

## The Educational Jackboot

The one thing they will not recommend, these high-paid gurus on our Public Education Commissions, is what true education requires if it is to be called education. They will mention the "need" for more teacher training, early education, social services, a new-fangled community council, or "input" to the educational sausage-grinder from those breeding-machines called parents.

They will produce multi-million dollar studies directed by rusty old lefties who have spent a lot of their careers engineering budget-busting tax grabs and even extortions and transfer-payment briberies of the kind that produced Canada's "free" health care.

O.K. We get it now. It's the sound of the Great Canadian Syllogism: Everything must be done by government. Everything is a failure. Therefore everything will be fixed by government. Bang: hard head of bull hits brick wall.

The public education problem is what mathematicians call a "strange loop." Example: the sentence, "It is true that everything I say is false," is a self-referential, self-contradictory loop. We get trapped by its weird logic. By the same token, highly-paid government educators are hopelessly trapped in the strange loop called education. They refuse to say the only thing that will disentangle:

That true education is simply about the development of wisdom, character, and leadership, and no system of government education can reliably produce these things. Some kids are headed for excellence, regardless. They will manage to escape the damping effects of the system. But for the rest - most - public education can be expected reliably to aim for and produce the opposite.

The reason is because to learn well and be wise, of high character, a leader, means not to be like everyone else. It means to be different, it means (here comes the "B" word, and the sound of many egalitarians choking) - to be better. To be what we all want our children to be. And that's undemocratic, in the modern sense.

Half a century ago, the very wise and learned Harvard Professor Irving Babbitt put this dilemma thus:

"The democratic contention that everybody should have a chance is excellent, provided it means that everybody is to have a chance to measure up to high standards. If the democratic extension of opportunity is, on the other hand, made a pretext for lowering standards, democracy is, insofar, incompatible with civilization."

Now here's the rub. In the early days, before the government education machine really got gyrating, the system worked modestly well. Public educators then, as now, saw it as their task in life to shape in a common mould the little souls entrusted to them. To put old heads on young bodies. Public servants took oaths swearing to uphold religious and community-parental values. All agreed to teach the things for which 115,000 Canadians have died in Canada's wars (but which are mostly off the public education

table today): liberty, piety, humility, family, free enterprise, self-reliance, high character, and a deep repugnance for government interference with these things.

It was always understood that very few would ever be true leaders - mass leadership being a contradiction in terms. Educators were aware, as Babbitt again put it, "that true liberty requires a hierarchy and a subordination," most of all, to some ethical centre, some set of values with reference to which, both individuals and governments must control themselves. Self control was the highest aim both of private character, and public institutions. Both America's and Canada's constitutional democracies were designed with this control factor - checks and balances - deeply in mind.

But modern egalitarian educators are hooked on the opposite, Jeffersonian assumption (he inhaled it from the revolutionist Rousseau) that all humans are naturally good. This, Babbitt described as "the most centrifugal doctrine the world has ever known - the doctrine that encourages men to put their rights before their duties."

Modern education is therefore no longer rooted in an ethics, the conviction that for unformed children there is a constellation of ennobling values and standards to be learned at some pain from exemplary teachers, but in a flawed psychology. In the idea not of self-control, but self-release (to let that goodie-goodness out). It is about self-esteem (rather than earning esteem from others for one's estimable behaviour). About creating one's very own value system (a common standard of morality is said to be oppressive, or "judgemental"). About deserving equality of social and economic outcomes (regardless of personal talent or effort, because the idea of excellence, leadership, and - oh dear - competition...is really only "socioeconomic class bias"). It is about rights without duties.

The political result in government schools is that the original notion of democracy, the first system in history intended to get the masses free - not from a common ethics, but from the political jackboot - to permit the fullest, freest development of inherently unequal human talents, has been perverted into a stifling egalitarian ideal served up as educational pablum to stop up the mouths of our children. The jackboot is in the classroom, and the door is closed.