

Therefore, investigation of the intent of the Constitution conventionally concentrates on the discussions in Philadelphia. To pursue the meaning of the Constitution further would throw us all the way back to that ancient, once supreme but long discredited idea of states' rights.

McDonald is our best historian of the Founding era. No one has sounded that era more deeply and fruitfully, and it is a kind of counsel of perfection to ask for more. Yet, if he could be persuaded to study the polemics of the 19th century, between the states' rights school of Calhoun, Stephens, John Taylor, Dabney, Bledsoe, and numerous others, and the consolidators—such as Story, Curtis, Bancroft, and Sumner—then he would gain insight into how the very context of the Founding was subtly warped by the latter in ways that have affected the historical vision of all later commentators, including, perhaps, even McDonald himself.

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Doctors of Education?

by Gary Jason

***Education's Smoking Gun: How Teachers Colleges Have Destroyed Education in America* by Reginald Damerell, New York: Freundlich Books.**

A recent issue of *Forbes* contained the truly wonderful news that a corporation is now selling a video encyclopedia of the 20th century. This is sure to be a hot item in the "education technology" business. Today's students, who dislike ordinary encyclopedias because they must be read, can now "tap into the visual side of their brains" and get their history by TV.

Anybody concerned about the dismal state of education today can only be depressed at such inventions. Who comes up with these nifty new educational ideas? The answer is, of course, "educationists," by which I mean pro-

fessors of education along with consultants and educators who have degrees in education from various "teachers colleges." In the burgeoning literature on the decline of education, not much attention has been paid to the culpability of educationists for the degeneration of American education. Reginald Damerell has written a fascinating book which shines a light on educationists, one that will surely make the roaches scramble for cover.

Damerell should know what he's talking about. After 11 years as a copywriter for an advertising agency, he was invited to join the faculty of the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) College of Education, after the critical and popular success of his book *Triumph in a White Suburb*, about a desegregation fight. While a professor of education, Damerell discovered an awful truth: Educationists are usually full of nonsense. Those professors in more rigorous disciplines simply dismiss departments of education as worthless. Ph.D.'s in classics or physics show more respect for a driver's license than for an Ed.D., the standard academic credential among educationists. It is widely understood that the academic losers enter the school of education because they cannot make it in any of the tougher disciplines (arts and sciences, engineering, medicine, law, or computer science). But since most professors don't take the educationists seriously enough to bother publicizing their failings, and since professors of education are themselves eager to keep the public in the dark, it takes a Mr.-Smith-goes-to-Washington (or more exactly, Amherst) to do the job.

Damerell's book is great fun to read. He recounts the story of Mary, accepted into the doctoral program at Amherst with Graduate Record Exam scores of 210 quantitative and 240 verbal—in effect, zero because the lowest score possible is 200. A room-temperature IQ did not prevent her from attaining the Ed.D. Damerell discovered that Bill Cosby received one, too—and so did the wife of the dean of the school. All three got their degrees by taking lots of "independent study" courses and doing "research" that falls far short of what would be accepted in other disciplines. Seeing such cases firsthand opened Damer-

ell's eyes.

As a field with no body of knowledge, a subject in search of content, education is filled with inane ideas. None is sillier than the current push among educationists for "visual literacy," vaguely defined as:

... a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences.

As a man who once earned his living writing TV commercials, Damerell makes short work of "visual literacy" before moving on to dissect other idiocies. Damerell explains in detail the damage education theorists have done to reading instruction, although curiously he does not discuss the excellent work done by Rudolf Flesch (author of the 1955 classic *Why Johnny Can't Read*) in generating public pressure for better reading instruction. Damerell also does a good job of documenting how educationists—especially the infamous Mary Futrell of the NEA—lowered standards for both teachers and students. (Only recently and reluctantly has the NEA supported even weak standards for teacher certification.) Textbooks have been lowered in quality, tests eliminated or watered down, and so on—the whole familiar, disgusting scene is reviewed in his book.

Damerell goes beyond the usual (quite correct) criticisms of current education theory to broach a touchy topic: the poor academic performance of minorities. He finds that Asians do better academically than blacks or other minorities not because of differences in innate intelligence but rather because of better work habits and higher parental expectations. Asians do well because they work: They read, write, compute, both in the classroom and at home. Not for them the nostrums of the education-school quacks: learning by TV ("visual literacy"); "bilingualism" as an excuse for not learning English; "self-image" building through inflated grades; substitution of touchy-feely electives for math and grammar. For speaking the simple truth Damerell will probably be attacked by education bureaucrats as racist, though he was awarded a

Human Relations Award by the Urban League of Bergin County and though he worked to elect Teaneck's first black councilman and to pass fair-housing laws. He has shown about educational programs what Charles Murray has shown about welfare programs: that liberal programs hurt blacks and other minorities, and hurt them badly. His

radical suggestion that we eliminate all schools of education deserves support from thoughtful Americans of every race.

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CORRESPONDENCE



Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Just the Way We Are

Zig Zigar came to Bismarck recently. (My husband, who doesn't do aerobics, likes his finger of Cutty before bed, and is understandably paranoid about his decadent life-style, says it feels to him as if Zig comes here once a month.) A lot of people I know went to the performance, and many bought Zig's books and tapes right there on the spot, being filled with the natural high that an hour of good clean living can produce.

What did Zig come to tell us? Nothing less than how to break bad habits, work to our full human potential, and spring out of bed in the morning—every morning—to greet the day secure in the knowledge that we're free of chemical and attitudinal impurities.

I'm happy to announce—and I'm sure Zig's happy to *have* me announce—that he will never work himself out of a job. There will always be a place for him and others like him on our podiums in front of record crowds. Zig is a drug, and when we come down from swallowing him whole, we have to face an ugly fact of life: We love the way we are.

What self-help advocates refuse to

acknowledge (and if we ever decide to *truly* help ourselves, what will become of their book sales?) is that human inertia, our disinclination to stop bad habits and start good ones, is heartfelt and—important in this era of unpronounceable additives—100 percent natural.

How long have we known that smoking might kill us, that French fries attach their mushy innards directly to the interiors of our arteries, that seatbelts are better than nothing? Forever, it seems. But up until the relatively recent frenzy of “smoke-outs” (telling title, that), “a la heart” menus, seatbelt commercials, and all the other suddenly fashionable attacks on our brittle spheres of individual freedom or ego, who among us cared much? Not many. And if all these campaigns were halted tomorrow, not many would have permanently altered their life-styles.

Our magnificent inertia doesn't apply only to life-and-death matters. Remember the awful “Metric Scare”? Every so often, radio spots and news releases, produced inside the Beltway for consumption in Podunk, would leak like toxic waste into our feeling of well-being: *Learn metric or be the laughingstock of your friends and loved ones. Don't get left behind in your career by those who can read the handwriting on the wall.* We all knew better. That handwriting was merely

government graffiti, scrawled by hoodlums in the high five figures. We knew that if “they” *really* thought it was important we'd be *made* to comply, as we're made to crawl along prairie interstates at 55 miles an hour and sit behind exploding airbags in new cars. And we've been vindicated: The “Metric Scare” passed like a thief in the night, stealing only our tax dollars, leaving us unscathed to tell the story to disbelieving grandchildren.

Most recently it's been the nine-digit zip code, which the USPS says will help our mail get there faster and more efficiently. Obviously, 999 out of 1,000 other Americans agree with me that our mail service is stupendous just the way it is, because that's the ratio of non-zip-plus-four to zip-plus-four mail I receive. Some letters addressed to me (*never* those sent *by* me, let me hasten to add) are even, pardon the expression, zipless, and still they saunter in. The occasional zip-plus-four address cowers among my other mail like a virgin at an Aztec convention.

Let's face it: Self-preservation is *not* our strongest instinct; is, in fact, an impossibility. We *know* we're only tourists here, so why not see the sights before the bus pulls out? Our innocent vices and our mulishness where it matters least are a large part of what makes us human. Humanhood alone has the wits to luxuriate in the status quo—to understand that life is a gift, meant to be enjoyed—and the raw determination to sometimes transgress that status quo if it means a real reward. Humanhood alone can look up from a plate of fried chicken livers, light a cigar, drain the last of the wine, and, perfectly aware that such habits are unhealthy for the body, say, with conviction, *I AM okay! You ARE okay!*—and be correct. The feast of the soul is a strictly human event.

As I was telling my husband just the other night, I could never *love* a man who was *totally* perfect. It seemed to reassure him. What it comes down to is that people who never smoke, never drink, never gossip or tell dirty jokes or swear, never compete too hard or take defeat personally—people who grimly jog 10 miles a day, smirk as they load their plate with the dregs of the food chain, and never permit themselves a good sulk or a moment of despair—such people are too good to be among