

30 years of dumbing down your children

There is no reason children cannot think in the same way as humanity's greatest figures. Lyndon LaRouche explains in an April release.

Over more than a half-century, in the United States, as each generation of professional educators is weeded out, the standard of literacy of graduating classes of public schools and universities is lowered. There have been occasional, partial, but relatively short-lived reversals in this prevailing trend, such as the "post-Sputnik" programs for teacher training in the mathematical natural sciences. Nonetheless, overall, and even within the shrinking percentage of graduates who are not totally illiterate in natural science, the overall trend has been down, down, down.

This problem has become most acute since the radical change in youth culture introduced during the 1963-68 spread of the sociology mass-experiments with the rock-drug-sex counterculture by associates of Aldous Huxley, Bertrand Russell, and Margaret Mead. In entire categories of education which were standard competencies among virtually all college entrants 30 years ago, behind the eyes of today's typical college graduate, there is an appalling vacuousness. Often, the private alternative school, even high-priced, produces a result as painful to the caring parent as the public ones.

Over 250 years ago, the famous Jonathan Swift wrote a series of brilliant satires on the moral and intellectual decay of social life in early 18th-century Britain. Later, this piece of adult humor, *Gulliver's Travels*, circulated as a popular children's book. To understand what are called by such names as "outcome-based education," or "A World of Difference" today, turn to one of the later stories in that Swift collection, "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms."

In that tale, the country is ruled by a queer race of horses, the "Houyhnhnms," who speak like British Liberal Party asses of Walpole's time. The human inhabitants, who are ruled over by these odd horses, have been degraded to wretched creatures with the morals and literacy of baboons, called "Yahoos."

Today, it is difficult to think of Lemuel Gulliver's Yahoos without being reminded of images of the famous Woodstock rock-sex-drug festival.

Forty years ago, the "radical counterculture" in the United States was little more than a plot by a sadistic pack of perverts associated with Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger, Heidegger's former

mistress Hannah Arendt, Margaret Mead, and a gutter-full of Yahoos calling themselves "beatniks." At that time, "recreational drugs" was a rarely visited snake-pit in a corner of the zoo, an exotic disorder spilling over into the nation's gutters from the ranks of organized crime's purveyors of prostitution and other so-called "popular" entertainment. Later came what the London Tavistock Institute sometimes described as its 1963-68 "cultural paradigm shift;" with that came Woodstock's "Yahoo" romp.

Looking at the facts, it is obvious today, that this destruction of our nation's children became today's general phenomenon as a result of the rock-drug-sex counterculture's mass brainwashing of many of the 1963-68 university-age generation. It is, in large part, those radicals of the mid-1960s campus who are top-down controllers of the corporate level of management in most of the key private and governmental institutions of today. Those seen as countercultural "freaks" in 1968-70 have become today virtually the arbiters of "politically correct" public morality and educational policy. If this trend is not reversed, this nation, perhaps even this civilization will not survive. Today's radical educational policies, rooted in the rock-drug-sex counterculture, are the new bubonic plague which threatens to destroy many of the world's communities, even entire nations, unless the needed emergency programs of cultural sanitation are introduced soon.

Reason for optimism

It is as bad as that, and actually worse. Nonetheless, there are reasons to be optimistic.

The last time something as bad as the present counterculture occurred, was during the so-called New Dark Ages of Europe's 14th century. The typical "counterculture freaks" of that barbaric time were the so-called "flagellants," the massed migratory hordes of followers of weird pseudo-Christian cults, with beliefs as ugly as those of a recently influential de-schooler Ivan Illich. These flagellants preyed upon the hungry land of that darkened century like swarms of human locusts. Yet, out of that terrible time, educational movements such as the Brothers of the Common Life of Gerhard Groote and Thomas à Kempis produced the greatest renaissance in all of human existence to the present date, the 15th-century Golden Renaissance of such famous names as Nicolaus of



The late nuclear physicist Dr. Robert Moon works with children and his assistant Bob McLaughlin at a summer camp reproducing original experiments in electromagnetism.

Cusa, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and so on.

Sometimes, only a menacing adversity, such as the mind-destroying effects of programs such as “outcome-based education,” is required to kick the frightened conscience of reformers into bringing about long-overdue revivals of the civilization they were about to lose.

The following discussions are increasingly typical today.

Concerned parents see the effect of present-day trends in education as children of neighbors and friends being turned into virtual zombies. “What can we do to protect our children from this?” There are measures which can be taken to lessen the risk of irreversible mind damage.

Or, a person who is bright, moral, but who has been cruelly cheated of literacy, asks: “Can I fix this? Can I learn to read and write above a 3,000-word vocabulary? Can I also become at least literate in mathematics?” Yes, it can be done, if you are determined to succeed.

These fears, these questions lead to the issues of educational policy in general. Some suggest: “Back to basics, back to the Three Rs.” That would be acceptable, temporarily, as a desperate alternative to the perverted practice of shoving sex education down the gullets of first-graders; but, it does not address the issue of providing a competent education. The simplistic recipe, “the Three Rs” shows a crude misunderstanding of education. It does not address the issue of equipping the next generation adequately to survive the technological and moral challenges of the time their generation will run the nation.

There are models of compensatory education for children, conducted outside of school programs, which have had some success, and which also typify the kinds of approaches which are more likely to succeed.

For rebuilding school systems, there are good models of education which can be copied by educational systems, or also used as guides for the case of the individual requiring a good remedial program. The best are the models of what were known as *Classical Christian humanist* programs — absolutely no kinship to more recent “secular humanist” packages. These classical programs were pioneered by the Brothers of the Common Life, and are typified in modern form by those Schiller-Humboldt reforms of education revived, until two decades ago, as post-Hitler Germany’s gymnasium program.

Why European thinkers?

This means taking head-on the so-called issue of “dead white European males.” Why should children of U.S. citizens, or residents, be required to achieve competency in the work of “dead white European males”? The short answer is: to enable them, and our nation to survive. The evidence which proves this is the key to discovering the requirements which any competent educational system, and any teacher must satisfy before being allowed to teach your child. This evidence centers upon three facts.

Fact #1: The best reported archeological evidence is, that the human species has existed on this planet for not less

than 2 million years.

Fact #2: The increase in mankind's power over nature, per capita, has increased vastly more during the last six centuries, since A.D. 1440, than during all human existence before A.D. 1440. This fact is measurable beyond all reasonable dispute.

Fact #3: This unique quality of the last six centuries is entirely the result of the spread, throughout this planet, of a cultural revolution which erupted in western Europe, centered in the city of Florence, Italy, during the 15th century's Golden Renaissance.

This revolution was a Christian revival, led by a group of figures of both religion and science, including the founder of modern science, Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa. It was also an ecumenical revival of civilization, out of the long "New Dark Age" of the preceding, 14th century. It was based on the common principle of the three great monotheisms, based upon the principle of Moses' Genesis 1:26-28, that man is in the image of God by virtue of man's inborn potential for willfully increasing man's power over nature per capita through creative discovery.

This Renaissance drew, directly or indirectly, upon virtually all of the accumulated knowledge of mankind up to that point. The center of the scientific side of the Renaissance was the assembly in Florence, of the manuscripts of Plato. Other Classical Greek writers were significant, but Plato's principles of scientific discovery were at the center of the Renaissance.

There were two leading aspects to this Renaissance, the religious or political side, and the scientific side. From the religious side of the Renaissance came the definition of a new kind of political order, the modern constitutional nation-state republic, replacing the previously established order of international law based upon empire. Cusa's famous *Concordantia Catholica* is at the center of this. The new design of state was based centrally upon the unique quality of each and every person as, in Latin, *imago Dei* and *capax Dei*: man in the image of God by virtue of the person's willful power of creative reason. The state must be designed to conform to this nature of mankind, in respect to the circumstances of individual life and the fact, that through creative reason, man had the capacity to know, and to be accountable to natural law.

This new conception of national republic was uniquely required for the fostering of scientific progress as a means for increasing the productive powers of labor of mankind as a whole. Although all of the rudiments for the achievements of modern natural science were found in the work of Plato and such of his students and collaborators as Theaetetus and Eudoxus, the explosion of scientific progress after Brunelleschi, Cusa, Toscanelli, et al. is without precedent in human existence earlier: Names such as Leonardo, Kepler, Leibniz, and Gauss typify the rapid accumulation, within about four centuries, of more newly discovered fundamental principles

of scientific knowledge than in the entire existence of mankind earlier.

The ability of mankind to increase humanity's power to meet human needs, and to maintain the habitability of this planet, depends absolutely upon continuing both that rate of scientific progress in discoveries, and also in transforming production and products alike to increase man's per capita productive powers of labor to new heights with ever-less effort required.

This requires a quality of individual citizen who is capable of participating efficiently in this scientific progress. Without that quality of citizen, civilization cannot survive. Without that, our children's world, our grandchildren, will not survive. Unless today's generation assimilates the essential contributions of preceding generations of mankind, this generation lacks the qualifications of a people fit to survive. Like it or not, the greatest part of the knowledge upon which continued existence today depends, was contributed by "dead white European males" who lived during the recent six centuries.

For the moment, stick to the case of natural science.

A modern U.S. curriculum

Do you wish your child to be adequately prepared to succeed at being an adult? The following is a fair description of what modern society requires.

What today's student needs to learn is not a pack of mathematical formulas. Formulas can be programmed into computers. The student must master what no computer will ever be able to do, what only a human being can do: discover a fundamental principle of nature. The way in which the pupil can learn the principle of scientific discovery, is to develop his or her own innate creative-mental potential. There is but one way in which this kind of education can be accomplished: The student must relive the mental act of discovery by some of the greatest minds of all history. Pythagoras, for example, and Plato, Eudoxus, and so on. The pupil must work through these discoveries in some definite order: first, the discovery whose mastery prepares the pupil to face the challenge of mastering the next problem on the list. This begins with a study of Classical Greek geometry, and uses classical and synthetic geometries as the springboards for structuring physical observations and experiments.

What the pupil accomplishes through reliving crucial creative moments from the minds of the past's great discoverers is twofold. Obviously, the student becomes familiar with the method for effecting valid discoveries. The student also comes to understand history in a way which is otherwise almost impossible, as the history of interlinked ideas respecting mankind's efforts to willfully increase man's productive powers of labor, mankind's power over nature, per capita.

In addition to natural science and mathematics, the pupil must become familiar with history in a similar way. The child

should master languages, including Classical forms of some ancient ones such as Greek, Sanskrit, and so on, in order to understand the common principles underlying the multiplicity of language in general. The student must master the use of language, especially in the classical forms of poetry and dramatic tragedy, the two highest art-forms in the verbal medium. The student should also master the rudiments of singing according to principles of well-tempered polyphony—using the best methods of voice-training, known as *bel canto*.

Three aspects of such a general curriculum are emphasized here. They are stressed because they are those elements of a general curriculum which are most important for either remedial education of young adults, or for out-of-school programs used by parents to minimize the mental and emotional damage done by today's typical public school system. These three are geometry, music, and poetry and drama. For adolescents and older persons, classical tragedy is indispensable as the form of drama emphasized for study.

Educational help outside the school

The student should be guided to think of geometry as "the language of vision," of music as "the language of hearing," and classical tragedy as "the language of truth-seeking." The relevant features of all three of these topics are treated in the author's contribution to the forthcoming, Summer 1994 issue of *Fidelio*, "The Truth of Temporal Eternity." In summary of the pertinent contents of that document, the case to be made for each is as follows.

The teaching of mathematics can be greatly simplified for the student, by using geometrical methods which render the subject matter not only easier to master, but with a more rigorous, more advanced grasp of fundamentals involved. The point is made briefly as follows.

Since the fundamental discoveries announced at the end of the century by the mathematician Georg Cantor, the modern geometrician is able to divide the notion of *number* into four species: *rational*, *algebraic*, *non-algebraic* or *transcendental*, and higher *transfinite* cardinalities. Each of these four classes of number is separated from the others by precisely defined limits, and by corresponding discoveries.

For example, the ancient Greeks mastered the geometric representation of the class of non-rational numbers which they defined as "incommensurables." In the middle of the 15th century, Nicolaus of Cusa was the first to prove that the number π is not an algebraic number, but what Leibniz and others later identified as *transcendental*. The existence of numbers beyond the limits of the transcendental was identified by Leibniz, and well-known to 19th-century mathematicians such as Gauss, Dirichlet, Riemann, and Weierstrass. The proof of the existence of such classes of *transfinite* numbers was supplied by Cantor in 1897.

It should be mentioned that some mathematicians will argue, mistakenly, that the transcendental character of π was

first proven by the successive work of Hermite and Lindemann, late during the 19th century. The rigorous proof was supplied, as part of the founding of modern science by Nicolaus of Cusa, in A.D. 1453.

Each of these proofs is accomplished by a rigorous but elementary form of geometrical construction, which can be fully mastered on the level of a good high-school curriculum. The student who takes this short-cut, can overtake and pass way ahead of the student who follows the laborious and flawed algebraic route plotted by today's popularized "new math."

The well-tempered tuning of the 12-tone octave scale is embedded naturally in the physiological characteristics of the human singing (and speaking) voice. This is based on the existence of six possible types of human singing voice, and the result of attempting to integrate all simultaneously into vocal polyphony. The Bach well-tempered system was not a matter of taste, but a scientific discovery of the natural characteristics of the human chorus. It is discovered, as Classical Vedic hymns show this, for example, that any classical poem is already a scored song, by virtue of the naturally determined pitches of the vocalization (of the vowels), and that all music is derived from the polyphonic singing of classical forms of poetry according to this principle of natural vocalization.

In geometry, the pupils are exploring the way in which the mind organizes its conceptions of vision. In music, the students are exploring the way in which the mind organizes its conceptions of hearing. The two combined, are the basis on which Johannes Kepler made the first successful attempt to establish a comprehensive mathematical physics including the notion of universal gravitation.

Probably, although tragedy can be presented in a superficial way as simple drama to younger pupils, the principles of tragedy itself can not be taught at age levels much below the secondary school classroom. An additional difficulty, the number of competent tragedies available for use are relatively very few. There are the few surviving works from the ancient Greek, such as those of Aeschylus, Marlowe's tragedies, those of Marlowe's friend Shakespeare, Cervantes's prose-drama-tragedy, *Don Quixote*, and the tragedies of Friedrich Schiller. Yet, the study of tragedy is perhaps indispensable for developing the student's capacity to understand history and the principles of language.

In the usual case today, where secondary schools offer no competent programs in musical training, poetry, or drama, music and tragedy can be provided through resourceful parents' cooperative efforts as an extra-curricular activity. Similarly, special programs in elementary through advanced mathematics from a geometry standpoint can be provided. It is probably to the degree that concerned parents occupy themselves with the challenge of such extra-curricular programs in these three areas, that the needed popular constituency basis for needed sweeping reforms within the school system can be established.