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Socialism Lives in Public Schools

by Thomas L. Johnson

A piece entitled “Education is not just another product in the market economy,” by Bob Chase, president of the National Education Association, is one of the clearest expressions of socialism and collectivism that one could ever encounter. His article also contains both errors and omissions.

He begins with a significant error. Chase claims that in the 19th century when people found that private firefighting companies could not be afforded by everyone, the solution to the problem was to establish public fire departments. He is wrong.

What actually arose to meet this need were volunteer fire departments that citizens chose to staff and support without any government involvement. It was only many years later, with the continuing spread of socialist ideas, that governments began, with the approval of most citizens, to subsidize “volunteer” departments or set up government-owned and government-operated fire departments.

Chase’s discussion of fire departments results from his ridiculous attempt to compare them to schools. He insists that “ignorance is very much like fire. Individual parents can invest diligently in their children’s education, but end up getting burned because some other parent could not do the same.”

And just how is anyone going to get “burned” if other people do not get what they need, no matter what these needs are?

Bob Chase is an ardent supporter of the public-school system and insists that “quality schools must be a public-sector enterprise.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, authors of the *Communist Manifesto*, would agree with him. In their famous manifesto they list 10 conditions necessary to

have a valid socialist society. The last one reads: “Free education for all children in public schools.”

Other famous supporters of public education include Hitler, Stalin, Castro, Mao Zedong, Mussolini, and every other 20th-century dictator, as well as virtually every politician throughout the entire world. It is thus truly amazing that private education has not been almost completely eliminated by now.

But then, it actually has.

Most so-called private schools and universities that exist today are anything but private, since they receive, either directly or indirectly, government money and other assistance. (Hillsdale College is one notable exception.) They also must often comply with government educational requirements to receive this money.

Consider this example: Recently, America’s Roman Catholic bishops voted 223-31 to impose tighter controls over the nation’s 234 Catholic colleges and universities. Now college leaders are afraid that this action might threaten government funding of these religious institutions.

Chase writes, “If children are functionally illiterate, the odds are stacked heavily against them in today’s economy.” He is clearly implying that without public schools, functional illiteracy would be widespread.

What he fails to mention is the fact that the public schools have been giving high-school diplomas to vast numbers of functional illiterates for decades, thereby being the main institutions responsible for this inexcusable phenomenon which seriously damages the lives of millions of Americans as well as our economy. (At least 90 percent of K-12 student attend public schools.)

Chase asserts, “We live in an age that glorifies the market.” Boy, you sure could have fooled me. If what he says is true, then why do we find that the government is extensively involved in virtually every human activity, including providing pornography to the general public by means of the “romance” novels that are available at public libraries?

Also, the children living in America are not “our” children as Bob Chase and others insist. This collectivist concept clearly implies that everybody in the United States comprises just one big family (a collective), and that we must all be held responsible, by force of government, for everybody else, including children. (Bill Clinton, a collectivist to the core of his being, often refers to all of us as “the American family.”)

Chase concludes that “the market cannot handle the education of 46.6 million children in 87,125 K-12 public schools.” How right he is, since a genuine free-market operation would have nothing to do with government schools and government funding. The operating of public schools by such companies as Edison Schools Inc., using government money to teach children who are forced by compulsory-attendance laws to attend school, is definitely not an example of the free market.

Chase at least admits that the public schools are ailing, but he calls for the spending of even more “public dollars to support proven, wholesale reforms.” Just how many times have we heard this plea?

The best possible reform that could ever be effected is eliminating the completely politicized socialist government schools and replacing them with private, profit-making, and charitable education businesses that offer courses of instruction only to willing customers. We need to introduce education to the free market.

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