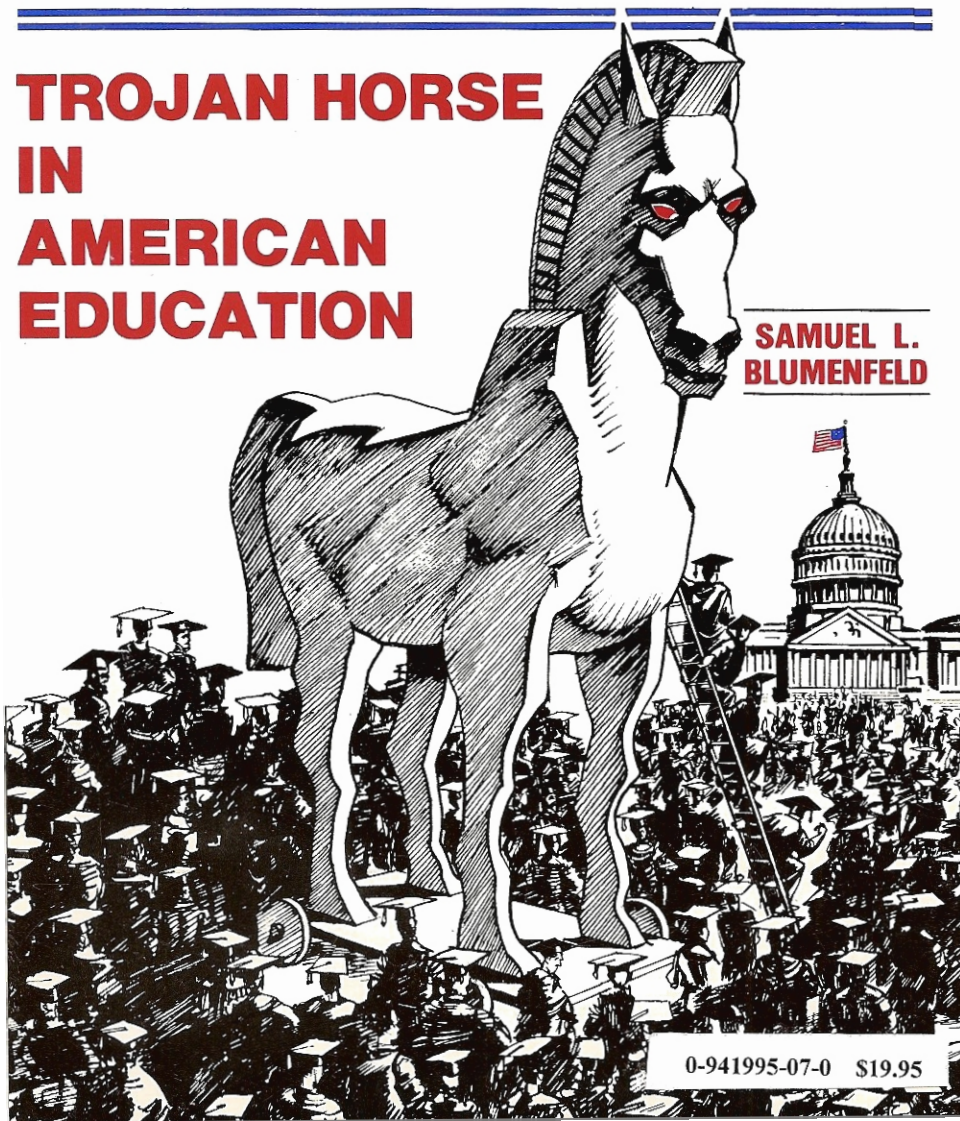


THE FIRST FULL-LENGTH EXPOSÉ OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

NEA

TROJAN HORSE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

**SAMUEL L.
BLUMENFELD**



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NEA:
TROJAN HORSE
IN
AMERICAN
EDUCATION

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

THE PARADIGM COMPANY

Boise, Idaho

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This book is dedicated to

PAT ROBERTSON

for giving America the hope of redemption

SUSAN STAUB

for fighting forced unionism in education

MARVA COLLINS

for demonstrating the true meaning of Teacher

REV. EVERETT SILEVEN

imprisoned in Nebraska

for defending religious freedom

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Although this book was first published in 1984, everything in it is as relevant today as when it was first published. If anything, the NEA has simply moved even further to the left than it was back then. It has simply adopted all of the politically correct trends of the far left. The history behind all of this has not changed. Thus, the NEA's influence in American education as a force of the left is still a fact that parents of children in the public schools must deal with.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld, Littleton, MA. May 2011

Preface to the 1997 Edition

It is thirteen years since the first publication of this book. It was written to make Americans aware of the growing political power of the organized teachers of America, a power that has stood in the way of true educational reform—the kind parents want, not the kind that the elitist change agents, in complicity with big business, are imposing on America. Until the watershed elections of 1994, the National Education Association made it difficult, if not impossible, for Republicans to gain control of Congress and the state legislatures where our education laws are made and the system funded. However, even with many new conservative Congressmen in Washington, little has been done by them to stop the liberal federal bulldozer from crushing the last vestiges of traditional education in the public schools.

To our dismay, we have discovered that as of 1997 a Republican Congress is either unwilling or unable to repeal the federal takeover of public education engineered by the Democrats with the help of some Republicans via Goals 2000, enacted March 31, 1994, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, enacted May 4, 1994, and the Improving America's Schools Act, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, enacted October 20, 1994. All of these laws had the full support of the NEA.

In other words, while this book did inform many Americans of the NEA's monopolistic tendencies and its humanistic, radical-leftist social agenda, it had no visible impact on the fortunes of the NEA. In fact, during the Reagan-Bush years and first four years of the Clinton administration, the NEA made enormous gains in union membership and in teacher salaries and benefits. As

for politics, the growing conservatism of the American electorate has finally begun to blunt the NEA's political clout at the local and state level. But Clinton's reelection to the Presidency was a reminder that the NEA is still a powerful and indispensable part of the Democrats' national political machine.

Meanwhile, the education establishment continues to grow and prosper. In 1982 the average public school teacher's salary was \$19,274. In 1995-96 it was up to \$37,643. In 1982 per pupil expenditure was \$2,726. In 1995-96 the national average was up to \$6,213. Total expenditure for public education rose from \$134.5 billion in 1984 to \$256 billion in 1995-96, an increase of \$122.5 billion in 11 years. Despite these enormous increases in spending—called for by the NEA—educational performance continues to decline.

In short, never have America's public school teachers been as well paid and politically connected as they are today, and never have our government schools been plagued by more violence, academic disarray, and parental dissatisfaction. What is even more shocking is the fact that four million children must be drugged daily with Ritalin in order to be able attend school!

And in all of these years the educators have been unable to solve our growing illiteracy problem despite desperate calls for reform. For example, in November 1986 former education secretary Terrel H. Bell called for an educational Marshall Plan to halt the alarming growth in illiteracy. Three years later (5/3/89), Secretary of Education Dr. Lauro Cavazos told the American people that the education reform movement, which began in 1983 with the famous *A Nation at Risk* report, "had lost its momentum," that test scores were still far below their 1960s peak, that we were still "wallowing in a tide of mediocrity" and "spending more and getting less for our dollar." ... "We're standing still," said Dr. Cavazos. "The situation scares me and I hope it scares you. . . . We must do better or perish as the nation we know today."

Today, well-connected change agents like Marc Tucker are busy imposing on America the new Human Resources Development System, described by Tucker in an 18 page letter to Hillary Clinton (11/11/92) as "a seamless web of opportunities to develop one's skills that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone—young and old, poor and rich, worker and full-time student." Tucker's egalitarian vision is fast becoming reality through Goals 2000 and School-to-Work legislation.

What is actually taking place is a cultural revolution engineered by the psycho-educators who will force children to undergo specified attitudinal

changes in order to conform to the values and standards of the empowered elite. Attitude is now considered more important than knowledge and political correctness more important than truth.

The result is that the lives of millions of children will be mutilated by the kind of mindless, soulless behaviorist education that leads to despair, failure, frustration, and suicide.

Public education cannot be restored to its former traditional goals because the educational elite have their own socio-political agenda financed by the rich foundations (Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford), aided and abetted by the state departments of education and the federal government.

It was a Harvard professor, Dr. Anthony Oettinger, who told an audience of business executives in 1981: "Do we really want to teach people to do a lot of sums or write in a 'find round hand' when they have a five-dollar handheld calculator or word processor to work with? Or do we really have to have everybody literate—writing and reading in the traditional sense—when we have the means through our technology to achieve a new flowering of oral communication? It is the traditional idea that says certain forms of communication, such as comic books, are 'bad.' But in the modern context of functionalism they may not be all that bad."

I wonder how many parents send their children to school to learn how to read comic books?

And the latest figures on literacy in the U.S. seem to indicate that the Oettinger philosophy is the prevailing view among American educators. In September 1993, the U.S. Education Department released the results of its \$14-million "Adult Literacy in America" study which said that nearly half of all adult Americans read and write so poorly that it is difficult for them to hold decent jobs. So much for the economic and intellectual benefits of compulsory school attendance!

The purpose of this book is to make Americans aware of what is going on in the public schools so that parents can make intelligent decisions about the education of their children. The system is now so perverse that children are at enormous risk the moment they enter it. They are at risk academically, spiritually, morally and physically.

Only those parents who have knowledge of the system will be able to protect their children from becoming its victims.

S.L.B.

August 1997

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And finally, lest the reader think otherwise, I wish to make it clear that the purpose of this book is not to disparage the thousands of dedicated teachers who must perform sometimes superhuman tasks. I shall always be grateful to those teachers in the public schools of New York, from 1931 to 1943, whose influences determined the course of my life: Miss Sullivan and Miss Murray, my first and second grade teachers, who taught me to read at P.S. 170; Miss Bender at P.S. 62 who kindled my love of classical music; Mrs. Strongin at Knowlton Junior High School, who stimulated my interest in French; and Mr. Greene at Stuyvesant High School, who encouraged me to become a writer. I learned from them how important teachers can be in the life of a student. I shall never forget them.

—Samuel L. Blumenfeld
Boston, May 31, 1984

Introduction: Why This Book?

Over the past decade Americans have become slowly aware that something is happening in their political life which has never happened before. Public school teachers, once loved and respected for their devotion to their profession, have become militantly politicized and are now the most active and powerful advocates of the political and social agendas of the radical left. The National Education Association, which represents 1.7 million teachers, has decided that its members are no longer satisfied with merely being public servants. They want to become political masters.

Sam Lambert, executive secretary of the NEA, predicted in 1967: "NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group. . . . NEA will organize this profession from top to bottom into logical operational units that can move swiftly and effectively and with power unmatched by any other organized group in the nation."¹

The NEA's obsession with power ought to alarm and concern all Americans, for the teachers have the organizational means to control the political destiny of this nation: 4,000 to 6,000 NEA members in each of the nation's 435 Congressional districts; 12,000 local NEA units permitting control of every

school district in the country; and 50 powerful state associations that are quickly becoming the controlling power bloc in state politics.

What would Americans think if any other group of public employees—be they policemen, tax collectors, or the military—decided to organize themselves nationally in order to achieve political dominance? We'd consider it an unmitigated threat to our freedom whether the group was of the left or the right.

It happened in France. Everyone thought that Marxism was dying in France, that the intellectuals were discovering the virtues of capitalism, when all of a sudden the socialists took power. It was the teachers who did it. A reviewer of Katherine Auspitz's *The Radical Bourgeoisie* explained how it happened:

"The secret to understanding the Mitterrand government is to begin with the recognition that school teachers are the largest occupational bloc of socialist deputies. Mitterrand's wife is the daughter of teachers. Mitterrand supported measures to unify parochial and public schools of France before he was elected.

"It was just 100 years ago that laws were passed establishing free, compulsory, secular schooling for French children of both sexes. Universal schooling, more than nationalization or any other single measure, represents the policy response of left-center governments to the problem of breaking with corporate authority—whether of church, state or modern corporations. All else is secondary."²

In April 1984 the socialist government of France moved to take control of the nation's 10,000 private schools, most of them Catholic. The private schools had made the fatal mistake of accepting government subsidies. Now they're paying the price.

Is it happening here? In Nebraska the state now regulates church schools which accept no support from the government. The regulations were enacted by a legislature controlled by the Nebraska State Education Association. Resistance to

these regulations has been met with school closures and the imprisonment of church ministers and parents in violation of their Constitutional rights.

Has the radical left decided that the best way to achieve power in America is through the organized political action of public school teachers? Are American teachers being trained and manipulated by the NEA to bring socialism to America? If they are, then the NEA is little more than the socialist Trojan horse within our political walls.

The purpose of this book is to make Americans aware that our public school teachers are no longer the benign, neutral servants of our communities. They are being used by clever political activists to bring the radical left to power. The radicals may not succeed in this election or the next, but their ability to control and influence the minds of our youth has given them the confidence that someday they will succeed.

The NEA's dominant position in the Democratic party has already made that party virtually a captive of the far left. And there are many liberal politicians who like what the teachers are doing because it serves their political ambitions.

Meanwhile, the public schools are falling apart and academic standards are at their lowest. At least a million students emerge from high school each year as functional illiterates thanks to the educational malpractice rampant in American public schools. The students may not be learning much, but they are getting heavy doses of propaganda from their politicized teachers.

It is an old truism that those who control the schools control the future. The NEA controls the schools and is determined to control our future. No group of so-called public servants should have that much power, the kind of power that can undermine the very foundation of American freedom. For the NEA not only wants monopoly power over education but power to make the taxpayer serve the NEA.

It is time for Americans to realize what the NEA is doing. The American taxpayer must decide if this is what he wants for those hard-earned dollars. We are being told by the NEA

that Americans will have to pay higher taxes if they want better education. We challenge that assertion, for the record of the last twenty years is clear: never has more money been spent on public education and never have the results been worse. Doubling school expenditures would probably give us even worse results.

If we really want educational excellence in this country, why don't we rely on those schools that are already providing it *without* burdening the taxpayer: the private, non-governmental schools? Private schools succeed for one very simple reason: they go out of business if they don't. That's obviously not the case with government schools. The worse they do, the more money they get! It's a no-win situation for the American taxpayer. For the American child, it's academic disaster.

If America wants educational excellence, it will have to get rid of politicized teachers, educator lobbyists, educational malpractice and failure and a crushing tax burden. It can do this by taking a long hard look at centralized, bureaucratized public education and deciding that the country can do very well without it.

You the voter, you the taxpayer will have to decide if you want to go where the NEA wants to take you. If you don't, then you will have to act now, for the teachers are already very well organized and have managed to put in their pockets a large number of your elected representatives in Congress and your state legislatures. The NEA wants to control you because you pay their salaries. And the only way they can control you is to control the political-legislative machinery that will force you to do their bidding.

That's the challenge and the threat that the NEA poses today.

A note about the plan of this book. When I started writing, I realized that in order to tell the story of the NEA I would also have to tell the story of public education, for it is impossible to

understand the one without the other. The NEA, in fact, is nothing more than a reflection of the ideological currents that have shaped our public schools from the beginning to the present. The result is a book larger in scope than its title suggests, one that will permit the reader to see clearly beyond the myths we have all been led to believe about our hallowed public schools.

The plain, unvarnished truth is that public education is a shoddy, fraudulent piece of goods sold to the public at an astronomical price. It's time the American consumer knew the extent of the fraud which is victimizing millions of children each year. A consumer can sue a private company for shoddy goods and misrepresentation. Indeed, Vietnam veterans have even sued the manufacturers of agent orange and won. But a student whose life has been ruined by educational malpractice in a public school has no recourse to the law. The educators are accountable to no one but themselves.

It's time the fraud was stopped. It's time for the American people to rise up and throw off a tyranny that can only get worse if nothing is done. There is a time to stand up and be counted. That time is now.

PART ONE

Delving Into the Past to Understand the Present

1. How We Got Public Education

The National Education Association was founded in 1857 by individuals who had worked hard to promote the public school movement in the United States. Thus, in order to understand the philosophical base of the NEA it is necessary to understand how and why Americans decided to put education in the hands of government.

Contrary to popular belief, the Constitution of the United States makes no mention of education. In fact, public education as we know it today did not begin to exist in this country until the 1840s. The idea of a state-owned and -controlled education system did not even originate in America. It was imported from Prussia, where an authoritarian monarchy used centralized, government-owned and -controlled schools and compulsory attendance for its own political and social purposes.

Why Americans decided to adopt the Prussian system instead of keeping education free of government interference is one of the most fascinating stories of our early history. It illustrates the power of educators when they get hold of an idea and tenaciously promote it—for better or for worse.

Believe it or not, the reasons why Americans turned over

education to the government, despite considerable opposition, had nothing to do with economics or academics. In fact, the historical evidence indicates that prior to the introduction of public education and compulsory school attendance, Americans were probably the most literate people in the world. It is even probable that the decline in literary taste in this country began with the growth and spread of public education with its watered down literary standards.

And certainly the problem was not economic, for the poor could always get an education if they wanted it. In some towns there were more charity and free schools, supported by private philanthropy and school funds, than poor pupils to go round. In Pennsylvania, for example, the state paid the tuition of any child whose parents could not afford to send him to a private school.

Despite the existence of slavery in the South, the first fifty years of the United States was as close to a libertarian society as has ever existed. For education, it meant complete freedom and diversity. There were no accrediting agencies, no regulatory boards, no state textbook selection committees, no teacher certification requirements. Parents had the freedom to choose whatever kind of school or education they wanted for their children. Home tutoring was common and there were private schools of every sort and size: church schools, academies for college preparation, seminaries, dames' schools for primary education, charity schools for the poor, tutors, and common schools.

The common schools were the original public schools and were to be found in New England and adjoining areas to which New Englanders had migrated. They were first created in the very early days of the Puritan commonwealth as a means of insuring the transference of the Calvinist Puritan religion from one generation to the next. The Reformation had replaced Papal authority with Biblical authority, and the latter required a high degree of Biblical literacy. In addition, the Puritan leaders had been impressed with the public schools

created by Luther and the German princes as a means of inculcating religious doctrine and maintaining social order in the Protestant states. Also, Harvard College had been founded in 1636, with the aid of a government grant, as a seminary for educating the commonwealth's future leaders, and it was found that a system of lower feeder schools was necessary to help find and develop local talent and to prepare such youngsters for higher studies at Harvard and future careers as magistrates and clergymen.

Thus the common schools of New England, supported by the local communities came into existence. The law required the creation of common schools in the smaller towns plus grammar schools in the larger towns, where Latin and Greek were to be taught. Latin and Greek were required, as well as Hebrew in the colleges, because these were the original languages of the Bible and of theological literature. However, all of the schools were strictly local schools, financed locally, and controlled by local committees who set their own standards, chose their own teachers, selected their own textbooks. There was no central authority dictating how the schools were to be run, just as there was no central authority dictating how the local church was to be run. Ministers were elected by their parishoners, and both schoolmasters and clergymen were paid by the towns. But the school laws did not preclude the creation of private schools by private individuals.

Thus, the Bible commonwealth was a network of communities—small republics—linked by a common Calvinist ideology, with a Governor and representative legislature overseeing the whole, exercising a civil authority limited by the higher laws of God. The churches ran the towns, and church members ran the legislature. Thus, while the ideology was orthodox, the political form was quite democratic. The community conferred authority only on those it elected.

Was this a theocracy? Scholars have never quite been able to decide one way or another, for there was enough of a separation between the civil authority and the clergy to make the

colony much less of a theocracy than it has gained a reputation for being. There was no religious hierarchy, and the Governor was purely a civil figure. But one thing we do know is that of all the English colonies, Massachusetts was the least tolerant of publicly expressed heretical teachings. The common schools, in fact, were created as religious instruments for teaching the catechism of the established orthodox Calvinist sect. The catechism was synonymous with literacy; and since a Bible commonwealth required a literate community for its preservation, religious and secular literacy went hand in hand. However, were it not for religious reasons, it is doubtful that the Massachusetts legislature would have enacted its school laws, for none of the other colonies enacted such laws. This did not mean that the people in the other colonies were less devout or had less religious content in their education. The other colonies, populated by a variety of sects, simply maintained a greater separation between church and civil authority.

The Bible commonwealth did not last long. The growth of the colony, the development of trade, the influx of other religious sects, the increased general prosperity and the emergence of religious liberalism tended to weaken the hold of the austere Puritan orthodoxy. Enforcement of the school laws grew lax, and private schools sprung up to teach the more practical commercial subjects. By 1720, for example, Boston had far more private schools than public ones, and by the close of the American Revolution, many towns had no common schools at all.

However, in drafting its new state constitution in 1780, Massachusetts decided to reinstate the old school laws, primarily to maintain the continuity of its educational institutions. John Adams framed the article which both confirmed the special legal status of Harvard and emphasized the commonwealth's continued interest in public education. The strongest support for the article came from the Harvard-Boston establishment which wanted to maintain the link be-

tween government and school. Harvard had been created with the help of a government grant and had been the recipient of many such grants over the years. In addition, members of the government had been on the Harvard Board of Overseers since 1642. The new constitution merely maintained the continuity of that relationship.

Connecticut, which had modeled its colonial laws on those of Massachusetts, followed suit and maintained the continuity of its common schools. New Hampshire did similarly. In New York State, the legislature in 1795 appropriated a large sum of money for the purpose of encouraging and maintaining schools in its cities and towns. The money was derived from the Land Ordinances passed by the Continental Congress in 1785 and 1787 which set aside a section of land in each Congressional township for the purpose of creating a state fund for education. Many towns took advantage of this school fund and established common schools. But these schools were only partially financed by the state fund. The counties were required to raise matching funds, and tuition was also paid by parents. In addition, wherever state governments showed an interest in promoting schools, private schools were also eligible for subsidies.

At the start of the new nation, Boston was the only American city to have a public school system, but it was hardly a system in today's sense of the word. Primary education was still left to the private dames' schools, and literacy was a requisite for entering the public grammar school at the age of seven. There was, of course, no compulsory attendance law. The pride of the system was the elitist Latin School which prepared students for Harvard. Most of the children who attended it came from the upper ranks of Boston society. Thus, the public school was not conceived in the post-Revolutionary period as a means of lifting the lowly masses from illiteracy. It was simply an institutional holdover from earlier days. At the same time private schools were flourishing, and most parents preferred them to the public ones.

For the next twenty years public and private schools coexisted in Massachusetts, with the more efficient private sector expanding slowly at the expense of the public sector. Outside of Boston, the growing middle and professional classes were abandoning the dilapidated public schools for the new private academies. Only in Boston did the public schools hold their own, and it was in Boston, in 1818, that the first move to expand the public sector at the expense of the private was made. This was a complete reversal of the general trend away from the public school generated by free-market forces. The promoters of the move wanted the city to establish a system of public primary schools and phase out the private dames' schools. The reasons given were that there were too many delinquent children roaming the streets and too many poor parents who could not afford to send their children to the dames' schools, thus depriving them of the literacy necessary for entering the public grammar schools.

To find out if this were indeed the case, the school committee appointed a subcommittee to make a city-wide survey of the schooling situation. The survey, the first of its kind ever to be made in this country, revealed some very interesting facts. About 2,360 pupils attended the eight public schools, but more than 4,000 pupils attended the 150 or so private schools. The survey also revealed that 283 children between the ages of four and seven, and 243 children over seven, attended no school at all.³ In short, over 90 per cent of the city's children attended school, despite the fact that there were no compulsory attendance laws and the primary schools were private. And it was obvious that even if primary education were made public, some parents would still keep their children at home, since there were already in existence eight charity primary schools for poor children. The committee thus recommended against establishing public primary schools since the vast majority of parents were willing to pay for private instruction and the charity schools were available for those who could not afford to pay anything.

The promoters of the public primary schools waged a vigorous campaign in the press. The fact that over 90 per cent of the children were in school was to them no cause for rejoicing. They focussed on the several hundred who were not. "What are those children doing?" they asked. "Who has charge of them? Where do they live? Why are they not in school?" They warned that unless these children were rescued from neglect, they would surely become the criminals of tomorrow, and their cost to society would be far greater than the cost of public primary schools.

What is curious about this campaign is that the promoters never suggested that perhaps the city might subsidize the tuition of children whose parents could not afford to send them to the dames' schools, thereby saving the taxpayers the cost of an entire public primary system. What they insisted on was an expansion of the public school system to include the primary grades, and they would not settle for anything less. Their persistence paid off, and primary education was finally made public. Three of the campaign's most active promoters, in fact, were appointed members of the new primary school committee.

Who were the promoters of this campaign? Why did they wage it with such fervor and determination? And why did they not seek a solution to the problem through private philanthropy or public subsidy, solutions far less costly to the taxpayer? At a time when the public, through its market choices, clearly showed that it favored the private approach to education, why did the promoters insist on an expansion of the public system? To answer these questions, one must know something about what was going on in the minds of Americans during this period.

The first fifty years of American history are generally passed over lightly by scholars on their way from the Revolution to the Civil War. We know some general facts about the period: the framing of the Constitution, the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans, the Jack-

sonian era. But we are seldom made aware of the incredible intellectual and philosophical changes that were taking place in that transition period from pre-industrial to industrial society. The emphasis in the history books is always on political and military events interlaced with material progress: the invention of the steamboat, the railroad, the cotton gin.

What also took place during that period was an intellectual event of great importance—probably the most important in American history: the takeover of Harvard by the Unitarians in 1805 and the expulsion of the Calvinists. That takeover not only made Harvard the citadel of religious and moral liberalism, but also the citadel of anti-Calvinism. Once the significance of that event is understood, the intellectual history of America suddenly begins to make much more sense, for no event has had a greater long-range influence on American intellectual, cultural, and political life than this one.

The issues at stake were fundamental: the nature of God and the nature of man. The liberals, brought up in the moral, benevolent atmosphere of a free, prosperous, ever-expanding society, could no longer accept the Calvinist world-view which placed the Bible at the center of spiritual and moral understanding. The liberals found the Calvinist doctrines of innate depravity, predestination, election, and reprobation particularly repugnant. Calvin's was a God-centered world-view in which a man's life was determined by his personal relationship to an all-powerful, objectively real God who had expressed His will in the Old and New Testaments. The Ten Commandments were the essence of God's law. They provided protection to life and property and codified commitment to God and family. They were the restraints that would save men from becoming the victims of their own innate depravity.

The Unitarians rejected all of this. They could not believe in the existence of an unfair, unjust God who elects a few and rejects others; a God who favors some and condemns the rest. Calvin was the first to admit that these doctrines seem unjust and repugnant but he answered that God has placed a limit on

what man is permitted to know and that man therefore has no choice but to accept God's will as revealed in the Scriptures and by the cold facts of life. Those facts include the existence of evil, the sufferings of the innocent, the triumph of tyrants, the general difficulties of the human condition in a world ruled by an omnipotent God who, despite all of this, is still a benevolent God because he created man to begin with.

The Unitarians accepted the notion that God created man, but they also insisted that man was given the freedom to make of his life whatever he can. It is man himself who decides, through his life on earth, whether he goes to heaven or hell. He is not innately depraved. He is, in fact, rational and perfectible. As for the existence of evil, they believed that it was caused by ignorance, poverty, social injustice, and other environmental and social factors. Education, the Unitarians decided, is the only way to solve the problem of evil. Education would eliminate ignorance, which would eliminate poverty, which would eliminate social injustice, which would eliminate crime. They believed that moral progress is as attainable as material progress once the principles of improvement are discovered. In this scheme of things there was no place for a triune God or a divine Christ through whom salvation was attainable.

It was therefore only natural that the Unitarians would shift their practice of religion from the worship of a harmless, benevolent God of limited powers to the creation of institutions on earth to improve the character of man. The one institution that the Unitarians decided could be used to carry out this formidable task was the public school. Their first organized effort was the campaign in 1818 to create public primary schools in Boston.

Why only public schools and not private or charity schools? Because private schools were run and controlled by individuals who might have entirely different views concerning the nature of man. Besides, private owners were forced by economic reality to concentrate on teaching skills rather than

forming character. As for the church schools, they were too sectarian, and the charity schools were usually run by Calvinists. Only the public schools, controlled in Boston by the affluent Unitarian establishment, could become that secular instrument of salvation.

But why did the first organized effort take place in 1818? Because, at around that time, a man in Scotland had proudly broadcast to the civilized world that he had discovered the basic principle of moral improvement. His name was Robert Owen, and we know of him today as the father of socialism. Owen was a self-made manufacturer who became a social messiah when he "discovered" what he considered to be the basic truth about human character: that a man's character is made for him by society through upbringing, education, and environment and not by himself as the religionists taught. Children in a cannibal society grow up to be adult cannibals. Children in a selfish, competitive society grow up to be selfish and competitive. No one was innately depraved or evil. An infant is a glob of plastic that can be molded to have whatever character society wishes him to have. Owen started publishing his ideas in 1813, and in 1816 to prove that he was right, established his famous Institution for the Formation of Character at New Lanark. Through a secular, scientific curriculum coupled with the notion that each pupil must strive to make his fellow pupils happy, Owen hoped to turn out little rational cooperative human beings, devoid of selfishness, supposition, and all of the other traits found in capitalist man.

All of these ideas were music to the ears of the Boston Unitarians who wanted confirmation that man is indeed perfectible through the process of education. But Owen had stressed that the earlier you start training the child the better chance you have to mold his character, which is why the Unitarians launched their campaign to create public primary schools. This was only the first step, for in 1816 Owen had published an essay outlining a plan for a *national* system of education in England whereby the character of a whole nation could be molded to the good of all. He wrote:

At present, there are not any individuals in the kingdom who have been trained to instruct the rising generation, as it is for the interest and happiness of all that it should be instructed. The training of those who are to form the future man becomes a consideration of the utmost magnitude: for, on due reflection, it will appear that instruction to the young must be, of necessity, the only foundation upon which the superstructure of society can be raised. Let this instruction continue to be left, as heretofore, to chance, and often to the most inefficient members of the community, and society must still experience the endless miseries which arise from such weak and puerile conduct. On the contrary, let the instruction of the young be well devised and well executed, and no subsequent proceedings in the state can be materially injurious. For it may truly be said to be a wonder-working power; one that merits the deepest attention of the legislature; with ease it may be used to train man into a daemon of mischief to himself and all around him, or into an agent of unlimited benevolence.⁴

Thus, socialism began as an educational movement to reform the character of man into "future man". Today we call him Soviet man. Leaving education "to chance" meant leaving it private, and that is why in 1818 the Unitarians insisted on creating public primary schools rather than subsidizing pupils to attend private ones. It was also the beginning of the organized movement that was to culminate in the creation of our compulsory public education system.

From the very beginning, the Unitarians and socialists were the prime movers and leaders of this long-range sustained effort. Between 1823 and 1825, James G. Carter, a Harvard Unitarian, published a series of essays deploring the general trend away from the common schools and advocating the expansion of public education and the creation of state-supported teachers' seminaries. Owen had stressed the need for such seminaries and in his book called them "the most powerful instrument for good that has ever yet been placed in the hands of man."⁵ The Harvard-Unitarian elite gave Carter's proposals its strongest endorsement and widest circulation.

In 1825, Robert Owen came to America to establish his

communist colony at New Harmony, Indiana. The experiment received a great deal of newspaper publicity and attracted a large number of followers. It was called "an experiment in social reform through cooperation and rational education." But in less than two years it failed. The problem, Owen decided, was that people raised and educated under the old system were incapable of adapting themselves to the communist way of life no matter how much they professed to believe in it. Therefore, the Owenites decided that rational education would have to precede the creation of a socialist society, and they subsequently launched a strong campaign to promote a national system of secular education. Owen's son, Robert Dale Owen, and Frances Wright set up headquarters in New York, helped organize the Workingmen's Party as a front for Owenite ideas, published a radical weekly paper called *The Free Enquirer*, and lectured widely on socialism and national education. Their antireligious views turned so many people away from Owenism, however, that they were forced to adopt covert techniques to further their ends. One of the men attracted to their cause was Orestes Brownson, a writer and editor, whose remarkable religious odyssey took him from Calvinism to Universalism to Socialism to Unitarianism and finally to Catholicism. Years later, describing his short experience with the Owenites, Brownson wrote:

But the more immediate work was to get our system of schools adopted. To this end it was proposed to organize the whole Union secretly, very much on the plan of the Carbonari of Europe, of whom at that time I knew nothing. The members of this secret society were to avail themselves of all the means in their power, each in his own locality, to form public opinion in favor of education by the state at the public expense, and to get such men elected to the legislatures as would be likely to favor our purposes. How far the secret organization extended, I do not know; but I do know that a considerable portion of the State of New York was organized, for I was myself one of the agents for organizing it.⁶

So now we know that as early as 1829, the socialists had adopted covert techniques to further their ends in the United

States, techniques which they continued to use for decades.

It was also in 1829 that Josiah Holbrook launched the Lyceum movement to organize the educators of America into a powerful lobby for public education. Was Holbrook a covert Owenite? Circumstantial evidence seems to indicate that he was. And if the socialists decided to further their cause by working through the instrument of public education, we can then understand why the system has had such a pro-socialist bias for as long as any of us can remember. Indeed, public education was to become the socialists' *primary* instrument for promoting socialism.

In promoting socialism one also promoted the state, for the secular state was to be the primary political instrument for exercising man's rational power. When Frances Wright, the Owenite feminist, lectured in the United States for a national system of education, she left no doubt that the state was to be the ultimate beneficiary of such a system. She said in 1829:

That one measure, by which alone childhood may find sure protection; by which alone youth may be made wise, industrious, moral, and happy; by which alone the citizens of this land may be made, in very deed, *free and equal*. That measure—you know it. It is national, rational, republican education; free for all at the expense of all; conducted under the guardianship of the state, at the expense of the state, for the honor, the happiness, the virtue, the salvation of the state.⁷

But while Josiah Holbrook, with active help from the Unitarians, was organizing the educators through the Lyceum movement, and the Owenites were agitating for a national system of education, the American people were going in the opposite direction. The free market favored private education, and new private academies were springing up all over the country, particularly in Massachusetts where the town-supported common schools were being abandoned by the middle class.

Thus, had free-market forces been permitted to operate in the educational field without ideological opposition, the com-

mon schools would have either disappeared or been reduced to their most rudimentary function as dispensers of free elementary education to a dwindling constituency. In the long run, it would have been more economical for the towns to pay for the tuition of poor children to attend private schools, than to maintain free schools. So the problem was never one of economics; it was, from the very beginning, philosophical.

If both the socialists and the Unitarians embraced educational statism as the future way to human moral progress, it was for two reasons: first, they rejected the Biblical, Calvinist view of man; and second, they rejected the Biblical view of history. Man, as sinful and depraved, was replaced by Man who was rational, benevolent, and innately good. But the American form of limited government with its elaborate checks and balances had been created on the basis of the Calvinist distrust of human nature. The Calvinists didn't believe that power corrupts man, but that man corrupts power. Man is a sinner by nature and therefore cannot be trusted with power. Only a true fear of God, they believed, can hold sinful man in check.

As the orthodox faith waned in the nineteenth century and faith in rational man grew, Western culture began to accept a reverse philosophy of human nature. To explain why man does the evil things he does, they turned from theology to psychology. The first pseudo-scientific attempt to explain the origin of criminal behavior was Phrenology, and its teachings had considerable impact on the thinking of many 19th century educators, including Horace Mann.

As for the Biblical view of history, the Romantic movement projected a new heroic image of man as conquerer and innovator, and mankind was viewed in a universal sense as one big progressive family. Thus was born the myth of moral progress: the idea that man was getting morally better and better.

The prime modern promoter of this idea was the German philosopher Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) who formulated the dialectical process of human moral progress, a process liberated from the strictures of the Old and New Testa-

ments. He replaced the objectively real God of the Bible with a subjective Pantheism in which man was revealed as the highest manifestation of God in the universe. Rational, heroic, perfectible man was thus elevated to godlike status, and his secular state was expected to dispense a justice and equality not to be found in the Scriptures. Liberated, unrestrained rational man would create, not unlimited evil as the Calvinists believed, but unlimited good.

It was only natural, therefore, that the Harvard-Unitarian elite would look toward Prussia for their statist models. And they found exactly what they were looking for in the Prussian state system of compulsory education, with its truant officers, graded classes, and uniform curriculum. That system had been set up in 1819, and Robert Owen claims in his autobiography that the Prussian system was built on his ideas. Of course, Luther had advocated public schools at the time of the Reformation. But the Prussian system was a model of centralized control, and it had the one feature that Owen considered indispensable for a successful state system: state training schools for teachers. It was acknowledged by the Prussians that you really could not control education until you controlled the teachers and their indoctrination. In other words, teachers were to be the front-line troops for statism.

Members of the Harvard-Unitarian elite had acquired a taste for German education while studying in Germany, but Americans had no interest in adopting such a system for themselves. In 1833, however, a French professor of philosophy, Victor Cousin, published a lengthy report on the Prussian system for his own government, which was subsequently translated into English and published in the United States. It was exactly what the public school movement needed, and it was distributed among American educators who began to arrive at a consensus that the Prussian system was the way to go.

The fact that Cousin had written the report added to its prestige, for Cousin was the main transmission belt of Hegelianism to the Harvard elite. His series of lectures on Hegel's

history of philosophy was widely read among the Harvard Unitarians, many of whom became Transcendentalists.

Thus, by the time Horace Mann entered the scene in 1837 as the first Secretary of the newly created Massachusetts Board of Education, the groundwork had been thoroughly done by the Owenites, Unitarians, and Hegelians. Mann, a talented lawyer legislator, was chosen by the Harvard-Unitarian elite to bring educational statism to Massachusetts because he had demonstrated that when it came to legislation, he could give the liberals whatever they wanted. They had enormous confidence in him and he never disappointed them.

If any single person can claim credit for changing America's social, academic, and ultimately political direction from a libertarian to a statist one, the credit must go to Horace Mann, for it was Mann who was able to overcome the considerable opposition to statism, while others could not. The key to Mann's success was in his peculiar sense of mission, combined with his practical political experience as a legislator, and the strong financial, cultural, and social backing of the Harvard-Unitarian elite.

He hated Calvinism with a passion and fought Calvinist opposition with a ferocity that disturbed some, but delighted most, of his Unitarian backers. But he succeeded mainly because he knew how to divide the opposition. By the mid-1830s, even some Trinitarian Protestants were being swayed by German religious liberalism. Also, Protestant leaders like Calvin Stowe and Lyman Beecher, who were based in Ohio, saw in the Prussian educational system a model they could use in their own efforts to maintain the Protestant character of American culture in the face of massive Catholic immigration.

In any case, the backbone of the opposition to educational statism was made up primarily of orthodox Calvinists who feared the long-range antireligious effects of secular public education and favored the decentralized common-school system as it existed before the Board of Education came into

being. One of them summed it up in these words in the *Christian Witness* in 1844:

We do not need this central, all-absorbing power; it is anti-republican in all its bearings, well-adapted perhaps, to Prussia, and other European despotisms, but not wanted here.⁸

Despite considerable and continued opposition, all attempts to stop the growth of educational statism failed. Thus, from its very inception educational statism was the prime promoter of statism itself in America. To Mann, the symbol of the triumph of statism was in the creation of the first State normal school. The normal school was the state-financed and -controlled teachers' college. No sooner had Mann been appointed Secretary of the Board of Education by Gov. Edward Everett than he got to work setting up the first normal school in Lexington. It was done through the financial help of a prominent Unitarian industrialist, whose funds were matched by the state legislature. It was established in 1838 as an experiment. Opposition to the idea of state-controlled teacher training remained strong, until 1845 when the opposition was finally overcome.

In March 1845, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to appropriate \$5,000 in matching funds to the \$5,000 raised by Mann's Harvard-Unitarian friends to build two additional normal schools. In describing the dedication ceremony at one of the schools, Mann wrote this in the *Common School Journal* (October 1, 1846):

What constituted the crowning circumstance of the whole was, that the Legislature, in making the grant, changed the title or designation of the schools. In all previous reports, laws, and resolves, they had been called "Normal Schools." But by the resolves for the erection of the new houses, it was provided that these schools should thereafter be known and designated as *State Normal Schools*,—the State thus giving to them a paternal name, as the sign of adoption, and the pledge of its affection.

To Mann, who believed the normal school to be "a new

instrumentality in the advancement of the race," the linking of state power to teacher education was indeed a crowning circumstance, creating what James G. Carter had described in 1825 as a powerful "engine to sway the public sentiment, the public morals, and the public religion, more powerful than any other in the possession of government."⁹ Carter was perfectly right, for once a nation's teachers' colleges become the main vehicle through which the philosophy of statism is advanced, that philosophy will very soon infect every other aspect of society.

The simple truth that experience has taught us is that the most potent and significant expression of statism is a State educational system. Without it, statism is impossible. With it, the State can, and has, become everything.

2. In the Beginning

The NEA was founded in 1857 at a meeting in Philadelphia called by the presidents of ten state teachers associations. One of the organizers, Thomas W. Valentine, president of the New York Teachers Association, told the gathering:

Twelve years ago, in the Empire State, the first state association of teachers in this country was formed. . . . Previous to this organization teachers everywhere were almost entirely unacquainted with each other. But what a mighty change a few years have wrought! Besides many minor organizations, there are now not less than twenty-three state teachers associations, each doing good work in its own sphere of labor, and today I trust we shall proceed to raise the capstone which shall bind all together in one solid, substantial structure.

...

What we want is an association that shall embrace all the teachers of our whole country, which shall hold its meeting at such central points as shall accommodate all sections and combine all interests. And we need this not merely to promote the interests of our own profession, but to gather up and arrange the educational statistics of our country, so that the people may know what is really being done for public education, and what yet remains to be done. I trust the time will come when our government will have its educational de-