

percent of her students still manage to fail her class.

To gauge the impact of “bilingualism,” consider the following, complete essay written in a “college-level” class at Bronx Community College by a Dominican-born, New York high school graduate:

I am going to college, to learn a profession for my future, My major is computer Science. In this moments is difficult, to someone get a good job. It is Important. you go to school to learn, because you finish major. After that do you get a good job, in Important company. They pay a lot money, do you could a position in the society and every do you Want. for that I am going to college.

Sue Dicker, Hostos’ director of ESL placement, argues that immersion wrongly gives pride of place to the “majority” language, to the detriment of “minority” (read: foreign) languages. Incredibly, Dicker claims that immersion programs seek to *eliminate* students’ first language. Imagine the response in the Dominican Republic, if English-language advocates demanded an end to the dominance of Spanish! Considering that polyglot countries (e.g., India) have survived only by forcing all groups to learn a common language, the multicultural defense of minority sovereignty is a case of backdoor colonialism.

In the fall of 1995, Spanish-born Hostos professor Rose Aruffat distributed in the English Department a portion of an essay that attacked conservatives who rejected “any suggestion to expand and reorient bilingual education programs to promote bilingual students’ literacy skills in their primary language” and who opposed the “expansion of bilingual education [that] would transfer status and power (as well as jobs) to minority groups who have the linguistic and cultural abilities to work in such programs.” Note the second-class role the writer envisions for English. For separatists, “bilinguals” is a code word for “Hispanics.” Thus, a candidate illiterate in English *and* Spanish, but who has a Hispanic surname, would have a better chance of landing a “bilingual” job than a non-Hispanic white fluent in both languages.

Despite millions of successful cases, CUNY’s ESL Council insists “there is no

evidence” that immersion works. The Council’s crusade against CUNY’s vastly cheaper and more effective language Immersion Institutes, which opened in October 1995, anticipates the loss of untold millions of dollars in patronage jobs and student aid checks, and the loss of “hate control.”

Why should American taxpayers support students lacking any intellectual promise, much less immigrants (or illegal aliens) learning a foreign language? How could students have received American high school diplomas, whether in Puerto Rico or New York, without knowing English? Why are *colleges* being used to teach ESL?

No other country recognizes a right to university matriculation (or to financial aid, for that matter) for illiterate immigrants. When we spoke last July, CUNY spokeswoman Rita Rodin was extremely defensive: “You can’t compare [CUNY] with other systems. There are many different factors. You have to allow for the different starting points.” Such caveats could invalidate all grading and testing, and justify unlimited financial aid.

Hostos was the scene of a near riot on February 26, as student and staff goons loyal to President Santiago menaced faculty supporters of Dean of Faculty Carlos Acevedo, whom Santiago had suddenly fired. Acevedo’s supporters claimed that Santiago had scapegoated him for the failures of Hostos’ bilingual pedagogy, which both sides supported. Another bilingualism supporter, Bronx County Democratic chairman Roberto “Bobby” Ramirez, anticipates “the day, when a New York city mayor speaks Spanish.” Resenting Ramirez’ Bronx machine, a naturalized Dominican student flying through paralegal studies at Bronx Community College intends to sign up as Republicans as many of his conservative Catholic and Pentecostal fellow countrymen as possible.

There was a time when a large chunk of CUNY’s professors were City College alumni. Now, but a few relics remain. A Puerto Rican City College graduate recalls with a wan smile the aristocratic Puerto Rican professor she admired during the 1950’s. “She said that after the revolution, she would be the minister of education. . . . Thirty years ago, I supported the civil rights movement. Now, I regret it.”

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## Letter From England

by Jeremy Black

### Why Johnny Bull Can’t Read



Education has long been a political hot potato in Britain. For decades it has been the central issue that links national politics to the politics of the localities, the politics of class, and the politics of party. This might appear surprising in a society where over 90 percent of schoolchildren are educated in government schools, where the government controls the parameters within which private schools operate, and where there is only one private university.

In short, the state has won the battle for control of British education. Yet, this triumph has been a hollow one; the state has taken over educational provision only to find the resulting system become a source of acute dissatisfaction.

The nationalization of education was a long-term process that reflected the extension of the welfare state. The 1870 Education Act divided the country into school districts and required a certain level of education, introducing the school district in areas where existing parish provision was inadequate. The Education Act of 1918 designated 14 as the minimum age for quitting school. The Education Act of 1944 obliged every local authority to prepare a development plan for educational provision, and the Ministry of Education imposed new minimum standards in matters such as school accommodation and size.

This state control of education also put an end to the streamlining of children by ability into different schools after examination at the age of 11 (12 in Scotland). Grammar and secondary schools were replaced by comprehensive schools, a policy actively supported by the Labour government (1964-70) and further, although with less zeal, implemented under its Conservative successor (1970-74). Motivated in part by class hatred or guilt, Labour politicians regarded grammar schools as elitist and favored a more egalitarian approach. Another major shift was away from single-sex and toward mixed schooling. This was a

change that took place without consultation, and that reflected the views of politically partisan “experts.”

In addition, major expansions in higher education since the 1960's have dramatically increased the number of students and thus the graduate population as well. The number of college students from lower-income families rose considerably; nine new universities were founded between 1958-66; and the number and importance of polytechnics increased. The Robbins Report of 1963 recommended higher education for *all* qualified candidates, and the government responded. Students were also given free tuition, and subsidies in proportion to their parental income. The percentage of 18-year-olds entering a university in the United Kingdom rose from 4.6 in 1961 to over 30 by the mid-1990's, by which time the polytechnics and other colleges had become universities.

These shifts in education reflected the socialization of British society and a cult of egalitarianism that is hostile to past practices and antagonistic to anything termed elitist. Educational reform became the left-wing, statist panacea of the 1960's and 70's, and so when Tony Blair (like Bill Clinton) makes education the ideological centerpiece of his government today, he is using widespread popular concern with educational standards to win support for more national planning. Part of the skill of both Clinton and Blair has been to transform the politics of the left from the redistribution of wealth, which is increasingly unpopular in societies made prosperous by capitalism, to policies that can tap middle-class aspirations. In essence, Blair and Clinton seek to unite the middle class and the state, and to convert both to the objectives of a transformed left. This is a far more insidious threat to conservatism than the politics of working-class identity and the traditional focus of the left. But, again, part of the skill of Blair and Clinton is that they have retained most of the old constituency.

The sentiments expressed by advocates of educational change in Britain, like their American counterparts, were and are often ugly, divisive, and self-righteous, but, more to the point, their policies do not work, either educationally or socially. Despite decades of expenditure, many British pupils continue to leave school without a secure grasp of words or numbers, which is especially

troubling in an economy with few opportunities for functional illiterates, whether in industry, farming, forestry, mining, or the armed forces. The level of educational attainment by the remainder of the school population leaves much to be desired. It is particularly ironic that language skills declined as Britain became steadily more absorbed into the European Union. In 1991-92, British schools taught an average of only 0.9 languages per pupil, which ranks at the bottom of the European Union (only Portugal is worse in this regard). French is the most common foreign language studied in Britain's secondary schools, but it was studied by only 59 percent of pupils in 1991-92; German was next at 20 percent. The comparable percentages in Ireland were 69 and 24. Indeed, according to many indicators, British schoolchildren do worse than their Continental counterparts.

State education also failed to fulfill the hopes of its supporters in the social sphere. Rising levels of crime and violence among schoolchildren, often *at* school, caused a public storm in 1996 when a London headmaster was stabbed to death after intervening in a brawl at the school gates. Teachers have refused to teach the increasing number of violent children—more evidence of the failure of the state system to act as a civilizing influence. In May 1997, a bright Scottish pupil committed suicide after being taunted for being smart by her dumbed-down classmates.

Nor has national planning made Britain a more egalitarian society, despite decades of national control of education. Instead, social class is now in part defined by room size, and in 1996 Tony Blair's choice of a particular state school for one of his kids led to controversy. Proximity to desirable state schools features prominently in housing sales, increasing property prices and altering the social and economic topographies of cities; attempts by educational authorities to alter school districts evoke fierce protests. Far from *abolishing* social divisions, then, government intervention in education has actually exacerbated them. “Leveling” has been seen as “leveling down,” something to be avoided even by those who do not seek social mobility.

Furthermore, hostility to what is perceived as elitism has been used to serve tendentious causes. For example, the current Labour government—Blair and

his allies, many of them unelected “political advisors” who interfere in the Civil Service and further politicize government—with an overwhelming parliamentary majority that claims the mandate of popular support on the basis of less than half of the votes cast, uses anti-elitism as a means to typecast its opponents and oppose their viewpoints. Take Labour's criticism of the hereditary peerage; although the remnants of the traditional *ancien régime* elite, hereditary peerage received fresh transfusions of merit thereafter, in the shape of new hereditary peers. In May 1997, shortly after its election, the Blair government began criticizing the socio-educational character of another autonomous and potentially hostile group, the judiciary. It was presented as overwhelmingly composed of men and the products of private schools, which to Labour signifies a necessarily anachronistic and reactionary force; indeed, all of the 26 judges appointed in 1993-94 had been to private schools and only three were women. This pattern is also found in the senators of the College of Justice in Scotland.

Tony Blair, himself, is the product of a distinguished private school and of Oxford University, both institutions being highly selective. But hypocrisy has been a central aspect of Labour's triumph, and characteristic of Blair. Blair's self-righteousness, combined with these attacks on other socio-educational groups, gives *carte blanche* to the new Labour elite. Their background is different from traditional Labour leaders, who emphasize trade and unionism. Instead, this is a leadership of affluence and social mobility, not socialism. The language of equality serves to foster opportunity for the few, not the many: the traditional left-wing criticism of conservatives can now be directed against the leadership of the left.

The left of the 1990's seeks not the nationalization of the productive economy but a takeover of the institutional fabric and administrative structures of the country. To achieve these goals it uses education as a weapon, to condemn potential opponents and to create a world that matches its ideology and interests. Inevitably in an over-centralized state, the rest of the population has to pay for this agenda.

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## EDUCATION

## The Forced Funding of Student Radicalism

by *Scott Southworth*

I happen to be a conservative, a Christian, and white. I am also in the military, and I disapprove of homosexuality. At the University of Wisconsin, there is little tolerance for this combination of characteristics. As a student there, I served as the symbol of all that's wrong with the world. My checkbook showed just the opposite, however: I supported the International Socialist Organization, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Campus Center, the abortion advocacy of the Women's Center, and the radical environmentalism of the UW-Greens (offspring of Ralph Nader's Green Party). With my money, the left endured with a virulence well known at most public universities.

To any outsider—especially anyone who knows my political and ideological beliefs—my support appears ridiculous. It was. However, it was not due to some gut-level feeling of “political correctness” or “multiculturalism” on my part. This support was coerced. The price for noncompliance? No grades; no graduation.

During my four years of undergraduate study and one semester of law school at the university, I had again and again expressed my outrage at the university policy of utilizing mandatory student fees to fund the political and ideological advocacy of private student groups. Finally, another law student, and one of my best friends, Keith Bannach, told me about a Christian legal foundation named the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF). He encouraged me to contact them about filing a lawsuit, and I finally did so in February 1995. I learned from Scott Phillips, the executive director of the ADF, that his organization did not

represent people but rather funded worthy cases approved by a board of directors after the attorney on the case sent in an application for funding. However, he gave me the name of a Christian attorney from Fairfax, Virginia, who had successfully applied for funding in the past. His name was Jordan Lorence.

I called Jordan immediately, and he agreed to take the case. The Alliance Defense Fund agreed soon thereafter to full funding. It was my job, as a quasi-expert on the mechanism for funding these groups, to figure out a way to explain the university's system to him. I had helped shut down a previous student government during my last year as an undergraduate, and had fought the implementation of the new, similarly structured student government that had formed under the helping hand of the university administration.

The University of Wisconsin operates under two large financial pools of money: tuition and student fees. Tuition pays for the professors' salaries, most university buildings, the maintenance of the lawns, the infrastructure, etc. Student fees fund a variety of services, and are divided into two small but separate pools of money: allocable and nonallocable. The nonallocable fees fund the Health Services, the recreational facilities, and the student unions. Like tuition, students have no control over the amount or recipient of these funds. The pool of allocable fees—totaling nearly \$500,000—is reserved for the student “government,” which can spend as it wishes, pending approval by university officials.

Both student governments that existed during my study at the university served their leftist clients well by funneling cash to many radical groups. To mask their cash cow, however, they also passed a few dollars on to nonpolitical or ideological activities (e.g., a bus service on campus). Additionally, the student government and the administration employed two well-known tactics to avoid any questions from would-be dissenters: secrecy and extensive bureaucracy. When a student (or parent) received the “Fee/Tuition” bill, no explanation followed as to what “fee” meant. No delinquent existed on the bill to warn stu-

dents and parents that their money funded radical agendas. In fact, if students wanted to find out where the “fees” went, they would have to query the administration, which sends out a nondescript list of all the allocable and nonallocable funds which make up student “fees.” It does not, however, alert anyone to many of the actual activities funded by these thousands of dollars.

If a student wished to see a breakdown of the individual allocable funds, he or she would have to contact the office of the student government. This office would then provide information that explains that student groups receive funding from two different allocable funds, distributed either by a committee of the student government or directly from the government itself, and that student groups could also receive funding via a student referendum. Each funding mechanism, of course, had its own application procedures and rules, etc., etc. Additionally, the Chancellor and Board of Regents would have to stamp their approval on all funding, and student groups receiving funds could only operate under certain guidelines. Needless to say, the system brilliantly confused or frustrated most detractors from proceeding past the inquiry stage. Since the administration abounds with leftists who agree wholeheartedly with the radical agenda of the student government, no whistleblowing had occurred to stop the practice.

To explain all of this to my attorney, I prepared what I affectionately term the “initial binder.” After studying this for some time, he agreed that the university's policy was an unconstitutional burden on students studying at the UW, but felt that we should offer the Board of Regents a way out without a lawsuit. He then wrote a courteous letter to the president of the board in November 1995, explaining the law and the policy. We never received a reply.

By early 1996, it became clear that a lawsuit was imminent. Amy Shoepke, a first-year law student and former UW undergraduate, joined in the process of developing the lawsuit, as did Keith Bannach. With our attorney, we embarked on evidence gathering. We collected