

**British Propaganda and Subversion of Textbooks
in American Public Schools—E**

EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF
HON. J. THORKELSON

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 9, 1940

EXCERPT FROM REPORT BY DAVID HIRSHFIELD

Mr. THORKELSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to extend my own remarks and include an article from the report of David Hirshfield relating to a book by Andrew C. McLaughlin, head of the Department of History, University of Chicago, and Claude H. Van Tyne, head of the Department of History, University of Michigan, entitled "A History of the United States for Schools."

Mr. Speaker, I have included these articles with my remarks, in order to call the attention of Members of Congress and the parents of our American boys and girls, to these changes in our textbooks, as I am sure all patriotic citizens are interested in retaining the true American history in our public schools.

A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES FOR SCHOOLS, REVISED 1919

(By Andrew C. McLaughlin, A. M., LL. B., head of the Department of History, University of Chicago, and Claude H. Van Tyne, Ph. D., head of the Department of History, University of Michigan.)

Objections submitted and sustained against the McLaughlin and Van Tyne text are that it teaches:

That there is little use trying to learn whose fault it was that the Revolutionary War began;

That the Declaration of Independence was largely plagiarized from English writings;

That the United States Constitution was copied after the British Constitution;

That many of the long-cherished stories in American history are "yarns";

That many revered patriot leaders were disreputable characters;

That many of our most inspiring slogans are not genuine;

That "we can afford now to laugh at our forefathers."

Objection has been made that in this textbook the British oppressions of the American colonists are so plausibly condoned or completely suppressed that no ground is left which seems to justify the statement of grievances in the Declaration of Independence or the armed resistance in Revolution.

It has been further charged that the history of the American Revolution is in this text reshaped to conform with definite British propaganda for the cultivation of the "international mind" in behalf of imperialistic interests and that its teachings to American children are poisonous to their patriotic spirit.

In the preface these authors proclaim:

"We make no apology for the omission of many of the 'yarns' of American history. * * *

"By means of this elimination we have secured space for fuller explanation and interpretation of really important events."

They omit mention of Nathan Hale, Faneuil Hall, the Green Mountain Boys, Betsy Ross and the birth of the flag, the quartering of troops, and the British attempts to bribe, and they minimize the patriot valor at Lexington, Bunker Hill, and New Orleans.

These "yarns," now omitted, have always heretofore been deemed important in American school history. They are as important now as they ever were—perhaps more important now than ever before, since the stanch national spirit they helped to engender is being insidiously undermined.

The "really important events," for which these authors secure space by omitting what they term "yarns" are such as these:

"England was, on the whole, more generous to her colonies than were other nations to theirs" (p. 139).

"Though the country must have been almost equally divided, the Whigs were most active, and succeeded in electing a Congress bent upon defending 'American liberties'" (p. 156).

"As a Tory wrote, in Washington's camp the soldier had 13 kings and no bread, and it seemed better to serve 1 king and have plenty of bread" (p. 178).

"It is from a study of this struggle between Whigs and Tories that we see the American Revolution to have been a civil war in America as well as a war between England and her rebellious colonies" (p. 183).

It is difficult to understand how any mind, or any pair of professorial minds, can regard such things as more "really important events" in American history than the inspiring incidents and heroic characters which have been omitted to make space for them.

McLaughlin and Van Tyne appear to have been the first of the Anglophile revisionists. The first edition of their school history, issued in 1911, distorts many truths regarding Anglo-American relations, to the disparagement of America and exaltation of Great Britain.

In their 1919 revision McLaughlin and Van Tyne have a complete chapter of 15 pages on How Europe Influenced America, 1807-1816, which did not appear in their 1911 edition.

In this new chapter opportunity is taken

1. To set up Magna Carta as the chief source of our liberties;

2. To discredit the Declaration of Independence as a plagiarism;

3. To contend at length that the United States Constitution is a mere written copy of the unwritten British Constitution.

These authors devote a great deal of space in stating in detail how John Locks, an Englishman, had written about liberty long before the Declaration of Independence was formulated; that in his writings "Locks expressed essentially the same ideas" and that the same sounded "very much like what we read in the American Declaration of Independence" (p. 199).

The United States Constitution, according to this school history, differs from the English Constitution only "in that most of it is included in a single document, while the English Constitution is made up of many laws, court decisions, and customs," etc., etc. (p. 197).

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The argument in support of this theory, taking up a page and a half in the new chapter, is a mere restatement of Sir Gilbert Parker's official British propaganda material with which our country has been flooded in recent years.

The chapter on the War with Spain has been revised and the 17 lines of tribute to Dewey's victory and Hobson's heroism, which appeared in the 1911 edition, were removed in 1919 to make space for the moot Diederichs incident in Manila Bay, and to expatiate how "Thus British friendship saved us."

Comparison of the two editions discloses many other alterations in the text, all conforming to up-to-date British propaganda.

Leading founders of our liberties are characterized as follows:

"It is hard for us to realize how ignorant and superstitious were most of the early colonists of America" (p. 134).

"Patrick Henry, a gay, unprosperous, and hitherto unknown country lawyer" (p. 141).

"Smuggling was so common that even a leading Boston merchant was known as the prince of smugglers" (p. 140).

"As the British soldiers who had left Boston at midnight neared Lexington in the early morning of April 19, 1775, Adams and Hancock stole away across the fields" (p. 163).

"Independence was not seriously thought of, except by a very few men like Samuel Adams. Great men and good patriots like Washington and Franklin were loath to think of such an outcome of the quarrel" (p. 162).

"Hamilton is said to have exclaimed at a banquet once, 'Your people, sir, is a great beast'" (p. 238).

"On the 4th of July 1801 voters of a town in Connecticut drank to the toast: 'Thomas Jefferson: May he receive from his fellow citizens the reward of his merit—a halter'" (p. 249).

"We can afford now to laugh at our forefathers" (p. 262).

It is not to be denied that these great and good men, who here are so flippantly defamed, were human and had their human faults and limitations. However, it is not their personal faults that are most important to us. In their faults there is little educational value, but their transcendent virtues, heroisms, sacrifices, abilities, and achievements, peculiar to themselves, and outstanding above those of any other set of men of any period, constitute vitalizing and inspiring educational material.

Nearly all of the herein mentioned historical revisionists are found to be at every opportunity harping upon the faults or failures of American leaders. This is naturally to be expected in British histories in relation to American affairs, but its transfer from British histories to American school histories is not natural and should not be tolerated.

The truth regarding the noble characters, exalted ideals, immortal words, and heroic deeds of the founders of our Republic, as it has been handed down to us through honest American historians, is the most precious possession of any people on earth and should be transmitted unsullied to posterity.

Jackson, Monroe, Clay, and other great leaders have not escaped criticism in this McLaughlin-Van Tyne history book.

Of Jackson they teach:

That he was rough and uncultured.

That he disliked the bank because its stockholders and managers were his political enemies.

That he put the public moneys into pet banks.

That Jackson was rough and uncultured is not as important in educational value as that, despite educational limitations and handicaps, he was a great soldier, a good statesman, and a model patriot. In his force of character, directness of methods and freedom from conventionalism he was a new type, and has been well described as the first genuine representative of democracy. Jackson's intense earnestness and strict honesty have been securely woven into the very fabric of our Republic. His noble qualities of mind and heart, his unselfish purposes and his lasting achievements will fill to overflowing all the space that can be found for him in any school history.

Another of the great makers of America whom these authors "damn with faint praise" is James Monroe, twice elected President, the second time by every vote in the electoral college but one. Of him, on page 272 they say:

"He was only a gallant officer of the lower rank in the Revolution, a fairly good diplomat who happened to have a hand in the Louisiana Purchase, and only an ordinary Secretary of State under Madison, but he was the choice of the Republican Party leaders, Madison and Jefferson."

The name of Monroe, for a hundred years, has been known and respected in every civilized country, and had President Monroe never done anything else than promulgate the Monroe Doctrine he still would stand out as one of the greatest constructive forces in our national life.

Monroe was a mere boy in the Revolution, and at 18 was promoted to a captaincy because of his bravery. He was twice Governor of Virginia, Minister to England, to France, and to Spain. He was Secretary of State and later Secretary of War through the War of 1812. These facts are better fitted for school history than is a sneering comment.

Regarding Henry Clay these authors are teaching as follows:

"There had been a deal, they asserted, and Clay, 'Judas of the West,' had sold his influence to Adams for the office of Secretary of State" (p. 288).

Party strife was bitter in the days of Clay, and extremely harsh words were often used by partisans against opponents. No public character, of that, this, or any other period, is justly described in a heated phrase of a bitter opponent. Yet these authors and other history revisionists show a peculiar fondness for this unfair method of estimating the characters of American leaders. It is by this method that Thomas Jefferson is presented to school children as deserving of "a halter."

Not content with disparagement of heroic characters, these coauthors proceed to discredit their immortal words. Maxims and slogans with which every school child has been familiar in the past are now pronounced as not authentic.

Of Lawrence's last brave words, "Don't give up the ship," these authors say:

"'Fight the ship until she is sunk' seem to have been his real words, and the others are the words of the boy who took his message on deck."—Page 265.

The authenticity of this slogan was accepted by Commodore Perry when he had it emblazoned on his battle flag at the victory of Lake Erie, and this is one of the most fondly cherished slogans in the United States Navy still. No educational advantage is gained by questioning its genuineness, and the only effect on the school child's mind of such petty caviling is to weaken confidence in any truth of history.

Of Ethan Allen's demand upon the commanding officer at Ticonderoga to surrender "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress," these authors remark in a footnote, page 167:

"So Allen afterward declared. He had no right to demand the fort in the name of the Continental Congress; for his commission was from Connecticut."—Page. 157.

Here they quibble over trifling points, to the obscuration of the splendidly dramatic manner in which Allen and his men, without firing a shot, won a fort which cost the British eight million sterling, a succession of campaigns and many lives. Allen's demand was made in the hearing of many men who confirmed all that "Allen afterwards declared."

The causes of the Revolution are in this textbook obscured, and the student seeking here the principles and motives of the colonists will find only omissions, contradictions, and confusion.

On page 144 these historians state that:

"The great objection raised by the Americans was, that they were taxed by the Parliament without being represented in it."

On page 146 they go on and say that:

"The King and his obedient ministers now thought that they must crush what they considered to be a spirit of rebellion. * * * A second mistake was the sending to America of an inadequate force of soldiers, which only irritated and did not 'cow the colonists.'"

The authors frequently tell what the King thought, how his ministers felt, and what his generals hoped in this instance the word "mistake" has application only from the British standpoint. What the authors clearly mean to teach is that if a larger British force had been sent the colonists might not have been irritated but would have been cowed:

In their endeavor to define the causes of the Revolution these authors state:

"There is little use trying to learn whose fault it was that the war began, for, as we have seen, such a long train of events led to disagreement between England and America that we should have to go back and back to the very founding of the Colonies. As in most quarrels, the blame for beginning is laid by each party on the other" (p. 152).

It is amazing that men who confess they do not know why the American Revolution began should have felt themselves called upon to write American school history.

McLaughlin and Van Tyne attempt to extract the glory from the Fourth of July. On pages 163-4 they teach:

"The reason we celebrate the 4th instead of the 2d of July is that most men thought more about the day Congress voted to accept a declaration drawn up by Thomas Jefferson explaining to the world the reasons for making the resolution of independence.

"A list of 27 grievances, was given, some of which seem unreasonable now, but others constituted real wrongs."

The enthusiastic jubilation of, the patriots following, the declaration, July 4, 1776, is thus referred to:

"Among the Whigs, or Patriots, the news was joyfully received. Some thoughtless people went too far and did foolish things, like, burning an effigy of the king or burning his portrait in a public square. In New York City the American soldiers pulled down a leaden statue of George III and melted it into bullets" (p. 164).

It was peculiarly proper that the statue of King George was turned into bullets to shoot his oppression and sovereignty out of this land. No better use for a king's statue ever was found in America.

Of France's motive in coming to the aid of America, on pages 175-6 they, say:

"England and France had long been enemies. Many bitter wars had been fought between them but none more bitter than that for ownership of America, which was decided in England's favor when Wolfe captured Quebec. From that hour French statesmen watched for a time when England should be weakened and when France might avenge her shame and regain her power."

Regarding the War of 1812 these authors teach, on page 261:

"To make war on England, however, was, in fact, to join Napoleon, her implacable enemy, so that the world witnessed the strange alliance of James Madison, lover of peace, and Napoleon Bonaparte, the genius of war."

In their summary of the results of that war they state, on pages 270-271:

"Of the War of 1812 one feels like asking with Little Peterkin, 'What good came of it at last?' Some 30,000 men had been lost and about \$200,000,000 had been spent on wasteful war. America's shipping was almost destroyed and trade had suffered great losses, and yet no principle for which she had fought was settled."

The fact of the matter is that the result of the War of 1812 settled forever the British claim of its right to impress American seamen. The British encouragement of Indian outrages upon our western border was ended.

Results even more important than the foregoing are cited by Carl Schurz in his Life of Henry Clay:

"The War of 1812, with all the losses in blood and treasure entailed by it, and in spite of the peace which ignored the declared causes of the war, transformed the American Republic in the estimation of the world, from a feeble experimental curiosity into a power—a world power, full of brains and with visible claws and teeth. It made the American people, who had so far consisted of the peoples of so many little commonwealths; not seldom wondering whether they could profitably stay long together, a consciously united Nation with a common country, a great country, worth fighting for, and a common national destiny—nobody could say how great—and a common national pride, at that time filling every American heart brim-full."

The justice of the American cause in the Mexican War is more than questioned in this book. In a footnote on page 323 these authors say:

“There is still room for question as to whether we were right in fighting Mexico, and scholars differ. Our patience was sorely tried, but a little, fairness, a little more patience, and a little more generosity might have made war unnecessary. Polk’s method of blaming Mexico reminds one of the soldier who came into camp with a dead sheep over his shoulder, though foraging was forbidden, ‘No sheep can bite me and live,’ he said.”

Time and events have amply vindicated the justness and necessity of the Mexican War, and the mere fact that “scholars differ” —as it ever is their chief vocation—furnishes no reason for shadowing with doubt the true motives and actions of our fathers in the minds of our children.

Space which these authors say they have secured for “really important events,” by omitting old inspiriting “yarns,” is lavishly devoted to a half-page reproduction of a British cartoon of the Revolutionary period, caricaturing America as a rattlesnake.

Another half-page cartoon, ridicules Lincoln as being ridden on a rail.

A cartoon of Woodrow Wilson’s “wonderful control” on affairs still current and controversial, occupies one-quarter of page 457.

The patriots frequently used the rattlesnake as an emblem, and their own applications of it formerly appeared in school histories. The revisionists substitute for it a hostile conception.

These cartoons, feebly conceived and crudely drawn, have no educational values. Such use of space, which has been gained by ruthless elimination of patriotic characters and incidents, would be incomprehensible but for the fact that it is in perfect accord with the Anglicized spirit and purpose, shown by these authors throughout their book, to distort; belittle, and ridicule the great leaders and vital truths in American history to the minds of American school children, the American citizenry of the future.
