

Introduction and update to “The Curse of an Educated Country” 2005

I initially wrote this one after “Slick Willie” was reelected in 1994. Upon being inaugurated and sworn in, he (supposedly conferring with “Old Elephant Ankles” [Hillary] who was his education Nazi) announced that he was going to “up” (a verb) the relative educational quotient in our great land by giving all of our young people a chance of a free two year stint in college resulting in an AA Degree. While promising a car in every garage and a chicken in every pot is as old as politics itself, I often wondered if anyone ever bothered to figure out the consequences of such an act, even assuming that it would be possible to hammer the necessary “book larnin” into their heads? I suggest that the result would be a genuine disaster. Read on and consider the current efforts to advance our governmentally controlled educational program!

ROC



The Curse of an Educated Country

By Dick Culver

Taken from the files of “The Master Joustler”

Well, the Clinton Administration has done it again! This time they have promised the entire country that all of our young people will be guaranteed two years at an institution of higher learning (college or junior college), presumably to gain at least an Associate Degree!

Don't you wish they'd have had such a policy when you were young? Isn't this new policy gonna' make the United States the most well educated country in the World? Many of the kids out there are no doubt patting themselves on the back telling themselves how lucky they are that Bill Clinton is safely ensconced back in the White House for another term. Well, before everyone “wets themselves”, I think it would be well to take a closer look at this educational “bonanza” to see what it's REALLY gonna' mean for the future of our country.

Education falls into the same category as God and motherhood, there are no arguments against them that don't make the critic sound like “Attila the Hun”. More education for the younger generation is always highly touted by the educational community (teachers, school

boards, college professors etc.) and always hyped by the politicians thirsting to water themselves at the public trough... never forget, votes are where you find them! OK, OK... smart a\$\$ what could possibly be wrong with making sure all of our kids get at least a two year college education? In the words of Longfellow, "listen my children and you shall hear"...

I'm gonna' work backwards on this one... Let me ask you a question and I want an honest answer. Let's assume that you were asked to show up to the local Junior College Auditorium next Saturday Morning. When you arrived you were called up to the stage and handed a scrolled piece of parchment. Upon unrolling the document you found your name on a sheet of paper that said you were now a graduate of the "East Wolf-Dung Junior College" with an "AA Degree" in say, Sociology...? Great, right? But what if they gave one just like it to everyone in town (so that the entire population now has one)... worse yet, say you hadn't even attended classes but now find that you are anointed with a "gen-u-wine" degree! Would you be any smarter or better educated than you had been last week, or even yesterday? The answer is of course obvious to the most casual observer... certainly not! In other words, the simple act giving everyone a diploma doesn't add anything to our educational quotient as a country or increase the productivity of the individual. The lack of scarcity of such a "wall hanger" would essentially strip it of any meaningful significance.

"Great Culver, you're just starting your fifth paragraph and you've already missed the point and gotten off the subject!" Well now, have I indeed? I'm not so sure... Like the guy says, I've seen this movie before. You are no doubt assuming that this new policy is actually going to educate the younger education in the disciplines necessary to improve their lives and further the glorious destiny of our country. Unfortunately I sincerely doubt that this new policy will do much of anything short of accelerating our slide towards bankruptcy as a nation.

The administration's position on this issue seems to be that if we can make a college education available to everyone, we will allow those trapped in a lifestyle by poverty to make something of themselves. Thus (the argument follows) we will eliminate (or at least reduce) crime, make welfare unnecessary and offer an opportunity for all youngsters, much as it says on the U.S. Army Recruiting Posters "to be all they can be!" An admirable position on the surface of it, but unfortunately the premise is based on assumptions concerning human nature that are somewhat at odds with reality.

My position on the entire question is based upon the following premises... The first is a rather unfortunate truism that while all men (and women of course) are born equal under the law, they are certainly NOT born intellectually equal. As is Allah's plan (as of yet not revealed to the masses), some of us are simply smarter than others... Please understand, I don't mean smarter by virtue of education, but smarter by virtue of being able to absorb academic disciplines. Basic intelligence cannot be pounded into a head unable to grasp intellectual concepts. Putting it as delicately as I can muster, some folks are geniuses and some are dummies... Most of us lie somewhere in between. Attempts to educate a dummy are doomed to failure, no matter how many programs are funded and mandated by an administration – ANY administration! Until genetic research allows medical science to change the chemical and mental functions of the brain, we must learn to live with reality. There is a difference in the mental capacity of individuals. No matter how many degrees you give a dummy, he's still gonna' be a dummy. More on this later.

The next problem that rears its ugly head is politics, ably aided by the social engineers (if the term "engineer" can be applied to such endeavors). Politics and political correctness

being what they are, you can look for a repeat of the great "high school" scam of several decades past. What am I speaking of? Well, what happens is that it becomes politically incorrect not to promote a member of a minority, just as it is socially incorrect not to promote one who is incapable of reading his or her own diploma. When you combine the two you have the formula for a real disaster! After all, we can't send these poor children out on the streets without a diploma... THAT just wouldn't be right (or kind, or whatever, ad nauseum...). No matter that the poor kids now have a piece of paper (that he or she may or may not even be able to read) that says they have a high school education. What do they really have? Nothing actually, just a piece of paper... but the people of the United States can point with pride to the fact that the great preponderance of American Children have a high school diploma... Right, and my name's Mickey Mouse!!

First, you've got to define what a High School Education is exactly!? I've been told by people in the hierarchy of the Marine Corps (who should know better) that we are getting a much smarter enlistee in the Corps than when I was a youngster because they are now required to have a High School Diploma to be eligible to enlist (and thus presumably smarter, more efficient, and better able to perform his or her assigned tasks). I answer with a chuckle. You've **GOT** to be kidding! We had a hell of a Corps in the old days even if we were less well educated (ahem...) and we used to win our wars(1), but then what the do I know! This (the requirement for every enlistee to have a high school diploma) is one of the greatest lies ever perpetrated on the American Public. Now if we could administer a "competency test" to the holders of this "revered" piece of paper, then I might buy this rationale, but I know better... and so do you if you will admit it! If we were to test the supposed "High School Graduates" we would be impugning the abilities of those who assigned the diplomas(2), and in the case of the minorities, you can rest assured that the various bleeding hearts would land on us like a ton of bricks... Their attack always begins, "the test would be slanted to give the non-minorities an advantage"... I submit that answers are answers... some people can answer the questions, and some cannot... seems fair to me. You've GOT to have some criteria for excellence or a lack thereof... A meaningless piece of paper will not suffice!

While teaching high school several years back, I had occasion to visit another school and noticed a banner hanging over the entrance to the lunchroom. It read "*ALL of Our Students are Winners Here!*" High sounding words indeed, and of course, I understood what they were attempting to say! The real truth is that not all of the students ANYWHERE are winners. You are always going to have a certain percentage of little intellectual "douche-bags!" Unfortunate but true... What the little piece of paper called a High School Diploma used to signify, was a differentiation between those who had the intellect and "stick-to-it-ivness" necessary to qualify for the diploma and those who didn't. This has been superceded by a "politically correct document" that really says that the student attended High School just often enough and/or was of the correct ethnic origin to be awarded this piece of paper. The diploma must, of course, be awarded to avoid criticism by the appropriate ethnic watchdog group or bleeding heart liberal organization making sure everyone gets an equal education... They don't seem to care that not everyone is capable of absorbing such an education!

This discussion does not even address one of the great failings of our current system, the essential "flushing" of the old "rote memory" requirements that worked wonderfully well for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. The current educational dilemma owes its origin to the **original** "douche-bag"; a guy by the name of Dewey (the man who has the somewhat dubious honor to be the father of what has come to be called "Progressive Education"), but then that's worthy of a story all in itself... another "Musing", another time... No matter what

the current educators say, “readin’, ‘writin’ and ‘rithmetic’ taught to the tune of a hickory stick” certainly produced a wealth of educated and productive citizens. Generations of Americans educated under those conditions have taken us from the telegraph, electric light, and the airplane to outer space and beyond... the current crop of high school grads are mostly just plain “spaced”, but then, I’m just old fashioned, I suppose! One should never be confused with facts of course when political correctness is at stake!

What does all this High School Diploma stuff have to do with offering everyone a two-year college degree? Well, if you haven’t figured it out by now, you may well fall into the “dummy” category! The point of the comparison is to indicate that much as the High School Diploma has become meaningless, so too would the AA Degree become meaningless and for the same reason(s). No one would be allowed to flunk (a verb), or deny a diploma to anyone for the same politically correct rationale. Soon an AA Degree would become necessary to get a job as dogcatcher! Is this what we want our educational system to degenerate into? A degree such as this would not be cheap in terms of money even if it is/was meaningless. Someone has to hire the instructors and professors! Now we have the Federal Government involved not only in the first 12 grades but in the colleges also. Bad “ju-ju” my friends! Never let “Uncle Sugar” get his hooks into anything that costs money, because (please trust me) you and I will wind up paying for this stupendous “boondoggle”... yes friends, *you and I*, and the public dole is again proliferated! Allah save us from this governmental intrusion into our paychecks and our children!

Political correctness has already begun to have an affect on our educational system in a negative manner. In a recent interview with the “Registrar of Harvard University”(3), the registrar was asked what the emphasis on quotas for minorities was having on their institution. His paraphrased answer indicated that educational excellence was being given a back seat to ethnic diversity! Not only that but he indicated if given a choice, they (and he) would always lean towards ethnic diversity versus academics... It strikes me as a travesty that our educational institutions have become more concerned about what pressure groups have to say, than the purveying of academic truth! This is truly a sad state of affairs, and it would appear to be only the beginning.

If the “AA Degree” goes the way of the High School Diploma, and I’m convinced that it will, we will be faced with a new dilemma. We have always used the college degree, even the AA Degree as an indicator of drive and intelligence on the part of the individual possessing it. Normally it cost its possessor many extra hours of effort on his or her own, and was considered (for instance) as a large plus on promotion boards within the military and police establishments. Since it will become just one more piece of paper, we may well have to go back to promotion examinations for individuals to advance in rank. This may well be a plus in the long run, until of course the political correctness angle gets figured in again. ...And you wonder why I hate the "social engineers"...

Years ago people went to college to gain specialized knowledge to work in a specific field of endeavor. Initially at any rate most went to institutions of higher learning for such things as Medicine, Law, Religion, Education, and Engineering. Not everyone was cut out to be a doctor, an attorney, a minister, a teacher, or an engineer. While we do need some of these folks, we don’t need a preponderance of them! SOMEBODY has to do the day to day work! Not everyone is going to become a CEO, nor should they. Degrees in management, sociology and ethnic studies are well down the line in the needs of society! You’ll never hear this from the educators of course; no one wants to torpedo their own livelihood. Academic

credits are often given in major institutions for such essential subjects as “basket weaving” and ethnic appreciation studies... gag me with a spoon! There may be places for such courses, but in my opinion a degree in sociology does not require the same mental exertion necessary for a person to become a “rocket scientist.” ...Yet we (as a society) have come to regard a degree (regardless of the academic discipline) as a degree. We have the, “oh my, HE (or she) has a ‘doctorate’” attitude. My reply would be, “yeah, but a doctorate in WHAT?” Certainly a Doctor’s Degree in Ethnic Studies does not come anywhere close to a Doctorate in Physics or Chemistry in terms of effort or intelligence required!

Please understand, I am not trying to step on anyone’s toes here, I’m simply trying to point out that a piece of paper may indicate many levels of effort, intelligence and difficulty of acquisition! ...Nor do all disciplines necessarily have the same degree of usefulness to society! I also realize that an individual with a "doctorate in basket weaving" may well have the mental ability to obtain a doctorate in physics. It may just be that the person holding the degree in “basket weaving” simply has no interest in physics, but even so, all degrees are not necessarily the same! I personally have a much greater interest in history and political science (if politics can ever be said to be a “science) than I do in my own discipline (physics). My endeavors at the time however, required that I subordinate my personal desires to the realities of turning out useful work. Of course there was also the idiot that told me I was too stupid to get a degree in physics, and being one of the most perverse people on the face of the earth, I set out to prove him wrong! Boy did I ever prove HIM wrong, the rotten SOB! I cursed that clown for the better part of six and a half years (four of undergraduate and two and a half of graduate school)... the management guys got “duffer’s elbow” while I burned the midnight oil!

Let’s go one step further however, let’s assume that each individual having obtained one of the current questionable High School Diplomas does have both the desire and the intelligence to pursue an AA Degree to successful completion. Further, let’s also assume that this is a degree that has some modicum of usefulness, i.e., management, accounting, or whatever... My question is this. If EVERY high school graduate goes on to obtain an AA Degree, WHO is going to do the useful work in society? Is the plumbing industry going to require an AA Degree to "strike for" journeyman plumber? How about electricians? Will we now have folks with an Associate Degree in Electrical Engineering hooking up the wiring in our houses? How about an Associate Degree in Sanitary Engineering (i.e. garbage collecting), or Custodial Engineering (janitorial work). I wonder if there is a college solution on how to utilize the shovel to dig ditches or use a push broom? I am not downgrading janitors or sanitation workers. One good sanitation worker might well be worth a platoon of mediocre engineers... What I’m really leading up to is the following. How will these degrees help our High School Graduates make more money or work their way up the ladder of success if everyone has one? Someone is still gonna’ have to sweep and clean (if we don’t want to wind up posterior deep in trash). Who will wire houses, install plumbing and other such useful chores? There is only so much money (or for that matter so many white collar jobs) to go around (unless the FED prints more of those funny looking green notes, thus fueling inflation even further). Will these same people (with their new degrees) now have to take the same jobs that they would have before (at the same money) even though they are now "degreed individuals"? If this is in fact the case, what have we (or worse yet "they") gained? I personally would vote to have really good men (or ‘persons’) as plumbers, electricians, contractors and the like. Who wants their new house to fall down or burn because of faulty wiring?

No my friends, what we're looking at here is the worst kind of fraud. There are only so many jobs to go around with an excess of people to fill them... degree or not! This will simply be a very costly (to the taxpayer) program "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (to quote a little Shakespeare... see there, I'll bet you "liberal arts types" didn't think I had it in me, huh? Heh, heh, heh...).

In closing, I wish to note that some of the most intelligent, successful and productive folks I have ever known, have never been anywhere close to a so-called "institution of higher learning". It is my contention that true success has little nothing to do with being given an academic break. Success is a matter of will and desire, not a meaningless piece of paper.

ROC

End notes to "The Curse of an Educated Country"

(1) It can be argued with some success that "not winning" our last few wars was more a matter of political expediency on the part of our politicians, not intelligence or a lack thereof on the part of the troops. Here I'm just "jibing" the hierarchy who pass themselves off as being more intelligent and "all wise" by virtue of their assigned duties!

(2) The much revered and usually overrated educators.

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(3) This interview was in a recent Reader's Digest article, but the important thing here as I see it is that this attitude has invaded some of our most revered and prestigious Educational Institutions. What will a degree from Harvard be worth a few years hence?