



Should the Public Schools Be Privatized?

Although the costs of public education keep going up every year, academic achievement in these schools continues to decline. Why? If you've read Charlotte Iserbyt's well-documented expose of government education, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*, you would know why.

The dumbed-down curriculum in our public schools did not come out of nowhere. It is not the result of some accident unbeknownst to our educators. It was instigated over a hundred years ago by our top educators to fulfill an agenda formulated to lead America into socialism. What is socialism? According to my Scribner dictionary, socialism is a "doctrine that there should be public ownership and operation of the means of production." Since all producers are individual human beings, socialism means confiscating the private property of anyone who creates anything of value.



Thus, socialism is the very antithesis of the kind of government our Founding Fathers gave us. John Hancock, in an oration commemorating the Boston Massacre, said in 1774:

Security to the persons and properties of the governed, is so obviously the design and end of civil government, that to attempt a logical proof of it, would be like burning tapers at noon day, to assist the sun in enlightening the world; and it cannot be either virtuous or honorable, to attempt to support a government, of which this is not the great and principal basis; and it is to the last degree vicious and infamous to attempt to support a government, which manifestly tends to render the persons and properties of the governed insecure.

That concept of government's proper purpose was enshrined two years later in the Declaration of Independence.

Private property gives individuals economic power, the power to earn money, the power to create wealth. Socialist governments assume the power to confiscate such private property and private wealth. But when government denies individuals the right to use their property for productive purposes, creative entrepreneurship dries up.

Thus, socialists in the process of taking over a free economy will have to increasingly deprive individuals of their right to use their property as they wish. This has already been done in America where environmental regulations are being used to deprive individuals of the right to use their property as they see fit.

Government ownership of schools is a concept that was promoted by early socialists in America, namely



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on May 5, 2011

by Robert Owen and his followers who created the world's first secular communist community at New Harmony, Indiana, in 1828. When that community failed, Owen blamed it on the inability of those educated under the individualist, religious system to adapt themselves to a communist way of life. Therefore, in order for socialism to succeed in America, a government education system had be established that would train children to become little socialists, who would then create a socialist state. Since education in early America was largely a private affair, Owen's followers then organized a secret society which would be used to promote the idea of a government education system that would promulgate atheism and socialism. Orestes Brownson, who had been a member of that secret society, later wrote after his defection:

The great object was to get rid of Christianity, and to convert our churches into halls of science. The plan was not to make open attacks on religion, although we might belabor the clergy and bring them into contempt where we could; but to establish a system of state — we said national — schools, from which all religion was to be excluded, in which nothing was to be taught but such knowledge as is verifiable by the senses, and to which parents were to be compelled by law to send their children.

Today's public schools do exactly what the Owenites wanted them to do: exclude Christianity from the schools and compel attendance.

Owen was also greatly helped by the work of Horace Mann, a Massachusetts legislator who became the state's first Secretary of Education in 1837. Although Mann had been raised as a Calvinist, he eventually adopted the religion of his powerful friends in politics and became a Unitarian. He also adopted their statist philosophy of government. He wrote in 1847:

Let us settle the question, in the first place, what our theory of government is. "Are its functions penal and retributive merely, or are they also directory and preventive?"

His answer was that the political leader should be active in advancing legislation to improve society:

He is to devise profound and far-reaching plans: he is to establish institutions and create systems which will work positive good, thus secure to the world the immense advantages which prevention has over remedy.

In short, his philosophy was a call for government activism — "devising profound and far-reaching plans" to change America.

In 1843 Mann visited Prussia and was impressed by their government education system and thought that it could be adopted by Americans. Most Americans had no desire to emulate the Prussians. And so, Mann wrote in his famous *Seventh Annual Report*:

If Prussia can pervert the benign influences of education to the support of arbitrary power, we surely can employ them for the support and perpetuation of republican institutions. A national spirit of liberty can be cultivated more easily than a national spirit of bondage; and if it may be made one of the great prerogatives of education to perform the unnatural and unholy work of making slaves, then surely it must be one of the noblest instrumentalities for rearing a nation of freemen.

It is no coincidence that every tyrant of the 20th century has used a government education system as the means of indoctrinating its youth to love the ruling tyrant.

The only way for Americans to get rid of their public schools is to privatize them. Some government



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educational institutions, such as West Point and the Naval Academy are necessary, but all other educational institutions can and should be privatized. While I also believe that our huge state universities should be privatized, it is necessary to privatize the public schools before we can work on the state universities.

Privatization of a town's public schools would solve many problems. It would reduce the cost of education and thereby lower property taxes used to support them. It would eliminate the need of a centralized state administrative apparatus, with its high-paying administrators and assistant administrators. It would free local schools to adopt learning programs that actually work, thereby improving student achievement. It would re-invent the idea of educational freedom, on the foundation of which this nation was built. It would also get rid of the stranglehold that the teachers' unions have on the schools.

It would not be difficult to privatize the schools. Each public school would become a private tax-exempt foundation, governed by a Board of Trustees composed of citizens of the community. The schools would charge tuition and use all of the other traditional means of raising money for the institution. As for parents who could not afford the tuition, the town would create a privately run town foundation for the express purpose of paying the tuition of students from poor families. Thus, every child in the community would be assured a good private education.

Teachers would be hired on the basis of their qualifications and experience. There would be no need for state certification, which hasn't prevented our present schools from hiring teachers who cannot teach. Thus, many individuals of high intelligence and world experience could be hired who would make excellent roll models for the students and inspire them to excel.

The schools would be free to develop into institutions of substance and quality based on the efforts of its trustees, administrators, students and parents. They could easily learn from the experiences of long-standing private schools throughout America that have managed to produce educational excellence. Privatization of the schools would also help Americans rediscover the exhilarating benefits of freedom from government's heavy-handed control over their lives.

Dr. Benjamin Church wrote in 1773, "When a people have once sold their liberties, it is no act of extraordinary generosity, to throw their lives and property into the bargain, for they are poor indeed when enjoyed at the mercy of a master."

Americans today are at the "mercy of a master." Everywhere we turn, the government is there to regulate us. This is a far cry from the government whose sold purpose is to secure our unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. We really don't need those "profound and far-reaching plans" like socialized medicine, the Department of Education, and other government bureaus that would elate Horace Mann.

But, of course, we still have a Constitution with a Bill of Rights, which the progressives in Washington are having a difficult time trying to annul, particularly the Second Amendment. But anyone interested in keeping America free understands how important that Amendment is. Here's an interesting quote I found in a book published in 1807. It contains an oration by Dr. Thomas Welsh, commemorating the Boston Massacre, written in 1783:

A militia is the most natural defence of a free state, from invasion and tyranny. They who compose the militia, are the proprietors of the soil....Every free man has within his breast the great essentials of a soldier, and having made the use of arms familiar, is ever ready for the field. And



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where is the tyrant who has not reason to dread an army of freemen?

Indeed, freedom is the natural state of Americans. And there is no better way to restore our free society than by getting the government out of the education business.



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