



## DICK BAYNTON: School Daze

Dick Baynton

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“School days, school days, Dear old Golden Rule days, ‘Reading and ‘riting and ‘rithmetic, Taught to the tune of the hick’ry stick. You were my queen in calico; I was your bashful, barefoot beau. And you wrote on my slate, “I Love You, Joe” When we were a couple o’ kids.”

The above words were spoken and sung in a lilting tune that was written by Will Cobb and Gus Edwards in 1907. In that year the U.S. population amounted to 87 million citizens compared to 325 million today. World population in 1907 was 1.75 billion while today world population numbers 7.5 billion; a growth rate of about 52.4 million each year.

In 2013, the last year that records are available, there were 55.7 million public and private school students in about 132,000 U.S. schools, public and private or an average of about 422 per school. About 3.5 million students graduated from public and private high schools in the 2015-16 year. In a recent year (2012) the best public high school graduation rate was 89.7% in Iowa.

Our nation and our world have grown since 1907 when 15 million students attended our public schools. Along with increases in population, numbers of public and private schools and community colleges have sprung up in every state. Public and private universities and colleges have been newly created while existing institutions have grown exponentially.

One of our readers submitted that the Shaft School in rural Lapeer County, Michigan was where he was introduced to public education 1940. The one-room school had an outdoor hand pump and an outhouse nearby. A wood stove replaced by an oil heater after his first year; restrooms for ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ were added in 1947 for the average of 30 pupils in K-8.

Expansion of educational institutions at all levels has spawned a vast bureaucracy of education experts, superintendents, principals, special needs instructors and teachers, anti-bullying laws and untold numbers of regulations related to students, classrooms and schools.

One of the most important sea-changes that has taken place is the rise of teachers unions that, in many cases at least in public schools, no longer teach for the benefit of student education and increased knowledge but for their own incomes and retirement benefits. Proof of this is the fact

that union leaders and their members balk at linking student outcomes (knowledge) with compensation and their resistance to school vouchers and charter schools.

Randi Weingarten is president of the 1.6 million-member American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, which represents teachers; paraprofessionals and school-related personnel; higher education faculty and staff; nurses and other healthcare professionals; local, state and federal government employees; and early childhood educators.

She should be representing the education of millions of school children in our schools. Her interest is salaries, retirement packages, and other benefits for dues paying members. Ms. Weingarten's union contributed more than \$11 million to liberal progressive political causes in the last election and other teachers unions gave another \$20 million to Democratic candidates and causes.

The 2017 federal education budget amounts to \$69.4 billion of discretionary funding and \$139.7 billion of mandatory spending for a total of about \$209 billion of bureaucratic spending. No one knows how much of these tax extractions are wasted on statisticians, department heads and spending for phantom educational purposes. We do know, however, that students in many of our public schools have deficient graduation rates and teachers are not accountable for educational achievement by their youthful charges.

Utah spends \$6,500 per public school student per year. Washington D.C. spends \$18,485 per year. Utah students exceed the national achievement average in reading, math and science; Washington D.C. students lag in all categories. A Cato Institute study in 2012 showed that the cost of K-12 public education was \$55,000; the cost spiraled to \$165,000 (inflation adjusted) by 2010. However, among 17-year-old students, reading, math and science achievement flat-lined. And we're spending billions to import brain-power from foreign countries?

Democrats in Congress and across the progressive liberal spectrum are fighting creative governance in all fields of public endeavor. These misled and misguided renegades fought against Betsy DeVos because she is rich and wants the best schools and educations for our children.

Albert Einstein said, "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity."