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*On the night of June 9, 1834, a group of prominent men "chiefly engaged in commerce" gathered privately in a Boston drawing room to discuss a scheme of universal schooling. Secretary of this meeting was William Ellery Channing, Horace Mann's own minister as well as an international figure and the leading Unitarian of his day. The location of the meeting house is not entered in the minutes nor are the names of the assembly's participants apart from Channing. Even though the literacy rate in Massachusetts was 98 percent, and in neighboring Connecticut, 99.8 percent, the assembled businessmen agreed the present system of schooling allowed too much to depend upon chance. It encouraged more entrepreneurial exuberance than the social system could bear.*

– The minutes of this meeting are Appleton Papers collection, Massachusetts Historical Society

## **Frederick W. Taylor**

The first man on record to perceive how much additional production could be extracted from close regulation of labor was Frederick Winslow Taylor, son of a wealthy Philadelphia lawyer. "What I demand of the worker," Taylor said, "is not to produce any longer by his own initiative, but to execute punctiliously the orders given down to their minutest details."

The Taylors, a prominent Quaker family from Germantown, Pennsylvania, had taken Freddy to Europe for three years from 1869 to 1872, where he was attending an aristocratic German academy when von Moltke's Prussian *blitzkrieg* culminated in the French disaster at Sedan and a German Empire was finally proclaimed, ending a thousand years of disunion. Prussian schooling was the widely credited forge which made those miracles possible. The jubilation which spread through Germany underlined a presumably fatal difference between political systems which disciplined with ruthless efficiency, like Prussia's socialist paradise, and those devoted to whimsy and luxury, like France's. The lesson wasn't lost on little Fred.

Near the conclusion of his *Principles of Scientific Management* 1 (1911), published thirty-nine years later, Taylor summarized the new managerial discipline as follows:

- A regimen of science, not rule of thumb.
- An emphasis on harmony, not the discord of competition.
- An insistence on cooperation, not individualism.
- A fixation on maximum output.
- The development of each man to his greatest productivity.

Taylor's biographers, Wrege and Greenwood, wrote:

He left us a great legacy. Frederick Taylor advanced a total system of management, one which he built from pieces taken from numerous others whom he rarely would credit.... His genius lies in being a missionary.

After Taylor's death in 1915, the *Frederick W. Taylor Cooperators* were formed to project his Scientific Management movement into the future. Frank Copley called Taylor "a man whose heart was aflame with missionary zeal." Much about this Quaker-turned-Unitarian, who married into an Arbella-descended Puritan family before finally becoming an Episcopalian, bears decisively on the shape schooling took in this country. Wrege and Greenwood describe him as: "often arrogant, somewhat caustic, and inflexible in how his system should be implemented.... Taylor was cerebral; like a machine he was polished and he was also intellectual.... Taylor's brilliant reasoning was marred when he attempted to articulate it, for his delivery was often demeaning, even derogatory at times."

Frank Gilbreth's *Motion Study* says:

It is the never ceasing marvel concerning this man that age cannot wither nor custom stale his work. After many a weary day's study the investigator awakes from a dream of greatness to find he has only worked out a new proof for a problem Taylor has already solved. Time study, the instruction card, functional foremanship, the differential rate piece method of compensation, and numerous other scientifically derived methods of decreasing costs and increasing output and wages—these are by no means his only contributions to standardizing the trades.

To fully grasp the effect of Taylor's industrial evangelism on American national schooling, you need to listen to him play teacher in his own words to Schmidt at Bethlehem Steel in the 1890s:

Now Schmidt, you are a first-class pig-iron handler and know your business well. You have been handling at a rate of twelve and a half tons per day. I have given considerable study to handling pig-iron, and feel you could handle forty-seven tons of pig-iron per day if you really tried instead of twelve and a half tons.

Skeptical but willing, Schmidt started to work, and all day long, and at regular intervals, was told by the men who stood over him with a watch, "now pick up a pig and walk. Now sit down and rest. Now walk—rest," etc. He worked when he was told to work, and rested when he was told to rest, and at half

past five in the afternoon had his forty-seven tons loaded on the car.

The incident described above is, incidentally, a fabrication. There was no Schmidt except in Taylor's mind, just as there was no close observation of Prussian schools by Mann. Below, he testifies before Congress in 1912:

There is a right way of forcing the shovel into materials and many wrong ways. Now, the way to shovel refractory stuff is to press the forearm hard against the upper part of the right leg just below the thigh, like this, take the end of the shovel in your right hand and when you push the shovel into the pile, instead of using the muscular effort of the arms, which is tiresome, throw the weight of your body on the shovel like this; that pushes your shovel in the pile with hardly any exertion and without tiring the arms in the least.

Harlow Person called Taylor's approach to the simplest tasks of working life "a meaningful and fundamental break with the past." Scientific management, or Taylorism, had four characteristics designed to make the worker "an interchangeable part of an interchangeable machine making interchangeable parts."

Since each quickly found its analogue in scientific schooling, let me show them to you:<sup>3</sup> 1) A mechanically controlled work pace; 2) The repetition of simple motions; 3) Tools and technique selected for the worker; 4) Only superficial attention is asked from the worker, just enough to keep up with the moving line. The connection of all to school procedure is apparent.

"In the past," Taylor wrote, "Man has been first. In the future the system must be first." It was not sufficient to have physical movements standardized; the standardized worker "must be happy in his work," too, therefore his thought processes also must be standardized.<sup>4</sup> Scientific management was applied wholesale in American industry in the decade after 1910. It spread quickly to schools.

In the preface to the classic study on the effects of scientific management on schooling in America, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*,<sup>5</sup> Raymond Callahan explains that when he set out to write, his intent was to explore the origin and development of business values in educational administration, an occurrence he tracks to about 1900. Callahan wanted to know *why* school administrators had adopted business practices and management parameters of assessment when "Education is not a business. The school is not a factory."

Could the inappropriate procedure be explained simply by a familiar process in which ideas and values flow from high-status groups to those of lesser distinction? As Callahan put it, "It does not take profound knowledge of American education to know that educators are, and have been, a relatively low-status, low-power group." But the degree of intellectual domination shocked him:

*What was unexpected was the extent, not only of the power of business-industrial groups, but of the strength of the business ideology...and the extreme weakness and vulnerability of school administrators.* I had expected more professional autonomy and I was completely unprepared for the extent and degree of capitulation by administrators to whatever demands were made upon them. I was surprised and then dismayed to learn how many decisions they made or were forced to make, not on educational grounds, but as a means of appeasing their critics in order to maintain their positions in the school. [emphasis added]

<sup>1</sup>The actual term "scientific management" was created by famous lawyer Louis Brandeis in 1910 for the Interstate Commerce Commission rate hearings. Brandeis understood thoroughly how a clever phrase could control public imagination.

<sup>2</sup>Gilbreth, the man who made the term "industrial engineering" familiar to the public, was a devotee of Taylorism. His daughter wrote a best seller about the Gilbreth home, *Cheaper By The Dozen*, in which her father's penchant for refining work processes is recalled. Behind his back, Taylor ran Gilbreth down as a "fakir."

<sup>3</sup>List adapted from Melvin Kranzberg and Joseph Gies, *By the Sweat of Thy Brow*.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor was no garden-variety fanatic. He won the national doubles tennis title in 1881 with a racket of his own design, and pioneered slip-on shoes (to save time, of course). Being happy in your work was the demand of Bellamy and other leading socialist thinkers, otherwise you

would have to be "adjusted" (hence the expression "well- adjusted"). Taylor concurred.

Callahan's analysis why schoolmen are always vulnerable is somewhat innocent and ivory tower, and his recommendation for reform—to effectively protect their revenue stream from criticism on the part of the public—is simply tragic; but his gathering of data is matchless and his judgment throughout in small matters and large is consistently illuminating.

## The Adoption Of Business Organization By Schools

In 1903, *The Atlantic Monthly* called for adoption of business organization by schools and William C. Bagley identified the ideal teacher as one who would rigidly "hew to the line." Bagley's ideal school was a place strictly reduced to rigid routine; he repeatedly stressed in his writing a need for "unquestioned obedience."

Before 1900, school boards were large, clumsy organizations, with a seat available to represent every interest (they often had thirty to fifty members). A great transformation was engineered in the first decade of the twentieth century, however, and after 1910 they were dominated by businessmen, lawyers, real estate men, and politicians. Business pressure extended from the kindergarten rung of the new school ladder all the way into the German-inspired teacher training schools. *The Atlantic Monthly* approved what it had earlier asked for, saying in 1910, "Our universities are beginning to run as business colleges."

Successful industrial leaders were featured regularly in the press, holding forth on their success but seldom attributing it to book learning or scholarship. Carnegie, self-educated in libraries, appears in his writings and public appearances as the leading school critic of the day; echoing Carnegie, the governor of Michigan welcomed an NEA convention to Detroit with his injunction: "The demand of the age is for practical education." The State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Michigan followed the governor:

The character of our education must change with the oncoming of the years of this highly practical age. We have educated the mind to think and trained the vocal organs to express the thought, and we have forgotten the fact that in four times out of five the practical man expresses his thought by the hand rather than by mere words.

Something was cooking. The message was clear: academic education had become a strange kind of national emergency, just as had been prophesied by the Department of Education's *Circular of Information* in 1871 and 1872. Twenty years later Francis Parker praised the elite Committee of Ten under Harvard president Charles Eliot for rejecting "tracking," the practice of school class assignment based upon future social destination. The committee had come down squarely for common schools, an ideal that Parker said was "worth all the pains necessary to produce the report. The conclusion is that there should be no such thing as class education." Parker had noticed the start of an attempt to provide common people with only partial education. He was relieved it had been turned back. Or so he thought.

The pronouncements of the Committee of Ten turned out to be the last gasp of the common school notion apart from Fourth of July rhetoric. The common school was being buried by the determination of new tycoon-class businessmen to see the demise of an older democratic-republican order and its dangerous libertarian ideals. If "educators," as they were self-consciously beginning to refer to themselves, had any misunderstanding of what was expected by 1910, NEA meetings of that year were specifically designed to clear them up. Attendees were told the business community had judged their work to date to be "theoretical, visionary, and impractical":

All over the country our courses are being attacked and the demand for revision is along the line of fitting mathematical teaching to the needs of the masses.

In 1909, Leonard Ayres charged in *Laggards in Our Schools* that although these institutions were filled with "retarded children," school programs were, alas, "fitted...to the unusually bright one." Ayres invented means for

measuring the efficiency of school systems by computing the dropout/holdover rate—a game still in evidence today. This was begging the question with a vengeance but no challenge to this assessment was ever raised.

Taylor's system of management efficiency was being formally taught at Harvard and Dartmouth by 1910. In the next year, 219 articles on the subject appeared in magazines, hundreds more followed: by 1917 a bibliography of 550 school management-science references was available from a Boston publisher. As the steel core of school reform, scientific management enjoyed national recognition. It was the main topic at the 1913 convention of the Department of Superintendence. Paul Hanus, professor of education at Harvard, launched a series of books for the World Book Company under the title School Efficiency Series, and famous muckraker J.M. Rice published his own *Scientific Management in Education* in 1913, showing local "ward" schooling an arena of low-lives and grifters.

Frederick Taylor's influence was not limited to America; it soon circled the globe. *Principles of Scientific Management* spread the efficiency mania over Europe, Japan, and China. A letter to the editor of *The Nation* in 1911 gives the flavor of what was happening:

I am tired of scientific management, so-called. I have heard of it from scientific managers, from university presidents, from casual acquaintances in railway trains; I have read of it in the daily papers, the weekly paper, the ten-cent magazine, and in the *Outlook*. I have only missed its treatment by Theodore Roosevelt; but that is probably because I cannot keep up with his writings. For 15 years I have been a subscriber to a magazine dealing with engineering matters, feeling it incumbent on me to keep in touch but the touch has become a pressure, the pressure a crushing strain, until the mass of articles on shop practice and scientific management threatened to crush all thought out of my brain, and I stopped my subscription.

In an article from *Izvestia* dated April 1918, Lenin urged the system upon Russians.

His jargon-enriched *Classroom Management* (1907) was reprinted thirty times in the next 20 years as a teacher training text. Bagley's metaphors drawn from big business can fairly be said to have controlled the pedagogical imagination for the entire twentieth century.

## The Ford System And The Kronstadt Commune

"An anti-intellectual, a hater of individuals," is the way Richard Stites characterizes Taylor in *Revolutionary Dreams*, his book on the utopian beginning of the Soviet Era. Says Stites, "His system is the basis for virtually every twisted dystopia in our century, from death under the Gas Bell in Zamiatin's *We* for the unspeakable crime of deviance, to the maintenance of a fictitious state-operated underground in Orwell's 1984 in order to draw deviants into disclosing who they are."

Oddly enough, an actual scheme of dissident entrapment was the brainchild of J.P. Morgan, his unique contribution to the Cecil Rhodes-inspired "Round Table" group. Morgan contended that revolution could be subverted permanently by infiltrating the underground and subsidizing it. In this way the thinking of the opposition could be known as it developed and fatally compromised. Corporate, government, and foundation cash grants to subversives might be one way to derail the train of insurrection that Hegelian theory predicted would arise against every ruling class.

As this practice matured, the insights of Fabian socialism were stirred into the mix; gradually a socialist *leveling* through practices pioneered in Bismarck's Prussia came to be seen as the most efficient control system for the masses, the bottom 80 percent of the population in advanced industrial states. For the rest, an invigorating system of *laissez-faire* market competition would keep the advanced breeding stock on its toes.

A large portion of the intellectual Left jumped on Taylor's bandwagon, even as labor universally opposed it. Lenin

himself was an aggressive advocate:

The war taught us much, not only that people suffered, but especially the fact that those who have the best technology, organization, discipline and the best machines emerge on top; it is this the war has taught us. It is essential to learn that without machines, without discipline, it is impossible to live in modern society. It is necessary to master the highest technology or be crushed.

But even in Russia, workers resisted Taylorish methods. The rebellion of the Kronstadt Commune in 1921 charged that Bolsheviks were "planning to introduce the sweat labor system of Taylor." They were right.

Taylor distilled the essence of Bismarck's Prussian school training under whose regimen he had witnessed firsthand the defeat of France in 1871. His American syntheses of these disciplines made him the direct inspiration for Henry Ford and "Fordism." Between 1895 and 1915, Ford radically transformed factory procedure, relying on Taylorized management and a mass production assembly line marked by precision, continuity, coordination, speed, and standardization. Ford wrote two extraordinary essays in the 1920s, "*The Meaning of Time*," and "*Machinery, The New Messiah*," in which he equated planning, timing, precision, and the rest of the scientific management catalogue with the great moral meaning of life:

A clean factory, clean tools, accurate gauges, and precise methods of manufacture produce a smooth working efficient machine [just as] clean thinking, clean living, and square dealing make for a decent home life.

By the 1920s, the reality of the Ford system paralleled the rules of a Prussian infantry regiment. Both were places where workers were held under close surveillance, kept silent, and punished for small infractions. Ford was unmoved by labor complaints. Men were disposable cogs in his machine. "A great business is really too big to be human," he commented in 1929. Fordism and Taylorism swept the Soviet Union as they had swept the United States and Western Europe. By the 1920s the words *fordizatsiya* and *teilorizatsiya*, both appellations describing good work habits, were common across Russia.

## The National Press Attack On Academic Schooling

In May of 1911, the first salvo of a sustained national press attack on the academic ambitions of public schooling was fired. For the previous ten years the idea of school as an oasis of mental development built around a common, high-level curriculum had been steadily undermined by the rise of educational psychology and its empty-child/elastic-child hypotheses. Psychology was a business from the first, an aggressive business lobbying for jobs and school contracts. But resistance of parents, community groups, and students themselves to the new psychologized schooling was formidable.

As the summer of 1911 approached, the influential *Educational Review* gave educators something grim to muse upon as they prepared to clean out their desks: "Must definite reforms with measurable results be foresworn," it asked, "that an antiquated school system may grind out useless produce?" The magazine demanded *quantifiable* proof of school's contributions to society—or education should have its budget cut. The article, titled "An Economic Measure of School Efficiency," charged that "The advocate of pure water or clean streets shows by how much the death rate will be altered with each proposed addition to his share of the budget—only a teacher is without such figures." An editorial in *Ladies Home Journal* reported that dissatisfaction with schools was increasing, claiming "On every hand signs are evident of a widely growing distrust of the effectiveness of the present educational system..." In Providence, the school board was criticized by the local press for declaring a holiday on the Monday preceding Decoration Day to allow a four-day vacation. "This cost the public \$5,000 in loss of possible returns on the money invested," readers were informed.

Suddenly school critics were everywhere. A major assault was mounted in two popular journals, *Saturday*

*Evening Post* and *Ladies Home Journal*, with millions each in circulation, both read by leaders of the middle classes. The Post sounded the anti-intellectual theme this way:

"Miltonized, Chaucerized, Vergilized, Shillered, physicked and chemicaled, the high school....should be of no use in the world—particularly the business world."

Three heavy punches in succession came from *Ladies Home Journal*: "The case of Seventeen Million Children—Is Our Public-School System Providing an Utter Failure?" This declaration would seem difficult to top, but the second article did just that: "Is the Public School a Failure? It Is: The Most Momentous Failure in Our American Life Today." And a third, written by the principal of a New York City high school, went even further. Entitled "The Danger of Running a Fool Factory," it made this point: that education is "permeated with errors and hypocrisy," while the Dean of Columbia Teachers College, James E. Russell added that "If school cannot be made to drop its *mental development obsession* the whole system should be abolished." [emphasis mine]

## The Fabian Spirit

To speak of scientific management in school and society without crediting the influence of the Fabians would do great disservice to truth, but the nature of Fabianism is so complex it raises questions this essay cannot answer. To deal with the Fabians in a brief compass as I'm going to do is to deal necessarily in simplifications in order to see a little how this charming group of scholars, writers, heirs, heiresses, scientists, philosophers, bombazines, gazebos, trust-fund babies, and successful men and women of affairs became the most potent force in the creation of the modern welfare state, distributors of its characteristically dumbed-down version of schooling. Yet pointing only to this often frivolous organization's eccentricity would be to disrespect the incredible accomplishments of Beatrice Webb and her associates, and their decisive effort on schooling. Mrs. Webb is the only woman ever deemed worthy of burial in Westminster Abbey.

What nineteenth-century Transcendentalists and Muggletonians hoped to be in reordering the triumvirate of society, school, and family, twentieth-century Fabians actually were. Although far from the only potent organization working behind the scenes to radically reshape domestic and international life, it would not be too far out of line to call the twentieth century the Fabian century. One thing is certain: the direction of modern schooling for the bottom 90 percent of our society has followed a largely Fabian design—and the puzzling security and prestige enjoyed at the moment by those who speak of "globalism" and "multiculturalism" are a direct result of heed paid earlier to Fabian prophecies that a welfare state, followed by an intense focus on internationalism, would be the mechanism elevating corporate society over political society, and a necessary precursor to utopia. Fabian theory is the *Das Kapital* of financial capitalism.

Fabianism always floated above simplistic politics, seeking to preempt both sides. The British Labour Party and its post-WWII welfare state are Fabianism made visible. This is well understood; not so easily comprehended are signs of an aristocratic temper—like this little anti-meritocratic Fabian gem found in a report of the British College of Surgeons:

Medicine would lose immeasurably if the proportion of such students [from upper-class and upper-middle-class homes] were to be reduced in favour of precocious children who qualify for subsidies [i.e., scholarship students].

Even though meritocracy is their reliable cover, social stratification was always the Fabian's real trump suit. Entitlements are another Fabian insertion into the social fabric, even though the idea antedates them, of course.

To realize the tremendous task Fabians originally assigned themselves (a significant part of which was given to schooling to perform), we need to reflect again on Darwin's shattering books, *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), each arguing in its own way that far from being blank slates, children are written

upon indelibly by their race of origin, some "favored" in Darwin's language, some not. A powerful public relations initiative of recent years has attempted to separate Darwin from "social Darwinism," but it cannot be done because Darwin himself is the prototypical social Darwinist. Both books taken together issued a license for liberal upper classes to justify forced schooling. From an evolutionary perspective, schools are the indoctrination phase of a gigantic breeding experiment. Working-class fantasies of "self-improvement" were dismissed from the start as sentimentality that evolutionary theory had no place for.

What Darwin accomplished with his books was a freeing of discussion from the narrow straitjacket it had worn when society was considered a matter of internal associations and relationships. Darwin made it possible to consider political affairs as a prime *instrument of social evolution*. Here was a pivotal moment in Western thought, a changing of the guard in which secular purpose replaced religious purpose, long before trashed by the Enlightenment.

For the poor, the working classes, and middle classes in the American sense,<sup>7</sup> this change in outlook, lauded by the most influential minds of the nineteenth century, was a catastrophe of titanic proportions, especially for government schoolchildren. Children could no longer simply be parents' darlings. Many were (biologically) a racial menace. The rest had to be thought of as soldiers in genetic combat, the moral equivalent of war. For all but a relative handful of favored families, aspiration was off the board as a scientific proposition.

For governments, children could no longer be considered individuals but were regarded as categories, rungs on a biological ladder. Evolutionary science pronounced the majority useless mouths waiting for nature to dispense with entirely. Nature (as expressed through her human agents) was to be understood not as cruel or oppressive but beautifully, functionally *purposeful*—a neo-pagan perspective to be reflected in the organization and administration of schools.

Three distinct and conflicting tendencies competed in the nineteenth-century theory of society: first was the empirical tendency stemming from John Locke and David Hume which led to that outlook on the study of society we call pragmatism, and eventually to behavioristic psychology; the second line descended from Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Savigny, and others and led to the organic theory of the modern state, the preferred metaphor of Fabians (and many later systems theorists); the third outlook comes to us out of Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, Bentham, the Mills, and leads almost directly to the utilitarian state of Marxist socialism. Each of these postures was savagely assailed over time by the development of academic Darwinism. After Darwin, utopia as a human-friendly place dies an agonizing death. The last conception of utopia after Darwin which isn't some kind of hellish nightmare is William Morris' *News from Nowhere*.

With only niggling reservations, the Fabian brain trust had no difficulty employing force to shape recalcitrant individuals, groups, and organizations. Force in the absence of divine injunctions is a tool to be employed unsentimentally. Fabian George Bernard Shaw established the principle wittily in 1920 when he said that under a Fabian future government:

You would not be allowed to be poor. You would be forcibly fed, clothed, lodged, taught, and employed whether you like it or not. If it were discovered that you have not character and industry, you might possibly be executed in a kindly manner.

- *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*

Fabianism came into existence around the year 1884, taking its name from Roman general Fabius Cunctator who preserved the Roman state by defeating Hannibal, chipping away at Hannibal's patience and will to win by avoiding combat. Darwin was the weird holy man Fabians adored, the man who gave them their *principle*, a theory inspirationally equal to god-theory, around which a new organization of society could be justified.

Society, after Darwin, was incontrovertibly about good breeding. That was the only true goal it had, or scientifically could have. Before Darwin, the view of historical development which fit best with Anglo/American tradition was a conception of individual *rights* independent of any theory of reciprocal *obligations* to the State; the duty of leaders was to Society, not to Government, a crucial distinction in perfect harmony with the teachings of Reformation

Christianity, which extended to all believers a conception of *individual* duty, *individual* responsibility, and a free will right to decide for oneself beyond any claims of states. John Calvin proclaimed in his *Institutes* that through natural law, the judgment of *conscience alone* was able to distinguish between justice and injustice. It's hard for secular minds to face, but the powerful freedoms of the West, unmatched by any other society at any other time, are rooted deeply in a religion so radical, so demanding it revolts the modern temper.

For Protestant Christians, salvation was uniquely a matter between God and the individual. The mind of northern Europe had for centuries been fixed on the task of winning liberties for the individual against the State. Notable individual freedoms were taken from the State beginning symbolically at Runnemedes in 1215. By 1859, six and a half centuries later, in the Age of Darwin, individual rights were everywhere in the Anglo-Saxon world understood *to transcend theories of obligation to the State*. Herbert Spencer embodies this attitude, albeit ambiguously. For Spencer, Darwinian evolution promised rights only to the strong. It is well to keep in mind that his brief for liberty masks a rigorously exclusionary philosophy, particularly when he sounds most like Thomas Paine. The first and second amendments of our own constitution illustrate just how far this freedom process could carry. Say what you please before God and Man; protect yourself with a gun if need be from government interference.

Spencer was the reigning British philosopher from 1870 to 1900. In the *Westminster Review* of January 1860, he wrote: "The welfare of citizens cannot rightly be sacrificed to some supposed benefit of the State, the State is to be maintained solely for the benefit of citizens.<sup>10</sup> The corporate life in society must be subservient to the lives of its parts, instead of the lives of the parts being subservient to the corporate life." Spencer had an even greater vogue in America, influencing every intellectual from Walt Whitman to John Dewey and becoming the darling of corporate business. Early in 1882 a grand dinner was held in his honor by the great and powerful who gathered to hear scientific proof of Anglo-Saxon fitness for rule—and a brief for moral relativism. This dinner and its implications set the standard for twentieth-century management, including the management of schooling. A clear appraisal of the fateful meal and its resonance is given in E. Digby Baltzell's *The Protestant Establishment*, a well-bred look at the resurgence of the Anglican outlook in America.

This attitude constituted a violent contradiction of German strong-state, state-as-first-parent doctrine which held that interests of the individual as individual are without significance. But derogation of individual rights was entirely consistent with Darwinian science. The German authoritarian preference received an invigorating restorative with Darwin's advent. Natural selection, the operational principle of Darwinism, was held to reach individuals only indirectly—through the action of society. Hence society becomes a natural subject for regulation and intervention by the State.

To illustrate how reverberant a drum the innocent-sounding locution "natural selection"<sup>11</sup> can really be, translated into social practice, try to imagine how denial of black dignities and rights and the corresponding degradation of black family relationships in America because of this denial, might well be reckoned an evolutionarily *positive* course, in Darwinian terms. By discouraging Negro breeding, eventually the numbers of this most disfavored race would diminish. The state not only had a vested interest in becoming an active agent of evolution, it could not help but become one, willy-nilly. Fabians set out to write a sensible evolutionary agenda when they entered the political arena. Once this biopolitical connection is recognized, the past, present, and future of this seemingly stumbling movement takes on a formidable coherence. Under the dottiness, lovability, intelligence, high social position, and genuine goodness of some of their works, the system held out as humanitarian by Fabians is grotesquely deceptive; in reality, Fabian compassion masks a real aloofness to humanity. It is purely an intellectual project in scientific management.

Thomas Davidson's *History of Education* seen through this lens transmutes in front of our eyes from the harmlessly addled excursion into romantic futurism it seems to be into a manual of frightening strategic goals and tactical methods. Fabians emerged in the first years of the twentieth century as great champions of social efficiency in the name of the evolutionary destiny of the race. This infused a powerful secular theology into the movement, allowing its members to revel privately in an ennobling destiny. The Fabian program spread quickly through the best colleges and universities under many different names, multiplying its de facto membership among young men and women blissfully unaware of their induction. They were only being modern. H.G. Wells called it "the open

conspiracy" in an essay bearing the same title, and worth your time to track down.

As the movement developed, Fabians became aristocratic friends of other social-efficiency vanguards like Taylorism or allies of the Methodist social gospel crowd of liberal Christian religionists busy substituting Works for Faith in one of the most noteworthy religious reversals of all time. Especially, they became friends and advisors of industrialists and financiers, travelers in the same direction. This cross-fertilization occurred naturally, not out of petty motives of profit, but because by Fabian lights evolution had progressed furthest among the international business and banking classes!

These laughing gentry were impressively effective at whatever they turned their hands to because they understood principles of social leverage. Kitty Muggeridge writes:

If you want to pinpoint the moment in time when the very first foundation of the Welfare State was laid, a reasonable date to choose would be the last fortnight of November in 1905 when Beatrice Webb was appointed to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, and she convinced her protégé, Albert Beveridge, to join a committee for dealing with employment.

During Mrs. Webb's tenure on the Royal Commission, she laid down the first blueprint of cradle-to-grave social security to eradicate poverty "without toppling the whole social structure." She lived to see Beveridge promulgate her major ideas in the historic *Beveridge Report*, from which they were brought to life in post-WWII Britain and the United States.

Fabian practitioners developed Hegelian principles which they co-taught alongside Morgan bankers and other important financial allies over the first half of the twentieth century. One insightful Hegelianism was that to push ideas efficiently it was necessary first to co-opt both political Left *and* political Right. Adversarial politics—competition—was a loser's game.<sup>12</sup> By infiltrating all major media, by continual low-intensity propaganda, by massive changes in group orientations (accomplished through principles developed in the psychological-warfare bureaus of the military), and with the ability, using government intelligence agents and press contacts, to induce a succession of crises, they accomplished that astonishing feat.

<sup>7</sup>In the British sense, middle classes are a buffer protecting elites from the poor; our own statistical income-based designation leads to a more eclectic composition, and to somewhat less predictability of attitudes and values.

<sup>8</sup>The origins are disputed but it was an offshoot of Thomas Davidson's utopian group in New York, "The Fellowship of the New Life"—an American export to Britain, not the other way around. The reader should be warned I use the term "Fabian" more indiscriminately with less concern for actual affiliation through the rest of the book than I do here. Fabianism was a *zeitgeist* as well as a literal association, and thousands of twentieth-century influentials have been Fabians who might be uncomfortable around its flesh and blood adherents, or who would be puzzled by the label.

<sup>9</sup>The spelling preferred by baronial descendants of the actual event. See Chapter Twelve.

<sup>10</sup>Contrast this with John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country" Inaugural of 1960 which measured the distance we had retreated since the Civil War. It's useful to remember, however, that Spencer reserved these feelings only for the Elect.

<sup>11</sup>In 1900, Sidney Sherwood of Johns Hopkins University joined a host of prominent organizations and men like Andrew Carnegie in declaring the emergence of the corporate system as the highest stage in evolution. Sherwood suggested the modern corporation's historic task was to sort out "genius," to get rid of "the weak." This elimination is "the real function of the trust," and the formation of monopoly control is "natural selection of the highest order." Try to imagine how this outlook played out in corporate schooling.

<sup>12</sup>The most dramatic example of abandoning competition and replacing it with cooperation was the breath-taking monopolization of first the nation's, then the world's oil supply by Standard Oil under the personal direction of John D. Rockefeller Sr. Rockefeller despised the competitive marketplace, as did his fellow titans of finance and industry, J.P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie. Rockefeller's negotiating team was instructed to accommodate any company willing to enter his cartel, to destroy any that resisted.

## The Open Conspiracy

When I speak of Fabianism, or of any particular Fabians, actual or virtual like Kurt Lewin, once head of Britain's Psychological Warfare Bureau, or R.D. Laing, once staff psychologist at the Tavistock Institute, I have no interest in mounting a polemic against this particular conceit of the comfortable intelligentsia. Fabian strategy and tactics have been openly announced and discussed with clarity for nearly a century, whether identified as Fabian or not. Nothing illegal about it. I do think it a tragedy, however, that government school children are left in the dark about the existence of influential groups with complex social agendas aimed at their lives.

I've neglected to tell you so far about the role *stress* plays in Fabian evolutionary theory. Just as Hegel taught that history moves faster toward its conclusion by way of warfare, so evolutionary socialists were taught by Hegel to see *struggle* as the precipitant of evolutionary improvement for the species, a necessary purifier eliminating the weak from the breeding sweepstakes. Society evolves slowly toward "social efficiency" all by itself; society under stress, however, evolves much faster! Thus the deliberate creation of crisis is an important tool of evolutionary socialists. Does that help you understand the government school *drama* a little better, or the well-publicized doomsday scenarios of environmentalists?

The London School of Economics is a Fabian creation. Mick Jagger spent time there; so did John F. Kennedy. Once elitist, the *Economist*, now a worldwide pop-intellectual publication, is Fabian, as is *The New Statesman* and Ruskin Labor College of Oxford. The legendary Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, premier mind-bending institutions of the world, are Fabian. Theodor Adorno, an important if barely visible avatar of the therapeutic state, and a one-time eminence at Tavistock, traveled the Fabian road as well.

You needn't carry a card or even have heard the name Fabian to follow the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing flag. Fabianism is mainly a value-system with progressive objectives. Its social club aspect isn't for coalminers, farmers, or steam-fitters. We've all been exposed to many details of the Fabian program without realizing it. In the United States, some organizations heavily influenced by Fabianism are the Ford Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Stanford Research Institute, the Carnegie Endowments, the Aspen Institute, the Wharton School, and RAND. And this short list is illustrative, not complete. Tavistock underwrites or has intimate relations with thirty research institutions in the United States, all which at one time or another have taken a player's hand in the shaping of American schooling.

Once again, you need to remember we aren't conspiracy hunting but tracking an idea, like microchipping an eel to see what holes it swims into in case we want to catch it later on. H.G. Wells, best known of all early Fabians, once wrote of the Fabian project:

The political world of the Open Conspiracy must weaken, efface, incorporate and supersede existing governments....The character of the Open Conspiracy will then be plainly displayed. It will be a world religion. This large, loose assimilatory mass of groups and societies will definitely and obviously attempt to swallow up the entire population of the world and become a new human community....The immediate task before all people, a planned World State, is *appearing at a thousand points of light* [but]...generations of propaganda and education may have to precede it. (emphasis added)

Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote his famous signature book "Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era" in 1970, a piece reeking with Fabianisms: dislike of direct popular power, relentless advocacy of the right and duty of evolutionarily advanced nations to administer less developed parts of the world, revulsion at populist demands for "selfish self-government" (homeschooling would be a prime example), and stress on collectivism. Brzezinski said in the book:

It will soon be possible to assert almost continuous control over every citizen and to maintain up-to-date files containing even the most personal details about health and personal behavior of every citizen, in

addition to the more customary data. These files will be subject to instantaneous retrieval by the authorities. Power will gravitate into the hands of those who control information.

In his essay, Brzezinski called common people, "an increasingly purposeless mass." And, of course, if the army of children collected in mass schooling is really "purposeless," what argument says it should exist at all?

13The government-created crisis, masquerading as an unexpected *external* provocation, is elementary Hegelian strategy. If you want to take Texas and California from Mexico, first shoot a few Americans while the press disinforms the nation that Mexican depredations against our nationals have to be stopped; if you want Cuba as a satrapy, blow up an American battleship and pin it on the Cubans. By this strategy, a nation which has decided to suspend its democratic traditions with a period of martial law (under which permanent social reordering would occur) might arrange a series of "terrorist" attacks upon itself which would justify the transformation as a defense of general public safety.

14In the "world peace" phenomenon so necessary to establish a unitary world order lies a real danger, according to evolutionists, of species deterioration caused by inadvertent preservation of inferior genes which would otherwise be killed or starved. Hence the urgency of insulating superior breeding stock from pollution through various strategies of social segregation. Among these, forced classification through schooling has been by far the most important.

## An Everlasting Faith

Fabianism was a principal force and inspiration behind all major school legislation of the first half of the twentieth century. And it will doubtless continue to be in the twenty-first. It will help us understand Fabian influence to look at the first Fabian-authored consideration of public schooling, the most talked-about education book of 1900, Thomas Davidson's peculiar and fantastic *History of Education*.

The *Dictionary of American Biography* describes Davidson as a naturalized Scot, American since 1867, and a follower of William Torrey Harris, federal Commissioner of Education—the most influential Hegelian in North America. Davidson was also first president of the Fabian Society in England, a fact not thought worthy of preservation in the biographical dictionary, but otherwise easy enough to confirm. This news is also absent from Pelling's *America and The British Left*, although Davidson is credited there with "usurping" the Fabians.

In his important monograph "Education in the Forming of American Society," Bernard Bailyn, as you'll recall, said anyone bold enough to venture a history of American schooling would have to explain the sharp disjunction separating these local institutions as they existed from 1620 to 1890 from the massification which followed afterwards. In presenting his case, Bailyn had cause to compare "two notable books" on the subject which both appeared in 1900. One was Davidson's, the other Edward Eggleston's.

Eggleston's *Transit of Civilization* Bailyn calls "a remarkably imaginative effort to analyze the original investment from which has developed Anglo-Saxon culture in America by probing the complex states of knowing and thinking, of feeling and passion of the seventeenth century colonists." The opening words of Eggleston's book, said Bailyn, make clear the central position of education in early America. Bailyn calls *Transit* "one of the subtlest and most original books ever written on the subject" and "a seminal work," but he notes how quickly it was "laid aside by American intelligentsia as an oddity, irrelevant to the interests of the group then firmly shaping the historical study of American education."

For that group, the book of books was Davidson's *History of Education*. William James called its author a "knight-errant of the intellectual life," an "exuberant polymath." Bailyn agrees that Davidson's "was a remarkable book":

Davidson starts with "The Rise of Intelligence" when "man first rose above the brute." Then he trots briskly through "ancient Turanian," Semitic, and Aryan education, picks up speed on "civic education" in Judaea, Greece, and Rome, gallops swiftly across Hellenistic, Alexandrian, Patristic, and Muslim education; leaps

magnificently over the thorny barriers of scholasticism, the mediaeval universities, Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation, and then plunges wildly through the remaining five centuries in sixty-four pages flat.

It was less the frantic scope than the purpose of this strange philosophical essay that distinguished it in the eyes of an influential group of writers. Its purpose was to dignify a newly self-conscious profession called *Education*. Its argument, a heady distillation of conclusions from Social Darwinism, claimed that *modern education was a cosmic force leading mankind to full realization of itself*. Davidson's preface puts the intellectual core of Fabianism on center stage:

My endeavor has been to present education as the last and highest form of evolution.... By placing education in relation to the whole process of evolution, as its highest form, I have hoped to impart to it a dignity which it could hardly otherwise receive or claim...when it is recognized to be the highest phase of the world-process. "World process" here is an echo of Kant and Hegel, and for the teacher to be the chief agent in that process, both it and he assumes a very different aspect.

Here is the intellectual and emotional antecedent of "creation spirituality," Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's assertion that evolution has become a *spiritual* inevitability in our time.

Suddenly mere schooling found itself elevated from its petty, despised position on the periphery of the known universe into an intimate involvement in the cosmic destiny of man, a master key too important to be left to parents. By 1906, Paul Monroe of Teachers College could write in his *Text-book in the History of Education* that knowledge of the "purpose of education" was to supply the teacher with "fundamentals of an everlasting faith as broad as human nature and as deep as the life of the race."

This *History of Education*, according to Bailyn, "came to be taught as an introductory course, a form of initiation, in every normal school, department of education, and teachers college in the country":

The story had to be got straight. And so a few of the more imaginative of that energetic and able group of men concerned with mapping overall progress of "scientific" education, though not otherwise historians, took over the management of the historical work in education. With great virtuosity they drew up what became the patristic literature of a powerful academic ecclesia.

The official history of education:

grew in almost total isolation from the major influences and shaping minds of twentieth-century historiography; and its isolation proved to be self-intensifying: the more parochial the subject became, the less capable it was of attracting the kinds of scholars who could give it broad relevance and bring it back into the public domain. It soon displayed the exaggeration of weakness and extravagance of emphasis that are the typical results of sustained inbreeding.

These "educational missionaries" spoke of schools as if they were monasteries. By limiting the idea of education to formal school instruction, the public gradually lost sight of what the real thing was. The questions these specialists disputed were as irrelevant to real people as the disputes of medieval divines; there was about their writing a condescension for public concerns, for them "the whole range of education had become an *instrument of deliberate social purpose*." (emphasis added) After 1910, divergence between what various publics expected would happen, in government schools and what the rapidly expanding school establishment intended to *make* happen opened a deep gulf between home and school, ordinary citizen and policymaker.

## Regulating Lives Like Machinery

The real explanation for this sudden gulf between NEA policies in 1893 and 1911 had nothing to do with intervening feedback from teachers, principals, or superintendents about what schools needed; rather, it signaled

titanic forces gathering outside the closed universe of schooling with the intention of altering this nation's economy, politics, social relationships, future direction, and eventually the terms of its national existence, using schools as instruments in the work.

Schoolmen were never invited to the policy table at which momentous decisions were made. When Ellwood P. Cubberley began tentatively to raise his voice in protest against radical changes being forced upon schools (in his history of education), particularly the sudden enforcement of compulsory attendance laws which brought amazing disruption into the heretofore well-mannered school world, he quickly pulled back without naming the community leaders—as he called them—who gave the actual orders. This evidence of impotence documents the pedagogue status of even the most elevated titans of schooling like Cubberley. You can find this reference and others like it in *Public Education in the United States*.

Scientific management was about to merge with systematic schooling in the United States; it preferred to steal in silently on little cat's feet, but nobody ever questioned the right of businessmen to impose a business philosophy to tamper with children's lives. On the cantilever principle of interlocking directorates pioneered by Morgan interests, scientific school management flowed into other institutional domains of American life, too. According to Taylor, application of mechanical power to production could be generalized into every arena of national life, even to the pulpit, certainly to schools. This would bring about a realization that people's lives could be regulated very much like machinery, without sentiment. Any expenditure of time and energy demanded rationalization, whether first-grader or coalminer, behavior should be mathematically accounted for following the new statistical procedures of Galton and Karl Pearson.

The scientific management movement was backed by many international bankers and industrialists. In 1905, the vice president of the National City Bank of New York, Frank Vanderlip, made his way to the speaker's podium at the National Education Association's annual convention to say:

I am firmly convinced the economic success of Germany can be encompassed in a single word—schoolmaster. From the economic point of view the school system of Germany stands unparalleled.

German schools were psychologically managed, ours must be, too. People of substance stood, they thought, on the verge of an ultimate secret. How to write upon the empty slates of empty children's minds in the dawning era of scientific management. What they would write there was a program to make dwarf and fractional human beings, people crippled by implanted urges and habits beyond their understanding, men and women who cry out to be managed.

## The Gary Plan

Frederick Taylor's gospel of efficiency demanded complete and intensive use of industrial plant facilities. From 1903 onwards, strenuous efforts were made to achieve full utilization of space by forcing year-round school on society. Callahan suggests it was "the children of America, who would have been unwilling victims of this scheme, who played a decisive role in beating the original effort to effect this back."

But east of Chicago, in the synthetic U.S. Steel company town of Gary, Indiana, Superintendent William A. Wirt, a former student of John Dewey's at the University of Chicago, was busy testing a radical school innovation called the Gary Plan soon to be sprung on the national scene. Wirt had supposedly invented a new organizational scheme in which school subjects were *departmentalized*; this required movement of students from room to room on a regular basis so that all building spaces were in constant use. Bells would ring and just as with Pavlov's salivating dog, children would shift out of their seats and lurch toward yet another class.

In this way children could be exposed to many nonacademic socialization experiences and much scientifically engineered physical activity, and it would be a bonus value from the same investment, a curriculum apart from

so-called basic subjects which by this time were being looked upon as an actual menace to long-range social goals. Wirt called his system the "work-study-play" school, but outside of Gary it was referred to simply as "the Gary Plan." Its noteworthy economical feature, rigorously scheduling a student body twice as large as before into the same space and time, earned it the informal name "platoon school."

While the prototype was being established and tested on children of the new industrial proletariat in Gary, the plan itself was merchandised from newsstand, pulpit, and lecture circuit, lauded in administrative circles, and soundly praised by first pedagogical couple John and Evelyn Dewey in their 1915 book, *Schools of Tomorrow*. The first inkling Gary might be a deliberate stepchild of the scientific management movement occurred in a February 1911 article by Wirt for *The American School Board Journal*, "Scientific Management of School Plants." But a more thorough and forceful exposition of its provenance was presented in the *Elementary School Teacher* by John Franklin Bobbit in a 1912 piece titled "Elimination of Waste in Education."

Bobbit said Gary schools were the work of businessmen who understood scientific management. Teaching was slated to become a specialized scientific calling conducted by pre-approved agents of the central business office. Classroom teachers would teach the same thing over and over to groups of traveling children; special subject teachers would deliver their special subjects to classes rotating through the building on a precision time schedule.

Early in 1914, the Federal Bureau of Education, then located in the Interior Department, strongly endorsed Wirt's system. This led to one of the most dramatic and least-known events in twentieth-century school history. In New York City, a spontaneous rebellion occurred on the part of the students and parents against extension of the Gary Plan to their own city. While the revolt had only short-lived effects, it highlights the demoralization of private life occasioned by passing methods of industry off as education.

Bobbit was the influential schoolman who reorganized the Los Angeles school curriculum, replacing formal history with "Social Studies." Of the Bobbitized set of educational objectives, the five most important were 1) Social intercommunication 2) Maintenance of physical efficiency 3) Efficient citizenship 4) General social contacts and relationships 5) Leisure occupations. My own favorite is "efficient citizenship," which bears rolling around on the point of one's bayonet as the bill is presented for payment.

## The Jewish Student Riots

Less than three weeks before the mayoral election of 1917, rioting broke out at PS 171, an elementary school on Madison Avenue near 103rd Street in New York City which had adopted the Gary Plan. About a thousand demonstrators smashed windows, menaced passersby, shouted threats, and made school operation impossible. Over the next few days newspapers downplayed the riot, marginalizing the rioters as "street corner agitators" from Harlem and the Upper East Side, but they were nothing of the sort, being mainly immigrant parents. Demonstrations and rioting spread to other Gary Plan schools, including high schools where student volunteers were available to join parents on the picket line.

At one place, five thousand children marched. For ten days trouble continued, breaking out in first one place then another. Thousands of mothers milled around schools in Yorkville, a German immigrant section, and in East Harlem, complaining angrily that their children had been put on "half-rations" of education. They meant that mental exercise had been removed from the center of things. Riots flared out into Williamsburg and Brownsville in the borough of Brooklyn; schools were stoned, police car tires slashed by demonstrators. Schools on the Lower East Side and in the Bronx reported trouble also.

The most notable aspect of this rioting was its source in what today would be the bottom of the bell-curve masses...and they were complaining that school was too easy! What could have possessed recently arrived immigrants to defy their betters? Whatever it was, it poisoned the promising political career of mayoral incumbent, John Purroy Mitchel, a well-connected, aristocratic young progressive who had been seriously mentioned as presidential timber. Although Teddy Roosevelt personally campaigned for him, Mitchel lost by a two-to-one

margin when election day arrived shortly after the riots were over, the disruptions widely credited with bringing Mitchel down. In all, three hundred students were arrested, almost all Jewish. I identify their ethnicity because today we don't usually expect Jewish kids to get arrested in bulk.

To understand what was happening requires us to meet an entity calling itself the Public Education Association. If we pierce its associational veil, we find that it is made up of bankers, society ladies, corporation lawyers and, in general, people with private fortunes or access to private fortunes. The PEA announced in 1911 an "*urgent need*" to transform public schools into child welfare agencies. (emphasis added) Shortly afterward, Mitchel, a member of the PEA, was elected mayor of New York. Superintendent Wirt in Gary was promptly contacted and offered the New York superintendency. He agreed, and the first Gary schools opened in New York City in March 1915.

Bear in mind there was no public debate, no warning of this radical step. Just seventy-five days after the Gary trial began, the financial arm of New York City government declared it a total success, authorizing conversion of twelve more schools. (The original trial had only been for two.) This was done in June at the end of the school year when public attention was notoriously low. Then in September of 1915, after a net one hundred days of trial, Comptroller Prendergast issued a formal report *recommending extension of the Gary Plan into all schools of New York City!* He further recommended lengthening the school day and the school year.

At the very time this astonishing surprise was being prepared for the children of New York City in 1915, a series of highly laudatory articles sprouted like zits all over the periodical press calling the Gary Plan the answer to our nation's school prayers. One characteristic piece read, "*School must fill the vacuum of the home, school must be life itself as once the old household was a life itself.*" (emphasis added) Like Rommel's Panzer columns, true believers were on the move. At the same time press agents were skillfully manipulating the press, officers of the Rockefeller Foundation, a body which supported the Gary Plan wholeheartedly, were appointed without fanfare as members of the New York City Board of Education, compliments of Mayor Mitchel.

Immediately after Prendergast's report appeared calling for total Gary-ization of public schooling, a book written by a prominent young protégé of John Dewey directed national attention to the Gary miracle "where children learn to play and prepare for vocations as well as to study abstractions." Titled *The Gary Schools*, its author, Randolph Bourne, was among the most beloved columnists for *The New Republic* in the days when that magazine, product of J.P. Morgan banker Willard Straight's personal patronage, took some of its editorial instruction directly from the tables of power in America.

In light of what happened in 1917, you might find it interesting to have your librarian scare up a copy of Bourne's *Gary Schools* so you can study how a well-orchestrated national propaganda campaign can colonize your mind. Even as Bourne's book was being read, determined opposition was forming.

In 1917, in spite of grassroots protest, the elite Public Education Association urged the opening of forty-eight more Gary schools (there were by that time thirty-two in operation). Whoever was running the timetable on this thing had apparently tired of gradualism and was preparing to step from the shadows and open the engine full throttle. A letter from the PEA director (*New York Times*, 27 June, 1917) urged that more Gary schools must be opened. An earlier letter by director Nudd struck an even more hysterical note: "The situation is acute, no further delay." This Hegelian manufactured crisis was used to thaw Board of Estimate recalcitrance, which body voted sufficient funds to extend the Gary scheme through the New York City school system.

School riots followed hard on the heels of that vote. European immigrants, especially Jews from Germany (where collectivist thinking in the West had been perfected), knew exactly what the scientific Gary Plan would mean to their children. They weren't buying. In the fallout from these disturbances, socialite Mitchel was thrown out of office in the next election. The Gary schools themselves were dissolved by incoming Mayor Hylan who called them "a scheme" of the Rockefeller Foundation: "a system by which Rockefellers and their allies hope to educate coming generations in the 'doctrine of contentment,' another name for social serfdom."

## The Rockefeller Report

The Gary tale is a model of how managed school machinery can be geared up in secret without public debate to deliver a product parents don't want. Part One of the Gary story is the lesson we learned from the impromptu opinion poll of Gary schooling taken by housewives and immigrant children, a poll whose results translated into riots. Having only their native wit and past experience to guide them, these immigrant parents concluded that Gary schools were caste schools. Not what they expected from America. They turned to the only weapon at their disposal—disruption—and it worked. They shrewdly recognized that boys in elite schools wouldn't tolerate the dumbing down their own were being asked to accept. They knew this would *close* doors of opportunity, not open them.

Some individual comments from parents and principals about Gary are worth preserving: "too much play and time-wasting," "they spend all day listening to the phonograph and dancing," "they change class every forty minutes, my daughter has to wear her coat constantly to keep it from being stolen," "the cult of the easy," "a step backwards in human development," "focusing on the group instead of the individual." One principal predicted if the plan were kept, retardation would multiply *as a result of minimal contact between teachers and students*. And so it has.

Part Two of the Gary story is the official Rockefeller report condemning Gary, circulated at Rockefeller headquarters in 1916, *but not issued until 1918*. Why this report was suppressed for two years we can only guess. You'll recall Mayor Hylan's charge that the Rockefeller Foundation moved heaven and earth to force its Gary Plan on an unwitting and unwilling citizenry, using money, position, and influence to such an extent that a New York State Senate Resolution of 1916 accused the foundation of moving to gain complete control of the New York City Board of Education. Keep in mind that Rockefeller people were active in 1915, 1916, and 1917, lobbying to *impose* a Gary destiny on the public schools of New York City even after its own house analyst pointed to the intellectual damage these places caused.

The 1916 analytical report leapfrogged New York City to examine the original schools as they functioned back in Gary, Indiana. Written by Abraham Flexner,<sup>16</sup> it stated flatly that Gary schools were a total failure, "offering insubstantial programs and a general atmosphere which habituated students to inferior performance." Flexner's analysis was a massive repudiation of John Dewey's shallow *Schools of Tomorrow* hype for Gary.

Now we come to the mystery. *After* this bad idea crashed in New York City in 1917, the critical Rockefeller report held in house since 1916 was issued in 1918 to embarrass critics who had claimed the whole mess was the idea of the Rockefeller project officers. So we know in retrospect that the Rockefeller Foundation was aware of serious shortcomings *before* it used its political muscle to impose Gary on New York. Had the Flexner report been offered in a timely fashion before the riots, it would have spelled doom for the Gary Plan. Why it wasn't has never been explained.

The third and final part of the Gary story comes straight out of *Weird Tales*. In all existing accounts of the Gary drama, none mentions the end of Superintendent Wirt's career after his New York defeat. Only Diane Ravitch (in *The Great School Wars*) even bothers to track Wirt back home to Gary, where he resumed the superintendency and became, she tells us, a "very conservative schoolman" in his later years. Ah, what Ravitch missed!

The full facts are engrossing: seventeen years after Wirt left New York City, a government publication printed the next significant chapter of the Wirt story. Its title: *Hearings, House Select Committee to Investigate Certain Statements of Dr. William Wirt, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, April 10 and 17, 1934*. It seems that Dr. Wirt, while in Washington to attend a school administrators meeting in 1933, had been invited to an elite private dinner party at the home of a high Roosevelt administration official. The dinner was attended by well-placed members of the new government, including A.A. Berle, a famous "inner circle" brain-truster. There, Wirt heard that the Depression was being artificially prolonged by credit rigging, until little people and businessmen were shaken enough to agree to a plan where government must dominate business and commerce in the future!

All this he testified to before Congress. The transformation was to make *government* the source of long-term

capital loans. Control of business would follow. Wirt testified he was told Roosevelt was only a puppet; that his hosts had made propaganda a science, that they could make newspapers and magazines beg for mercy by taking away much of their advertising; that provided they were subservient, leaders of business and labor would be silenced by offers of government contracts for materials and services; that colleges and schools would be kept in line by promises of federal aid until such time as they were under safe control; and that farmers would be managed by letting key operators "get their hands in the public trough."

In the yellow journalism outburst following Wirt's disclosure, *Berle admitted everything*. But he said they were just pulling Wirt's leg! Pulling the leg of the one-time nationally acclaimed savior of public education. *Time* magazine, *The New York Times*, and other major media ridiculed Wirt, effectively silencing him.

Of Wirt's earlier New York foray into the engineering of young people, New York City mayor Hylan was quoted vividly in *The New York Times* of March 27, 1922:

The real menace to our republic is this invisible government which like a giant octopus sprawls its slimy length over city, state and nation.... It has seized in its tentacles our executive officers, our legislative bodies, our schools, our courts, our newspapers, and every agency created for the public protection.... To depart from mere generalizations, let me say that at the head of this octopus are the Rockefeller Standard Oil interests.

Like many of the rest of you, I was conditioned early in adult life to avoid conspiracy talk and conspiracy takers by the universal scorn heaped upon the introduction of such arguments into the discourse. All "responsible" journalistic media, and virtually all of the professoriate allowed public access through those media, respond reflexively, and negatively, it seems, to any hint of a dark underside to our national life. With that in mind, what are we to make of Mayor Hylan's outburst or for that matter, the statements of three senators quoted later on this page?

Don't expect me to answer that question for you. But do take a deep breath and make the effort to read Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, written back in the 17th century but easily located in every library of any size in the United States, for some enlightenment in your ruminations.

During the crucial years of the school changeover from academic institution to behavioral modification instrument, the radical nature of the metamorphosis caught the attention of a few national politicians who spoke out, but could never muster enough strength for effective opposition. In the *Congressional Record* of January 26, 1917, for instance, Senator Chamberlain of Oregon entered these words:

They are moving with military precision all along the line to get control of the education of the children of the land.

Senator Poindexter of Washington followed, saying:

The cult of Rockefeller, the cult of Carnegie...as much to be guarded against in the educational system of this country as a particular religious sect.

And in the same issue, Senator Kenyon of Iowa related:

There are certain colleges that have sought endowments, and the agent of the Rockefeller Foundation or the General Education Board had gone out and examined the curriculum of these colleges and compelled certain changes....

It seems to me one of the most dangerous things that can go on in a republic is to have an institution of this power apparently trying to shape and mold the thought of the young people of this country.

Senator Works of California added:

These people...are attempting to get control of the whole educational work of the country.

If it interests you, take a look. It's all in the *Congressional Record* of January 26,1917.

16A man considered the father of twentieth-century American systematic medicine and a longtime employee of the Rockefeller Foundation.

## Obstacles On The Road To Centralization

Three major obstacles stood in the way of the great goal of using American schools to realize a scientifically programmed society. The first was the fact that American schooling was locally controlled. In 1930, when the massive socializing scheme was swinging into high gear, helped substantially by an attention-absorbing depression, this nation still had 144,102 local school boards.<sup>17</sup> At least 1.1 million *elected* citizens of local stature made decisions for this country's schools out of their wisdom and experience. Out of 70 million adults between the ages of thirty and sixty-five, one in every sixty-three was on a school board (thirty years earlier, the figure had been one in twenty). Contrast either ratio with today's figure of one in five thousand.

The first task of scientifically managed schooling was to transfer management from a citizen yeomanry to a professional elite under the camouflage of consolidation for economy's sake. By 1932, the number of school districts was down to 127,300; by 1937 to 119,018; by 1950 to 83,719; by 1960 to 40,520; by 1970 to 18,000; by 1990 to 15,361. Citizen oversight was slowly squeezed out of the school institution, replaced by homogeneous managerial oversight, managers screened and trained, watched, loyalty-checked by Columbia, Stanford, Chicago, the Cleveland Conference, and similar organizations with private agendas for public schooling.

The second obstacle to an ideological takeover of schools was the historic influence of teachers as role models. Old-fashioned teachers had a disturbing proclivity to stress development of intellect through difficult reading, heavy writing assignments, and intense discussion. The problem of proud and independent teachers was harder to solve than the reading problem. As late as 1930 there were still 149,400 one-room/one-teacher schools in America, places not only cheap to operate but successful at developing tough-minded, independent thinkers. Most of the rest of our schools were small and administrator-free, too. The idea of principals who *did not teach* came very late in the school game in most places. The fantastic notion of a parasitic army of assistant principals, coordinators, and all the rest of the various familiar specialists of institutional schooling didn't exist at all until 1905, except in the speculations of teacher college dreamers.

Two solutions were proposed around 1903 to suppress teacher influence and make instruction teacher-proof. The first was to grow a heretofore unknown administrative hierarchy of nonteaching principals, assistant principals, subject coordinators and the rest, to drop the teacher's status rank. And if degrading teacher status proved inadequate, another weapon, the standardized test, was soon to be available. By displacing the judgmental function from a visible teacher to a remote bastion of educational scientists somewhere, no mere classroom person could stray very far from approved texts without falling test scores among his or her students signaling the presence of such a deviant.<sup>18</sup> Both these initiatives were underway as WWI ended.

The third obstacle to effective centralization of management was the intimate neighborhood context of most American schools, one where school procedures could never escape organic oversight by parents and other local interests. Not a good venue from which to orchestrate the undermining of traditional society. James Bryant Conant, one of the inventors of the poison gas, Lewisite, and by then chairman of a key Carnegie commission, reported in an ongoing national news story after the Sputnik moment that it was the small size of our schools causing the problem. Only large schools, said Conant, could have faculty and facilities large enough to cover the math and science we (presumably) lacked and Russia (presumably) had. The bigger the better.

In one bold stroke the American factory school of Lancaster days was reborn. Here a de-intellectualized Prussian-style curriculum could reign undetected. From 1960 to 1990, while student population was increasing 61

percent, the number of school administrators grew 342 percent. In constant dollars, costs shot up 331 percent, and teachers, who had fallen from 95 percent of all school personnel in 1915 to 70 percent in 1950, now fell still further, down and down until recently they comprised *less than 50 percent* of the jobs in the school game. School had become an employment project, the largest hiring hall in the world, bigger than agriculture, bigger than armies.

One other significant set of numbers parallels the absolute growth in the power and expense of government schooling, but inversely. In 1960, when these gigantic child welfare agencies called schools were just setting out on their enhanced mission, 85 percent of African American children in New York were from intact, two-parent households. In 1990 in New York City, with the school budget drawing \$9,300 a kid for its social welfare definition of education, that number dropped below 30 percent. School and the social work bureaucracies had done their work well, fashioning what looked to be a permanent underclass, one stripped of its possibility of escape, turned against itself. Scientific management had proven its value, although what that was obviously depended on one's perspective.

~~17~~Down from 355,000 in 1900.

~~18~~None of this apparatus of checks and balances ever worked exactly as intended. A degraded, demoralized teaching staff (and even many demoralized administrators) lacks interest or even energy to police the system effectively. Gross abuses are legion, the custom almost everywhere; records are changed, numbers regularly falsified. A common habit in my day was to fill out phony lunch forms *en masse* to make schools eligible for *Title I* monies. The chief legal officer for the state of California told me in Sacramento a few years ago that his state was unable to effectively monitor the compulsory attendance laws, a truth I can vouch for from firsthand experience.