

Schools Teach Children To Be Mindless Consumers

Most of the problems your country suffers result from the fact that schools teach what corporations need, not what people need. Find author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

One of my greatest pleasures in writing has come from the thought that perhaps my work might annoy someone of comfortably pretentious position. Then comes the saddening realization that such people rarely read.
- John Kenneth Galbraith, Canadian-born American economist (1908-2006)

Alas, Mr. Galbraith's statement bore more truth than even he may have realized.

First of all, a Canadian study a few years ago for *McLeans* magazine showed that only six percent of Canadian adults read more than three books per year. Considering that many people read books related to their work--indeed, must read them, such as medical doctors and other professionals, to stay up with advances in their respective fields--the number of people who read for pleasure, including those who read nonfiction simply to learn more, must be tragically small.

Although I have not seen similar studies relating to citizens of the USA or other western countries, I have no reason to believe that their reading rates would differ from those of Canadians.

Oh, we read, most of us. We read junk mail delivered to our homes, prodigious quantities of emails that serve us no good, internal memoes that usually mean nothing to us in our workplace and news in newspapers, magazines or on the internet. Those news sources that we choose ourselves tend to be biased, as all news sources are. The news sources we choose tend to all be biased in the same directions, preventing us from getting confused by a wide variety of opinions.

Thus we come to believe that our news sources present a fair and reasonable assessment of the news of the day. If our chosen news sources don't cover a story, it can't be important. Or we simply chose to believe that all other events are of lesser importance such that they don't deserve to breach our personal intellectual radars.

Thereby we funnel ourselves into comfortable grooves where we believe that most other people in the world think like ourselves. It may not be true, but we believe it's true, through practice and habit. Thus we come to take comfortably pretentious positions, as Galbraith noted.

When something that someone says or writes violates the sanctity of our cozy corner of thought, we think that person or organization must be on the fringe, likely dangerous because it might cause others to come around to its position. As we have persuaded ourselves that those who do not think like us are not "normal" or "average" or right, some of us feel it necessary to expunge the sources of such anti-social thought from public consciousness. We bitch and criticize and condemn.

We believe it is only right, indeed our duty, to prevent seditious thoughts from invading the minds of innocent people ("Save the children!") to the possible extent that others begin to think differently from us, in progressively larger numbers.

Eventually, the "we" referenced above get old, become disregarded by the younger generation in power, die off and join history as "those who thought differently in those bygone days." Some of them were strong supporters of slavery, believing that some people (always the social group to which they belonged) were naturally superior to others and had the right to treat them like pets or hunting prey.

The original aboriginal tribe of Newfoundland, Canada, for example, whose skin colour most likely resembled the "red skins" that Europeans began to call all natives of North America, were literally hunted into extinction, for sport. The unsociable Beotuk Indians had a habit of covering their exposed skin with red ochre, making them sufficiently different that Europeans thought they should be eliminated as a threat to social purity.

After that we had men who thought women so intellectually stupid that they should not have the right to vote, to

equal pay for equal work, to be treated without abuse or to receive compensation if they were chucked out of their homes by their men (owners) who got tired of them.

Even today we have men in some western societies who believe that war is the only way to subjugate inferior peoples. Our leaders--who may be among these people--may tell lies to persuade enough voters to support going to war with ultra-sophisticated weapons and smart bombs against people who can only defend themselves with knives, rifles and stupid car bombs. Somehow there are still people who will believe that making war is the only and best route to peace.

You can see how pretentious the positions of such people must be, that they will believe the lies of the leaders who secured their positions in the first place by lying to those same people to get elected.

John Kenneth Galbraith, a brilliant man who believed his calling was to teach in a university and to write for university students and graduates, had no answers to the dilemma he posed in our quote. Yet there is a solution. And it's a simple one. And extraordinarily cheap.

Teach the children what we want them to know and to be able to think their way through pretentious and lying positions posed by others who want little more than to twist their minds into believing that their lives only have value if they do what their leaders tell them.

Our school systems are set up on a model that prepares young people to be the workers and consumers of the future. That is their whole purpose. And they do it well. But they don't have to teach creative and eager children to be dull automatons who simply do what their corporate employers want them to do and buy what they are told to buy in advertising.

The primary responsibility of parents is to teach their children what they need to know to be competent and confident adults. Many parents today don't do that. They leave that job to schools, even if they naively want to limit and control what the schools teach to the corporate model.

The situation today is not hopeless, as many believe. Change is possible, but only if people talk about it and find ways to teach new parents what they need to know about raising their children effectively and in a healthy manner.

When enough parents teach their own children properly, without leaving it to schools to do the job many parents abdicate, the school systems will eventually change.

Right now too many parents are too concerned about ensuring that the schools their children attend teach to the corporate model. We can talk about his situation until enough people understand how their minds have been manipulated and how the minds of their children are being molded in ways that are unhealthy for them and for the country.

Just talk about it.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to grow children who can think for themselves and who need a guide to show what to teach their kids and when.

Learn more at <http://billallin.com>

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