

Education Matters

Charlotte Iserbyt interviewed by John F. McManus

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Charlotte Iserbyt, an education watchdog since before her days in Reagan's Education Department, argues that the academic meltdown in public education is intentional.

In addition to her work with the U.S. Department of Education during 1981-1982, Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt served overseas with the American Red Cross during the Korean War and with the U.S. Department of State from 1956-63. She is a free-lance writer specializing in education and has seen her work appear in numerous publications including *THE NEW AMERICAN*. Her new book, **The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America**, contains a wealth of documentation indicating that the moral and academic crises in public education are not accidental but by design.

Q. How did you get started as an education watchdog?

A. My family returned to the U.S. from the West Indies in 1970. After living outside the country for 15 years, we settled in Maine. When one of my two sons brought home an open-ended questionnaire seeking information about his and our family's values, I knew something was wrong. Then I saw incredible things going on in the schools: Kids rolling around on the floor; self-concept training; all this fuzzy, mushy, touchy-feely type instruction. I also discovered that our school district was led by a Harvard-trained superintendent who later admitted to me that he considered himself a change agent.

I began complaining to the principal and the school board about several programs, even about the curriculum itself. After two failed attempts to get elected to the school board, I won a position in 1976. I have to laugh now because they counted the votes three times in hopes of finding that I hadn't triumphed! Soon, a retired public school teacher came to me and asked me to attend an in-service training conference entitled "Innovations in Education." An ally, she even paid for me to attend. That conference was a real eye-opener, and I have been on my "white horse" ever since.

Q. What did you discover at this conference?

A. All attendees were given a copy of *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovations in Education*, the bible for bringing about change in our schools and communities, written by Ronald Havelock of the University of Michigan. We were even taught how to identify resisters and, because this is precisely what I was, they were unknowingly teaching me how to identify myself. Part of the instruction dwelled on techniques to influence community leaders — businessmen, service club members, doctors, and others — to gain

their support for the introduction of absolutely disastrous programs. This manual, funded by the U.S. Office of Education (the forerunner of the Department of Education), gave suggestions about how to "sneak in" controversial and "innovative" methods of teaching in such areas as health education, drug and alcohol education, sex education, suicide education, death education, critical thinking education, and other types of "education."

At this point, it occurred to me that no one ever termed math courses "math education" or reading courses "reading education." From that day forward, I have been suspicious of any school course that has the word "education" attached to it. But that's a small point. I'd lived in socialist countries and traveled in Communist countries, and my husband is a European who lived under both the Nazis and the Communists. And here I was being taught at federal expense to identify "resisters" who were opposed to these socialistic dumbing-down proposals.

Q. Did you have any success as a member of the local school board?

A. My efforts succeeded in banning values clarification, putting an end to subjecting the children to survival games, and introducing a mere five minutes of grammar instruction per day, which was all they would allow for such a vitally important subject. Nevertheless, two weeks after I left, everything I'd worked to accomplish was overturned.

Q. How were you able to get yourself into an important position in the U.S. Department of Education?

A. Through the efforts of a good friend in the White House, I was appointed Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). OERI was, and still is, the office out of which the controversial national and international educational restructuring has been funded. I worked in this position for more than a year and was summarily relieved of my duties because I leaked information to the press about an important technology grant which would control the content of curriculum at the local level. My superiors didn't want details about what they were implementing to become known.

Q. What else were you asked to do while working for OERI?

A. Hundreds of these mind-altering, values-destroying programs were funded out of my office. ED sent a huge catalog entitled "Programs that Work" to every facilitator center in the United States. These programs were then introduced into classrooms everywhere. Of course, what ED urged stood in stark contrast to the desires of

virtually all local school boards. I had arrived at the funding and philosophical source of what I had objected to as a local school board member: the death-mentality survival games; "no right/no wrong" values clarification; behavior modification; globalist education; non-absolutist critical thinking. It didn't take me long to realize that I wasn't going to be able to stop any of it.

Q. Is this why you compiled your new book, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*?

A. Yes, I call it a "resister's book." It's a compilation of information from a variety of sources going back over many years. It contains statements and position papers issued by individuals and organizations that are deliberately and maliciously working to achieve behavioral changes in students, which will ultimately alter society in general. These ideas and individuals have virtually taken over the schools of America, which are certainly not providing what is commonly understood as education. They're dispensing subversive indoctrination.

Q. Can you be more specific in summarizing their overall goal?

A. They seek to destroy absolute values and cast aside the importance of right and wrong that form the basis of any stable and free society. In other words, they want to undo what our nation's founders established. To achieve this goal, they seek to train our children precisely as animals are trained, through a Pavlovian conditioning process innocuously called outcome-based (performance-based) education. Those who are "trained" instead of being educated receive tangible rewards for their "correct" answers. A distinct result of such programming is fear to take a principled or controversial stand, or at least a disinclination to do so because there is no reward forthcoming. This is how animals are trained. But human beings are possessed of free will, have intellects, souls, and consciences, and are not mere brute animals. For years, the schools have been giving children this non-absolutist trash, and it has ultimately resulted in such horrors as the Columbine massacre.

Q. When you went to Washington at the beginning of the Reagan administration, weren't you expecting that the Department of Education would be abolished?

A. That's what we wanted, and that's what had been promised. Recall that throughout 1980 candidate Reagan had stated his intention to do away with both the Department of Education and the Department of Energy. But, once elected, he appointed Terrell H. Bell as Secretary of Education. Bell had been the Commissioner of Education in the old Office of Education during the Ford Administration. He had actually lobbied Congress for the creation of the new cabinet-level ED during the Carter years. Then, in 1982, a courageous colleague, National Institute of Education (NIE) director Edward Curran, recommended that the NIE, the research and development arm of ED from which most of the destructive programs emanated, be abolished. Bell immediately fired him. Any expectation anyone still had that ED would be abolished disappeared completely.

Q. How did you acquire all of the materials you cite in your book?

A. During the period I served at ED, I saved or copied many of the documents crossing my desk. Eventually expecting to be dismissed, I started storing them in the home of a friend. When the hammer dropped on me, I already had what I needed. Plus, I have acquired many friends throughout the nation who have supplied me with the product of their own valuable research.

Q. After being fired and returning to Maine, what did you do?

A. First, I went on a nationwide speaking tour. I believe I spoke in 40 different states explaining the federal education agenda. I knew that parents were being told that they're "taking things out of context" when they objected to something going on in the schools. They needed direct quotes from official documents drafted by the subverters themselves. They needed to know that there is a deliberate plan to dumb down their kids and to destroy the nation's values — a two-pronged plan to destroy this country. My book provides the ammunition necessary to help the growing number of citizens who wish to expose these planners and keep America free. I don't want any American ever again to be confronted with "That's your opinion" when they object to the outrages to which their children are being subjected. If they have my book, they can document their "opinions."

Q. Give me a specific example from your book of the kind of information needed by parents in order to show deliberate design in the effort to remake American education.

A. For a full week during the summer of 1974, members of the Chief State School Officers Institute representing the 50 state educational departments met at a plush resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They were given recommendations by an array of top leaders of the U.S. Office of Education and other invited specialists such as Alvin Toffler and Willard Wirtz. The report coming from this conference, published and funded by the federal Office of Education, states that "technology has created a new relationship between man, his education, his society" — a relationship in which "the home, the church" cannot meet current challenges. Conclusions reached at this conference included the following: "Individuals need more ≤ participation in group decision making"; "problems of the future must be solved based on values and priorities set by groups"; "the states should ≤ provide alternatives to earning the high school diploma"; "Educational credit should be available to students for activities related to their studies in work, volunteer action, community participation, school volunteer programs and other programs contributing to the betterment of the home, school, community and society." These are precisely the type programs that are now enshrined in virtually all of the nation's schools.

Q. Did the United Nations set out from its creation to influence the U. S. educational system?

A. In 1946, within a year of the founding of the UN, a Canadian psychiatrist named Brock Chisholm spoke before the organization's World Health Organization (WHO) on "The Psychiatry of Enduring Peace and Social Progress." In his talk, he actually recommended "the reinterpretation and eventual eradication of the concept of right and wrong." By 1948, when Chisholm was serving as the executive director of WHO's Interim Commission, the journal *International Conciliation* published his 1946 speech. It contained a

glowing preface by his good friend, Communist spy Alger Hiss. Chisholm wanted all teachers retrained in the psychiatric methods. It is from this type of thinking, combined with the pervasive influence of UNESCO, that behavioral science and values clarification programs were created and introduced into America's schools.

Q. What exactly has UNESCO's role been in the restructuring of American education?

A. As far back as 1947, under the Truman administration, the President's Commission on Higher Education issued a report entitled "Higher Education for American Democracy," which pronounced that education "must be conditioned essentially by policies established by the State Department and by ministries of foreign affairs in other countries." More specifically, it then stated: "Higher education must play a very important part in carrying out in this country the program developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.... The United States Office of Education must be prepared to work effectively with the State Department and with the UNESCO." What began in 1947 has continued and grown ever since.

Q. Obviously, the takeover of American education began a long time ago.

A. Yes, and I have numerous citations in my book showing the planned subversion from as far back as the late 1800s and the early part of the 20th century. For instance, in 1934, the American Historical Association published *Conclusions and Recommendations for the Social Studies*, a book funded with a large grant from the Carnegie Corporation. British socialist Harold Laski enthusiastically endorsed this report as follows: "At bottom, and stripped of its carefully neutral phrases, the report is an educational program for a Socialist America." And he was absolutely correct because this book calls for changing the United States from free enterprise to a planned economy.

Q. Does your book supply any information about the 1985 United States-Soviet Union Educational Agreements?

A. Indeed it does and I expect that some of what I have included will surprise those who place "conservatism" and conservative heroes above adherence to the U.S. Constitution. These incredible agreements opening the door to the introduction of Soviet-style education into America's schools were signed by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Then, Edwin Feulner, who today leads the Washington-based Heritage Foundation but who was then the presidentially appointed chairman of the Commission on Public Diplomacy of the U.S. Information Agency, urged speedy acceptance of recommendations contained in the agreements.

Q. You have a very negative opinion of the widely publicized and increasingly popular voucher system. Why don't you like vouchers?

A. Very simply, vouchers are a mechanism to gain control over private schooling, and eventually even over homeschooling. If vouchers are used by parents to pay for education outside the government schools, then the issuer of the voucher (the government) will step in to certify that the alternative form of education meets government standards.

In my book, I cite the work of a savvy Texan named Billy Lyon who showed that many educators and politicians use the term "choice" as a substitute for "vouchers." What they really seek is control. For instance, Lyon pointed to Albert Shanker, the late American Federation of Teachers leader, who stated: "It may be that we can't get the big changes we need without choice." President George Bush announced, "Choice is the one reform that drives all others." And former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos expressed his desire "to use the power of choice to help restructure American education." When these people employ the word "choice," they mean "vouchers," the back-door approach to gaining control.

Q. What is your overall answer to the problems you have uncovered?

A. Prior to 1930, the United States had the finest education system in the world. We should be very proud of that fact. And we could easily return to that preeminent position, but doing so has to be based on a realization that federal money not only isn't the answer, it's the root cause of declining test scores and all the other problems we have discussed. Federal money has been used for behavior modification, not for academics. It has been used for values clarification, not to strengthen biblically-based morality. And it is being used to "dumb down" America's children, not educate them as their grandparents were educated.

The first step that must be taken is to abolish the Department of Education. Once that's accomplished, we will see the collapse of all the state education departments that get as much as 70 percent of their operating budget from ED.

Charlotte Iserbyt is the consummate whistleblower! Iserbyt served as Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, during the first Reagan Administration, where she first blew the whistle on a major technology initiative which would control curriculum in America's classrooms. Iserbyt is a former school board director in Camden, Maine and was co-founder and research analyst of Guardians of Education for Maine (GEM) from 1978 to 2000. She has also served in the American Red Cross on Guam and Japan during the Korean War, and in the United States Foreign Service in Belgium and in the Republic of South Africa.

Iserbyt is a speaker and writer, best known for her 1985 booklet *Back to Basics Reform or OBE: Skinnerian International Curriculum* and her 1989 pamphlet *Soviets in the Classroom: America's Latest Education Fad* which covered the details of the U.S.-Soviet and Carnegie-Soviet Education Agreements which remain in effect to this day. She is a freelance writer and has had articles published in *Human Events*, *The Washington Times*, *The Bangor Daily News*, and included in the record of Congressional hearings.

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To order Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt's *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America...A Chronological Paper Trail* (700 pages pb, \$47.00 including S/H), go to www.deliberatedumbingdown.com
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