

The ‘dumbing down’ of America

By Jeff Thomas, Editor, International Man. 23 October 2016

Recently, I paid for an item with the exact amount requested, including 89 cents in change. The salesgirl stared at the coins and clearly wasn't sure what to do. Eventually, she reached for a calculator and began to total them up one at a time: $25 + 25 + 25 + 10 + 4$. Having been schooled in the age prior to calculators, I'm accustomed to doing arithmetic in my head, but this particular instance evidenced a level of “dumbing down” over the last 50 years that was beyond what I had realized.

Since the dumbing down has been so consistently prevalent over the decades, it's clear that this is no accident, nor is it an experiment in “alternative education” that hasn't worked out as was intended. It's clearly the result of a conscious effort to diminish the average person's ability to think. As such, it's had a long gestation period and was expected to require generations, but was nevertheless a conscious goal.

But why on earth would the controlling elite of any country seek to diminish the power to reason? Surely, reason is the basis of all independent thought – the catalyst for new ideas and improvement on existing goods and systems.

The answer, in a word, is control. Independent thought is the prime enemy of those who seek to dominate a people. For that reason, those who rule will happily sacrifice technological and social progress if it means that their dominance can be increased.

Controlling both the answers and the questions

It's the nature of humans to question their situation and their surroundings. However, a clever leader will surmise that that means he needs to not only provide the answers, but the questions. If he can keep the people preoccupied with questions that are of little consequence to him, and provide answers that are easy for the people to absorb, he will control the areas of thought and, in so doing, will diminish the likelihood that he or his actions will be questioned.

Since time immemorial, successful leaders have understood that, in order to take the attention off their actions, carefully constructed distractions are called for.

For centuries, when leaders have been under criticism by their minions, they've used the distraction of war. War not only tends to unify a people, it also helps them to accept the removal of their basic rights for an “emergency” period. (Of course, most leaders don't replace the rights after the emergency has ended. War therefore is also a good tool to increase tyranny, generally.) As Ludwig von Mises observed:

“War was not an affair of the peoples; it concerned the rulers only. The citizens detested war, which brought mischief to them and burdened them with taxes and contributions.”

However, in modern times, propagandists have become far more sophisticated. Let's look at a few. Adolf Hitler said:

“Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually, they will believe it.”

Vladimir Lenin was a great believer in the idea that:

“The art of any propagandist and agitator consists in his ability to find the best means of influencing any given audience, by presenting a definite truth, in such a way as to make it most convincing, most easy to digest, most graphic, and most strongly impressive.”

Two of the greatest inventions in making propaganda easy to sell have been political parties and television. In the days of kings, it was common to hate the king and want his downfall, but, with political parties, it's possible to get one half of the people hating one party and the other half hating the other party. Then, all that's necessary is to assure that each party has roughly the same amount of apparent power and the people will focus all their attention on the hatred of the opposing party and fail to notice those who are pulling the strings equally for both parties. The kings thereby remain the kings forever, whilst remaining invisible. The idea is not to defeat the anger of the people, but to redirect it. As Friedrich Hayek commented:

“The skillful propagandist then has the power to mold their minds in any direction he chooses, and even the most intelligent and independent people cannot entirely escape that influence if they are long isolated from all other sources of information.”

That last phrase is key. In today's world, we possess the most significant propaganda tool that has ever been invented: television.

Through this medium, we can create a major issue out of a minor incident, create two opposing viewpoints, each designed to appeal to one group or the other, and then repeat the propaganda unceasingly until the people have become thoroughly polarized from each other on the issue. In this fashion, we can begin with a minor incident, such as the one in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. Arrange for one set of pundits to state unequivocally that the problem was racist Caucasian police, whilst presenting another set of pundits who just as vehemently proclaim that the problem is lawless blacks. Then, as Brother Adolf states, repeat the message endlessly – in this case, on the news seven days a week, from morning till night, for over six months.

Mission accomplished. The conservative group has redoubled its belief in the necessity for an increased police state, whilst the liberal group dug in its heels on its perception of class warfare and the need for increased collectivism to combat that class warfare.

Once this issue has played itself out, it can disappear completely from the television and a new issue takes its place.

As stated above, in creating this means of propaganda, we have first created the question in the mind of the people, then we have spoon-fed two opposing answers – one designed to appeal to those who are by nature conservative and one to those who are by nature liberal. If we do our job well, the groups will become so blindly polarized that no social gathering, such as a dinner party, will contain both liberal and conservative invitees, or it will be a disaster.

All liberals will be unified in their thinking, just as all conservatives will be. Of course, those who are libertarian will be vilified by both of the other groups, as they represent a third alternative. (The success in indoctrinating a people and destroying their ability to reason can be measured by their vehemence in rejecting a third choice of reason.)

However, reason must be blocked out on a continuous basis, or there's danger that it may return over time. As early as 600 BC, Lao Tzu had figured this out:

“The muddiest water is cleared as it is stilled.”

Hence the importance of the endless repetition of the message. As a news item, Ferguson was deserving of a minor mention, perhaps once a week. But by suspending the outcome (whether charges would be laid against the officer), fuel could be added to the rhetoric fire day in, day out, for months on end. When it had finally outlived its usefulness, it was time to create another event. Of course, one shooting every six months in a population of 320,000,000 is a minor blip, but, through the continuous carpet-bombing of the viewer's brain with the same rhetoric, two such events a year would seem like an epidemic.

Once we reach this level of thought control, it's possible to offer utterly unacceptable candidates for public office and still have them gain election. All that's needed is that they parrot the same rhetoric the people have become dependent on as a replacement for reason.

Whether it be Communist Russia, Nazi Germany or Fascist America, once the people have been successfully conditioned to allow Big Brother to dictate thought, the next step has always been totalitarian rule.

Crux note: Unfortunately, most people have no idea what really happens when a government goes out of control, let alone how to prepare...

The coming economic and political collapse is going to be much worse, much longer, and very different than what we've seen in the past.

That's exactly why New York Times best-selling author Doug Casey and his team just released an urgent video. [Click here to watch it now.](#)