverse publications as *Reason*, *The New American*, *The Chalcedon Report*, *Insight*, *Education Digest*, *Vital Speeches*, *WorldNetDaily*, and others.



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