

State of Mankind

How much do you know?

Excerpts from

How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World

(68)

Dumbing Down Students

The United States is a democratic country. From presidents to lawmakers, town mayors, and school-district committee members, all are elected by voters. Whether democratic politics can be pursued in a manner that is truly beneficial to all depends not only on the moral level of the people, but also on the level of their knowledge and understanding. If voters are not well-versed in history, political and economic systems, and social issues, they will have difficulty wisely electing officials who will base their platforms on the long-term and fundamental interests of the country and society. This puts the country in a dangerous situation.

In 1983, a group of experts, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, wrote the report *A Nation at Risk* after eighteen months of research. The authors of the report said:

“For our country to function, citizens must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues, often on short notice and on the basis of conflicting or incomplete evidence. Education helps form these common understandings, a point Thomas Jefferson made long ago in his justly famous dictum: ‘I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.’”

Individuals with little knowledge and poor critical thinking ability are unable to recognize lies and deceptions. Education plays an enormous role, and communist elements penetrate into all levels of the education system, making students foolish and ignorant and thus vulnerable to manipulation.

A Nation at Risk makes these additional points: “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising

tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.” “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” “We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.”

The report quoted analyst Paul Copperman: “For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.”

The report cites some shocking findings: In addition to U.S. students’ grades often being at the bottom in international exams, 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate — that is, only possessing the most basic literacy skills, unable to meet the needs of complex modern life and work. The ratio of functional illiteracy is 13 percent among 17-year-olds and may reach 40 percent among minorities. From 1963 to 1980, the grades of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) slid down, with the average language score dropping by more than 50 points, and

the average math score dropping by nearly 40 points. “Many 17-year-olds do not possess the ‘higher order’ intellectual skills we should expect of them. Nearly 40 percent cannot draw inferences from written material; only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay; and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.”

After the 1980s, people of insight in the American education field launched the Back to Basics campaign, but did it help stop the decline of American education? In 2008, Mark Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory University, published *The Dumbest Generation*. The first chapter of the book combines the results of examinations and surveys by the Department of Education and non-governmental organizations, summarizing the knowledge gaps of American students in history, civics, math, science, technology, fine arts, and other fields. In the history exam in the 2001 National Education Progress Assessment (NEAP), 57 percent of students scored “below basic” and only 1 percent achieved “advanced.” Surprisingly, in response to the question, which country was the U.S. ally in World War II, 52 percent chose Germany, Japan, and Italy, instead of the Soviet Union. Results in other areas were equally disappointing.

The decline in the quality of education in the United States is obvious to all. Since the 1990s, the term “dumbing down” has appeared in many books on American education and has become a concept American educators cannot avoid. John Taylor Gatto, a senior teacher and educational researcher in New York City, wrote: “Pick up a fifth-grade math or rhetoric textbook from 1850 and you’ll see that the texts were pitched then on what would today be considered college level.”

In order to avoid making the American education system look bad, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) had to redefine the scores of the university entrance examination, the SAT, in 1994. When the SAT began to adopt the modern form in 1941, the average score of the language exam was 500 points (top marks are 800 points). By the 1990s, the average score had dropped to 424 points, yet ETS redefined 424 as 500 points.

The decline in the quality of education is not just reflected in the decline in students’ literacy. Due to the lack of basic knowledge, the critical thinking faculties of American students have fallen sharply. The scholar Thomas Sowell pointed out in the 1990s: “It is not merely that Johnny can’t read, or even that Johnny can’t think. Johnny doesn’t know what thinking is, because thinking is so often confused with feeling in many public schools.”

Unlike the rebellious student leaders in the 1960s who could speak eloquently, today's young people who participated in street protests and were interviewed by television news reporters could rarely clearly express their demands. They lack basic common sense and reason.

The reason for the decline of grades is not that students today are not as intelligent as before, but because communism is quietly carrying out a war against the next generation, using the education system as its weapon. Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt, the author of *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America: A Chronological Paper Trail*, and former senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Education in the 1980s, said, "The reason Americans do not understand this war is because it has been fought in secret—in the schools of our nation, targeting our children who are captive in classrooms."

From Chapter Twelve: Sabotaging Education

