

True Blue

The Adams County Democrat
July 2015

For-Profit Education: What Is It and Who Profits from It?

For-profit education, also referred to as proprietary education or privatized education, is an orchestrated movement designed to siphon public resources (i.e., money) away from public schools and into the hands of profiteers.

For-profit education does not call itself what it is, instead marketing itself as providing improved school choice and teacher accountability for students from moderate to low income households. In reality, for-profit education more frequently limits educational options and outcomes for these students while lining the pockets of educational entrepreneurs and corporations seeking monetary gain. For-profit education includes charter schools, vouchers, and high stakes testing programs.

Although funded with tax revenues, charter schools and voucher programs receive very little state oversight regarding how children are being served and how monies are being spent. All too frequently, this has culminated in prosecutions of charter school proprietors for blatant misuse of public funds and poor delivery of educational service. Furthermore, some of these charter schools have been shut down by the state at the last minute, disrupting the educational process for children and forcing families to seek alternate school placements on a moment's notice for their children.

High stakes testing programs, which are mandated by state legislatures and funded with public monies paid to private, for-profit corporations, consume so much time and so many resources that limited time and resources remain for teaching and learning. Too many of these tests are poorly designed and are not thoroughly field-tested to be sure they measure what they purport to test. Some parents have begun to resist these mandated programs through the "opt-out" movement, and many teachers and administrators have also begun to speak out against the amounts and types of testing now required of students and schools.

Many parents, educators, and students were shocked and outraged this past spring upon learning that a prominent testing firm was covertly monitoring and spying on students' school-based and home-based internet activity. This privacy intrusion into children's and family's private lives was done under the guise of protecting the "security" of the testing firms' test questions.

In Ohio, for-profit education has proliferated under the Republican-controlled legislature and the Republican-held governor's mansion. It has convoluted and compromised the educational experiences of our communities' children, and Ohio has become a national example for what is wrong with this approach. The time is ripe for Ohio's voters to demand more educationally sound and financially responsible educational policies from our elected officials and to demand a curtailment of for-profit education in Ohio.

(For more information, please consider doing searches on this and related topics in on-line editions of newspapers such as the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Columbus Dispatch, Washington Post, Cincinnati Enquirer, New York Times, etc.)

The true purpose of education is to make
minds, not careers.

The secret in education lies in respecting
the student.

Those who exert the first influence upon the mind, have the greatest power.

Horace Mann

“WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO ANTITRUST?”
(adapted from article in San Francisco Chronicle, 5.25.15)

On May 20 a settlement was reached between the Justice Department and 5 giant banks. The banks had engaged in the biggest price-fixing conspiracy in modern history. Attorney General Loretta Lynch called their actions “a brazen display of collusion”. But there will be no trial - and no executive will go to jail. The banks will regard their fines as the costs of doing business.

The United States used to have antitrust laws that could stop corporations from monopolizing markets. “Upward Redistribution” of wealth now rules the economy: the majority of Americans are paying increasingly higher prices while the wealthy few make increasingly higher profits. More and more, economic control is being focused in the hands of the few. For example, look at the food industry. The 4 largest food companies control 82% of beef packing, and 85% of soybean processing. Monsanto alone owns the key genetic traits to more than 90% of the soybeans planted by farmers in the United States, and 80% of the corn.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, writes: “Antitrust has been ambushed by the giant companies it was designed to contain. The market is rigged. And unless government unrigs it through bold antitrust action to restore competition, the ‘upward redistributions’ hidden inside the ‘free market’ will become even larger”.

Quote: “If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. But if he spends his days as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is deemed an industrious and enterprising citizen.”
(Henry David Thoreau)

CORPORATE DOMINANCE:
SOME IMPACTS ON THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND ON INFORMATION FLOW

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects our press from passage of laws which would abridge the free flow of ideas. Yet, corporate control of media outlets during the past twenty years has led to monopolies which determine and control the overwhelming majority of information that reaches us through mainstream, mass media.

Over 90% of the news, education, and entertainment programming currently entering American households is owned and controlled by only six, corporate conglomerates, all with multiple business holdings and interests. These six corporations are: 1) General Electric; 2) News Corp; 3) Disney; 4) ViaCom; 5) Time Warner, and 6) the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).

These six corporations determine and control what events and phenomena will or will not be given news story status, and they dictate the specific bias given to any story they release. These six corporations also decide which books, newspapers, and magazines will be printed, promoted, and distributed for us to buy and read. And, they determine which movies, musical recordings, and television shows will be made, marketed, and aired for us to consume. These six corporations exercise less control over information distributed via the internet, but they are rapidly becoming an increasingly aggressive presence in dissemination of information through cyberspace.

It has been said by many that we have entered the information age. It is true that there never have been more avenues available for us to quickly take in information about the world around us. But, we would be wise to not confuse this quantity with quality. As journalist A.J. Liebling famously stated in 1960, "***Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.***"

We must work harder than we ever have to be wise consumers, critical evaluators, and responsible conveyors of information -- and to not be ideologically controlled by those corporations which feed us more than 90% of the news, education, and entertainment programming that reaches us through mainstream media.

Economic “Miracles” in America

Imagine the following scene. A beautiful summer day and you find yourself in your favorite coffee shop. As you sip your coffee, your tranquility is disturbed by a rather animated discussion at an adjacent table. You quickly come to the conclusion that the adjoining table is made up of die-hard Republicans discussing the merits of Rick Perry’s “Texas Miracle.” The hope is that the Republicans will prevail in 2016, and this economic policy will bring prosperity and the pursuit of happiness to all Americans. Your dilemma, being a Democrat, is how to respond to the success of the Texas economic “miracle” since Mr. Perry became governor in 2000.

What is this economic miracle that was achieved in Texas? We must remember that their economic output is dependent on oil and 13% of states economic output is due to drilling and fracking. Between 2000 and Jan. 2015 Texas created three out of ten new jobs in America and employment in the state rose by 2.2 million, a 25% increase. The unemployment rate is 4.2% versus the national rate of 5.6%. But according to the governor the complete answer to this incredible growth was due to the economic policies of a) no state income tax, b) tax breaks for industry, c) light regulation, and d) unquestioning support for oil.

However, as Democrats have pointed out there are problems with these policies. Environmental pollution from the energy industry and new studies revealing the increased earthquakes from fracking as illustrated in particular in neighboring Oklahoma. Oil is a boom and bust industry and with the recent decline in oil prices the 3.4% economic growth rate in 2014 is predicted by the Dallas Fed to be .5% for 2015. In March of this year the state lost 25,000 jobs. Governor Perry has also invested in adding leisure, hospitality, and information service jobs to the economic growth of Texas. On the negative side Mr. Perry in his tenure has been lax in not spending enough money for education, infrastructure, and increasing the state safety net.

As a counter to this miraculous state, consider the state of California. California shares a number of similarities with Texas in that both states have young populations and California’s economy is tied to key industries of high tech and entertainment. What is of most interest is that the economic policies of the state are almost the exact opposite and yet, California is prosperous. Consider that the unemployment rate fell from 12% to 6% from 2010 to 2014 and half a million jobs were added in the state in the last twelve months. However, when we look at the economic policies, we see that California builds high speed rail links; there are tighter restrictions of greenhouse gas emissions, high taxation rate, strict regulations, broader access to health care, and a push in a number of cities to raise minimum wages.

When Republicans hit the campaign trail, they will be touting the “economic miracle” they will be bringing to America. Texas will be the star and so will other states that are following all or parts of this economic agenda. As Democrats we must remember that we have our “economic miracle” in the state of California. Both policies seem to bring about jobs and economic growth. The question the voter must consider is the quality of life that will result from following one model or the other. Which model will improve and help reverse the decline of the middle class? Do we want better schools so our children can obtain jobs that will be created in the remainder of this century? Are testing and charter schools working or do we need to find new sources of income to obtain quality in our educational institutions? When are we going to bring our infrastructure up to the standards that exist in other developed countries? Are we going to allow industry to create an ecological crisis in terms of greenhouse gases by destroying regulatory bodies as the EPA? Can increasing poverty be stopped and health insurance for all be achieved without new laws and regulations by the federal government?

A conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk forward.

Franklin D Roosevelt

Liberalism is the trust of the people tempered by prudence. Conservatism is distrust of the people inspired by fear.

William E Gladstone

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

Thomas Jefferson

GAME CHANGER: SOLAR POWER

We are very close to solar energy becoming less expensive for energy generation than gas, oil and coal. Soon, we will no longer need to depend on environmentally damaging, non-renewable sources of energy and the mega-corporations that harvest and process them. SunShot, an initiative of the U.S. Energy Department has spent 59 million dollars since 2007 to attract an additional 1.2 billion in private solar investment with the stated goal of a \$.50 solar module.

Solar is a young industry and is unstable. Companies, such as Solyndra, Evergreen and Spectra Watt, have gone bankrupt because they have made misplaced bets on more expensive technologies. Now, however, in spite of serious competition from China, the U.S. solar technology companies believe they can compete because technology is improving and the U.S. has the lead.

From 2009 to 2011, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association, the number of Americans working in the solar industry more than doubled to 100,000 – passing the 80,600 coal miners working in the U.S. according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

When companies can produce solar voltaic modules for less than \$.50 per watt, solar energy will be able to compete directly with coal. Right now the cheapest solar cells are being produced for as little as \$.70 per watt and are expected to hit \$.50 per watt within 4 to 5 years.

(adapted from Bloomberg Business Report, 10.13.11)

THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE IS IN THE PRESENT.

SOLAR POWER FOR YOUR ADAMS COUNTY HOME

By Glenn Robison

It is now possible to get a solar power system for your home that will produce all or most of the electricity you use annually. We have had our system operating since the end of April. To date our system has produced about 1500KWH. The decision to get our system was made after we learned there were other systems operating locally and the total cost will be recoverable in 5 to 10 years. I believe the annual return for our system will be 8 to 10% of the cost. For 2015 there is a 30% tax credit on federal income tax. The return on investment will increase if electricity rates increase.

A solar power system uses a number of photovoltaic cells connected to an inverter. The photovoltaic cells produce DC power which is connected to the inverter where it is converted to AC power which is what is needed for our homes. The number of photovoltaic (solar) cells and the size of the inverter depend on the amount of power you wish to produce. The solar cells can be mounted on the roof or on a free standing structure. The optimum location is facing south and is free of shade all day. The exact orientation for a particular location can be determined by reading articles on the internet.

The most common system today is being connected to the grid. There are no batteries for storage so you either use power as it is generated, or it goes onto the grid and is credited to your account. After the sun goes down you have power available from the grid. A special reversing electric meter is installed by the electric company to keep track of what you generate and what you use from the grid. This is not a back-up system for power outages. When your power from the grid is off the solar system is off. This is a safety feature so the electric lines can be repaired safely. Through the summer and fall most customers will produce more electricity than is used. As you use more electricity than is produced in the winter you will access the surplus produced in earlier months.

The benefits of a home solar power system are not only the reduction of electric bills, but in the reduction of greenhouse gases and other pollutants produced by coal or gas fired power plants. What could be better; save money and help save the planet.

If this is something you would like to consider, I suggest talking to someone who has installed a system. I am aware of 5 home systems in the county. Our system is on a free standing structure which I built with a little help. The electrical part is fairly simple. Most electricians would be able to follow the plans from the equipment suppliers. In my opinion it is not difficult to install one of these systems.

ELECTION DAY NOVEMBER 3, 2015
TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS

Adams County has 15 townships. Each township has three trustees and a fiscal officer. Their terms are four years. Township trustees have the legislative authority in the township. The trustees oversee the care and maintenance of the township roads, fire protection, cemeteries, parks and recreation, zoning and waste disposal. Other responsibilities include providing order during elections, conducting bi-monthly meetings, provide public notices of meetings and special meetings, provide for the general welfare of the township, and maintain records of all township business and activities.

The fiscal officer is the keeper of all the township records and is responsible for them. He/she is elected to oversee and safeguard the township funds and work with the trustees to see monies are spent wisely and the best interest of the residents. The fiscal officer's duties include keeping accurate records of proceedings of Trustees at all their meetings, and the township's accounts and transactions, issuance checks, preparing payrolls, tax reporting, and deposits.

The average salaries of trustees in Adams County are between \$600 and \$800 per month. The average salaries of fiscal officers in Adams County are between \$1,000 and \$1,200 per month. Salaries depend on the township's annual budget. The revenue for each budget comes from the General Fund, Road and Bridges Fund, Gas Tax, and Motor Vehicle Tax. Some townships have cemetery levies and fire levies. Also, some townships have a levy, mills, for operating expenses.

The highest township budget in Adams County is \$1,814,819 and the lowest is \$268,074. The townships are audited every two years and are required to pay for the cost of the audit. A fiscal officer and one trustee for each township will be elected in this November's general election. It is important for everyone to vote in this coming election. Make your vote count! These offices are very important!

Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying wrong remedies.
Groucho Marx

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

- 1) THE NATIONAL BIRD OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 2) THE NATIONAL FLOWER OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 3) THE FIRST MOTTO OF THE UNITED STATES WAS E PLURIBUS UNUM MEANING _____.
- 4) THE CURRENT MOTTO OF UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 5) THE NATIONAL TREE OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 6) THE NATIONAL SYMBOL OF FREEDOM OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 7) THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 8) THE NATIONAL MARCH OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 9) THE NATIONAL ANIMAL OF THE UNITED STATES IS _____.
- 10) THE CURRENT VERSION OF OUR NATIONAL FLAG WAS ADOPTED ON _____.

Answers on last page

Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.

Otto Von Bismarck

People are all born alike – except Republicans and Democrats.

Groucho Marx

ABSENTEE VOTING

You may request an absentee ballot in person at the Board of Elections, or call 937- 544-2633.

Absentee ballots must be postmarked or hand delivered to the Board of Elections no later than Monday, Nov. 2, 2015.

Adams County Board of Elections
215 North Cross St
West Union, Ohio 45693

THANK YOU!

Thanks all Adams County Dems, who have supported and worked on True Blue since its inception in 2011 – The Adams County Executive Committee, the Adams County Democrat Club and its members - and special thanks to Ina Hendrix for those True Blue cakes and Sue Naylor and family for folding and stuffing envelopes.

ANSWERS:

- 1) THE AMERICAN BALD EAGLE
- 2) THE ROSE, ESTABLISHED IN 1986 BY RONALD REAGAN
- 3) ONE FROM MANY, FROM THE LATIN
- 4) IN GOD WE TRUST, ESTABLISHED IN 1956 BY PRESIDENT EISENHOWER FROM A LINE IN THE 4TH VERSE OF THE “STAR SPANGLED BANNER”
- 5) THE OAK TREE
- 6) THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, 1886, THE OFFICIAL TITLE IS “LIBERTY ENLIGHTENING THE WORLD”
- 7) THE “STAR SPANGLED BANNER”
- 8) “THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER”
- 9) THE AMERICAN BALD EAGLE – THIS SEEMS LIKE A TRICK QUESTION, BUT IS TRUE
- 10) JULY 4, 1960 WHEN THE 50TH STATE OF HAWAII CAME INTO THE UNION.

PRESENTLY THERE IS NO NATIONAL FRUIT – WRITE OR EMAIL YOUR NOMINATION TO TRUE BLUE. WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK IS A DESERVING CHOICE.

ELECTION DAY NOVEMBER 3, 2015 ISSUE 1

The Ohio Bipartisan Redistricting Commission Amendment is on the November 3, 2015 Ballot in Ohio as a constitutional amendment. The measure, upon voter approval, would create a bipartisan redistricting commission, the Ohio Redistricting Commission, to draw state (not federal) legislative districts. The measure would also establish new requirements for district standards.

The Ohio Redistricting Commission would consist of the following seven members: the Governor, State Auditor, Secretary of State, one person appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one person appointed by the legislative leader of the largest political party in the house of which the speaker is not a member, one person appointed by the President of the Ohio Senate and one person appointed by the legislative leader of the largest political party in the senate of which the president is not a member.

While the current system guarantees that one out of five members of the commission are from the minority party, the proposed system would assure that two out of seven members are from the minority party. In other words, the new amendment would secure 29 percent of the commission seats for minority party members, whereas the current system secures 20 percent of the commission seats for minority party members.

All legislative districts would be required to be composed of "contiguous territory, and the boundary of each district to be a single nonintersecting continuous line." They would also be required to be "compact." The amendment would forbid district plans from favoring or disfavoring a political party.

The amendment would go into effect in 2021, which is when the next redistricting will occur.

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