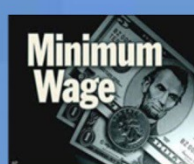
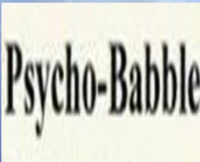
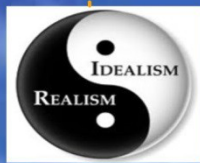


How I became a conservative



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college, New York slums, domestic peace corps, welfare, mental patients, land lording.

by Al Carter (the Moral Role of social work)



by al garner

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Introduction

I grew up in the conservative 50s in one of the most conservative areas (Orange County, Calif.) and went to college where it was said that as we got older, we would get more conservative. (Prophetic) After four years of studying the ideal world, I was graduated and moved to the real world of the slums of the very liberal New York City. I daily read the liberal NEW YORK TIMES, and went from one bad job to another in liberal social work (in the liberal late 60s). I thought the problem was me, but noticed no one was getting anything done.

I dabbled in teaching and politics, more social work, and then land lording, which allowed me to write. I happened on books by Milton Friedman and others, which explained conservative ideas. Slowly the light came on. It had taken years. Why hadn't this been covered in college? Because most colleges are liberal.

Liberals who've anointed themselves Robin Hood and Santa Claus have led us astray. They are bright and more educated than the masses, but mistaken about fundamentals. Moderates and conservatives (not the far right) are more realistic and realize the importance of traditional values. Yet they are always tarred for not 'caring' enough, while paying farmers not to grow and welfare mothers not to work. This book shows their wisdom by drawing on the ideas of: Ronald Reagan, Milton Friedman, Edward Banfield, Jack Kemp, William F. Buckley, and Thomas Sowell.

Definitions

- '**Liberal**' is portrayed (by the predominantly liberal media) as 'progressive, modern, open-minded, compassionate, enlightened, egalitarian, tolerant, and generous.'

- '**Conservative**' is portrayed as 'backward, stingy, mean, rigid, heartless, selfish, narrow, angry, and fearful.'

From my experience, the liberal view is: an ideal world is possible, old is bad, new is good. Anti-establishment, anti-capitalism, security, socialism, pro-union, and redistribute the wealth to level the classes. The conservative view is the opposite.

LIBERAL

Universities
Entertainment
Social work

CONSERVATIVE

business

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Psychology	
ACLU	
Much of the news media	talk radio, fox news
Spokesmen for the poor & minorities	
18 % of the public	40%
Under age 30	over
New values	traditional values
Rights	responsibilities
Socialism	capitalism
When one person gains, another loses	false
Those with more are greedy & oppress those with less	false

Those with less:

Tenants.....
 Labor.....
 Consumers.....
 Minorities.....
 Criminals, bums.....
 The 3rd world.....
 Under age 30.....

Those with more:

landlords
 management
 big business
 whites
 'society'
 the U.S.
 over

(More on the liberal outlook in chapter 4, section 'a,' 1st essay - 'Liberal Myths,' and in the Appendix.)

Chapter I **Education**

I grew up in Southern Calif. in the idyllic 50s. Though one idealizes one's youth, these were good times - a wholesome era of traditional values portrayed by OZZIE AND HARRIET and by HAPPY DAYS. (Good, but they could have been better.)

How useful was high school?

In school I ran around with the 'establishment' crowd many whom were student leaders.

Reading

We weren't assigned authors we would have loved like Jack London and Ernie Pyle.

Writing

Spelling, vocabulary, and some grammar lessons were good, but we didn't write enough.

Math

Besides the basics, what was necessary? Not algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and they didn't improve our thinking as was claimed.

Social studies

(not social 'science') History was interesting for some, but left out most of the countries. We didn't have enough geography, current affairs, or social problems.

Sports

Overdone

Other

We took science and language, but didn't use them. Art, music, and speaking were not academic and could have been after-school activities.

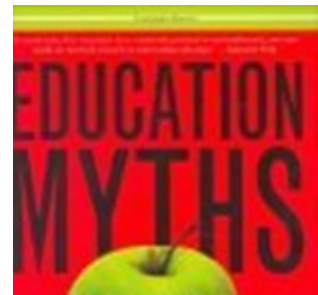
We were told little or nothing about: resume writing, job hunting, managing money, traditional values, human nature, corruption, politics, media bias, religious scandals, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, prejudice, and the pros and cons of joining the military.

We were not told about maturity in relation to adolescence, friendship, courting, sex, parenting, vice, crime, religion, cults, politics, youthful idealism, and liberal and conservative thinking.

When it came to college, the preparation wasn't serious. We were too busy having fun and becoming 'well-rounded.' The last day of school we tore up our notebooks and threw the pages around the halls in celebration.

At graduation we were inspired and praised. People congratulated us. Why? We

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of

hadn't done much. Much of our schooling was busywork while we grew up.

How much was useful? Probably half - the three r's, some social studies, typing, driver's ed, first aid, shop, home economics. Though not academic, the clubs, student paper, student government, and talent shows were useful and great fun.

After-school sports were a superb outlet for athletes, providing conditioning, challenge, competition, recognition, teamwork, discipline (and getting yelled at). For others they provided school spirit, band, drill team, and pep rallies. Could these drives be harnessed for academic or vocational decathlons (and be practical, which is not true of the national spelling bee)?

If I could change school, I would group students according to achievement, not age, use more lay teachers, and provide vouchers to give families a choice of schools. Schools would have to compete for students and teachers. I would prepare students for the real world by requiring achievement in:

1. Traditional values (basic to maturity. Students could clean the schools, as in Japan, to learn some of these.)
2. Mental health (courses and counseling - to promote maturity).
3. Physical health (diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, drugs, Pregnancy, first aid, longevity, etc.). Students maintaining good health wouldn't need sports.
4. Career counseling (to find one's primary interests).
5. Apprenticeships (so students would graduate with marketable skills).
6. Practical academics (geared to the real world).

Many things contribute to these six categories - hobbies, clubs, scouts, sports, student government, TV, reading, travel, living in different regions, a second language, summer camp, volunteer and paid work Students could be tested on and given credit for their achievements in these areas. Everyone would gain - the school by tapping the outside world, the parents for their efforts, and the students by getting a practical education and a head start. A big step toward this would be

School vouchers

Education in the U.S. below the 12th grade is virtually public and the results are generally bad. Education above the 12th grade is public and private and the best in the world. If we want better below the 12th grade, we can increase private education with vouchers. Parents would shop for schools instead of moving to different school districts. Private schools would spring up according to demand and remain according to performance. They would hire more para-professionals and aides. Public schools would have to compete by cutting top-heavy bureaucracies, tenured union employees, etc.

Parents of private school students would not have to pay twice - once in taxes for



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public schools and again in tuition for private schools. Many of them are not rich (and many are teachers in public schools).

Schools would specialize for the talented, the disabled, athletic, vocational, English-deficient - whatever.

Critics say new private schools wouldn't be regulated, but those regulations haven't helped public schools. At any rate, new private schools would be held to the standards of the older private schools. Those that didn't produce would lose students.

The church state issue shouldn't amount to much as most students in Catholic schools are Protestants. If their parents aren't worried, it's not much of an issue.

The public schools establishment and their unions have monopolized education for years with disastrous results; it's time for competition.

When I finished high school, everyone (including Elvis) had to join the military or get drafted. I went into the Coast Guard for six months and then to summer camps and meetings for years. A waste. We really didn't do anything because it was a government run monopoly. How much better it would have been if it had been privatized.

On to college (for a 'liberal arts' education from 'liberal' professors). (The essay below drew a letter of agreement from Martin Anderson, author of *IMPOSTORS IN THE TEMPLE*.)

How useful was college?

In a nation that venerates education, college is seen as the ultimate goal. But is it? I've looked at what it did for me and many of my peers. We were 'establishment' types who were graduated from private and public colleges. Here are the results (which often depended on the professors and the books):

Astronomy- waste. Biology – terrible. Economics – could have been good and practical. Education courses – infamous. English – essential when practical. Geography – delightful. Government – could have been good. History – good, but left out non-western cultures. International relations – good. A foreign language – probably useless for most. Literature – could have been good if we'd had authors like Jack London and Ernie Pyle. Logic – waste. Philosophy – waste. Psychology – should have been practical. Sociology – laughable. Speech – no impact.



We had nothing on:

- Maturity in relation to: friendship, courting, sex, vice, crime, religion, cults, idealism, politics, parenting, liberalism, and conservatism.
- Resume writing, job hunting, managing money, traditional values, human nature,

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corruption, politics, military life, religious scandals, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, prejudice, social classes, the fallibilities of professionals, and how to read the media.

Did college make me and my peers:

- Better citizens?.....	Slightly.
- More cultured?.....	Slightly.
- Aware of various fields?.....	Too theoretically.
- More employable?.....	Yes, but not for the effort involved.
- Ready for graduate school?.....	If one needs four years.
- Ready for the real world?.....	No.
- More mature?.....	Not like the real world would have.
- Aware of our creativity?.....	Not enough.
- Was it worth the time and cost?.....	No.

After college, we kept few textbooks and never reviewed our notes. We were verbose. Some took jobs requiring no degree. Some went back to school to learn typing. Some sought career counseling as they had been in the wrong field.

Presently many are smart, but not intellectual, and are more subjective and prejudiced than they'd admit. They are reluctant to consider that half of what we studied we never used, nor heard of it since college.

Many of the girls went to college to find a husband and never used their degrees.

We were conditioned to be liberal. One professor said as we got older, we would get more conservative (prophetic), but this was never explained.

My degree didn't help in teaching and writing. In social work, politics, and mental health, it was often a hindrance, as it's 'liberal' bent was far off the mark and it didn't make me 'streetwise.' I'm glad I didn't go to graduate school in those fields.

My real education was: living in slums and in New York City, the domestic version of the Peace Corps, career counseling, running a home for mental patients, renting rooms in my house, being self-employed, the fallible media, and life itself. As it turned out, I had to unlearn much of what college and the media had taught me. Hence my interest in noted author Ray Bradbury's saying he was 'one of the few lucky enough not to go to college.' Famed Russian author Solzhenitsyn said his 'education' was being a prisoner in Siberia.

College consists of missing information, useful information, useless information, and misinformation. Those who didn't finish didn't miss as much as they're led to believe.

The useful parts were: - Vocabulary and concepts. - Learning to think, speak and write objectively and critically. - Exploding myths. - Independent study. - Writing papers on favorite subjects. - Exchange student programs (tops). - Student government, Model United Nations

College should retain these, but require achievement in: 1) Traditional values, 2) Mental health, 3) Physical health, 4) Career counseling, 5) Internships, and 6) Practical courses.

Students could be tested and given credit for achievements in outside activities that fulfilled these categories.

If this approach were used, more families would get their young people into such activities. Everyone would gain - the school in granting practical degrees, the parents for their efforts, and the student in getting a head start.

Regarding the second recommendation above - mental health: schools should require students mature for obvious reasons, but also so the political students don't end up on the extremes of the

Far left or far right

People believe what they want to believe; and they want to believe certain things because of how their minds work. The far left and far right go to extremes because they are immature.

It seems the far left (hippy types in the late 60s) grew up spoiled, irresponsible, unconditionally loved, and learned to get by on charm and rhetoric. They came of age idealistic and unprepared. They found reality too harsh and rebelled radically. They tear down the establishment, yet expect it to cure society's problems the way an adolescent criticizes his folks, yet expects

them to solve every problem. They don't hold the poor responsible because they (the far left) never learned responsibility. They put it aside and look for a world that is secure, loving, socialistic, egalitarian, positive, psychologically oriented, well-educated, and rational. They don't find it and become cynical.

The far right (John Birchers) is the other extreme. They are immature in a different way - repressed. They didn't develop emotionally, establish their identities, or become fully in touch with their feelings. They never resolved many issues, and are angry, fearful. They feel under siege and don't know why. Their security is the past. They make fetishes of guns, the bible, the flag, and the constitution - beacons in a threatening world of change. They plod through life doing their 'duty.' Talking about sex is taboo, homosexuality is an abomination, and issues are black and white - sometimes the work of God, the devil, or communists. Security is the biggest military, biggest police force, and biggest gun in the closet. They over-identify with their leaders and want them to do their thinking, fight their battles, be macho (and ride a white horse). They don't find these and remain frustrated, threatened, and angry.



	Far left	Moderate	Far right
Identity.....	groping.....	settled.....	stunted
Love is.....	everything.....	part of life.....	to be earned
Sensitive.....	overly.....	somewhat.....	lacking
Outlook.....	idealistic.....	realistic.....	reactionary
Believe in.....	theories.....	practicalities.....	dogmas
Orientation.....	future.....	present.....	past

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Intellectual approach.....	objective.....	objective.....	subjective, mean
Social classes.....	anti.....	accepting.....	regimented
Superiors.....	too chummy.....	some distance.....	obedient
Traditional values.....	anti.....	valued.....	dogmatic
Discipline.....	permissive.....	firm.....	repressive
Responsibility.....	pass the buck.....	valued.....	burdensome
Sex.....	permissive.....	prudent.....	repressed
Change.....	worship.....	accept.....	fear
Future.....	revolution.....	evolution.....	turn the clock back
Leaders.....	anti.....	work with.....	venerate
Religion.....	anti.....	neutral.....	fundamental
Soc. Problems.....	guilt.....	empathy.....	intolerance
Psychology.....	worship.....	use.....	fear
See mankind as.....	perfectible.....	good& bad.....	bad
Maturity.....	immature.....	mature.....	immature
See the poor as.....	victims.....	limited.....	fools
See hardened criminals as.....	'ill'.....	immature (by choice).....	evil
Priorities.....	social programs...	defense
Priorities.....	'compassion'.....	order
Approach.....	sloppy.....	flexible.....	rigid
Approach.....	carrot.....	carrot& stick.....	stick
Lifestyle.....	non-conformist.....	straight.....	too conventional
Appearance.....	non-conformist.....	appropriate.....	unimaginative
Humor.....	scoffing.....	natural.....	lacking
Results.....	jaded.....	acceptable.....	frustrated
Seen as.....	bleeding heart.....	mature.....	mean

The far right is uptight and often mixes church and state. The far left is irresponsible, idealistic, patronizing, and too generous. A close look at each would probably show many in these groups have not found fulfillment in their personal lives; they seek it in their beliefs, which become their 'family.' They seek beliefs that provides all the answers and pervade and control most aspects of life. They want a world that doesn't and can't exist.

Both can be arrogant, smug, self-righteous, and fanatical. One has only to look at what happens when either has come to power in a foreign country - a left or right wing dictatorship as a 'temporary' measure - a Fidel Castro of the left or an Muslim fundamentalist of the right.

Another reason schools should require students mature is so they graduate realistic about life, not idealistic.

Beware of idealism

When we are children we are idealistic in planning to be astronauts, cowboys, movie

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stars (at the same time) - and we grow out of it. When we are teenagers we are idealistic in dreaming of the perfect romance, best school, best job, non-stop success, and changing the world. These dreams should be tempered with realism from our elders, but often they are not.

In college, students are told they can create a 'new man,' eliminate poverty, level the classes, educate everyone, eliminate prejudice, stop war, 'save' the 3rd world, etc. Many liberal students believe this, and go into journalism, teaching, or social work.

Some churches contribute to this by preaching: a sublime brotherhood, only positives, good intentions are enough, a cult of personality, etc.

The more immature the young adult, the more susceptible he is to going off the deep end. Some join communes, cults, sects, or ill-founded protest movements. Some join the Peace Corps with stars in their eyes, and finish their term having accomplished little or nothing. (I saw this when in the domestic version of the peace corps - VISTA).

Some go to Wash. D.C. to 'clean up' politics. But Washington needs 'cleans' only temporarily at a high level after a scandal to quell controversy. Once the scandal fades, they are discarded as Washington is more comfortable with leakers, gamesmen, and backstabbers.

Idealistic young people get into the wrong work or marry the wrong person. Idealistic brokers lose money. Idealistic military officers risk their men in battle. Idealistic parents spoil their kids. Idealistic preachers lead their flocks to disaster (Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jim Jones).

On a much larger scale the greatest danger, of course, lies in revolutions. Idealistic intellectuals fan the flames to burn everything down so they can come to power. They are hostile to compromise. They lack maturity and patience, and become more authoritarian than the regimes they replaced. In the past some have created communism and fascism, abolished money, and persecuted people wearing glasses. They've purged, committed genocide, and started wars. Other idealists have gone off to fight them, thinking the war would be over in a few weeks.

During the Spanish Civil War, idealists joined the International Brigade to fight for democracy. Later they found their side was autocratic and backed by communists.

In China the idealistic young were unleashed as the Red Guards from 1966-76, bringing one of the worst periods in China's history.

Idealism is the pitfall of youthful inexperience. Older people must expose the young to reality at every step of their development.

I graduated highly idealistic with a degree in Political Science and little understanding of capitalism and socialism. I hadn't heard of Milton Friedman, or the liberal misconceptions in Appendix, or that college campuses and the media are mostly liberal, or anything against unions or minimum wage.

I hadn't read anything sensible (then or since) about how to discipline youngsters. I had driven a school bus in college, and learned how to discipline (Appendix A). This was to turn out to be very important, as later in social work, my supervisors believed in everything but discipline. I was to go through great anguish and testing on this. If I hadn't driven a school bus, I'd have ended up in the nut house.



Chapter II Oh, to save the world

After graduating wet behind the ears and verbose, I moved to the slums of liberal New York City.

A Baptism by fire

Living in slums

I wanted to learn about ‘the downtrodden victims of society who lived in abject poverty.’ I lived in Spanish Harlem and the lower eastside – both in New York in the late 60s and later behind the capitol in Wash. D.C. in the early 70s.

Rather than ‘the pitiful and oppressed poor held down by the establishment,’ I found something different. Cars were benches - people sat on them, which ground the grit into the paint. Some stood or walked on them. Occasionally a car found itself up milk boxes in the morning with the back tires off. The next day the front tires and engine parts disappeared, and later kids used it as jungle gym. Some were set afire.

So much trash and litter filled the gutters, the streets were almost level with the sidewalk, although cleaned every two days.

You knew you were in the slums when coming up the subway stairs. When your eyes came to the level of the street, they saw broken glass, litter, and sidewalks darkened by gum and fuel oil. I got so used to it, when I came up the stairs in a clean neighborhood, it was a pleasant shock.

When furniture caught fire or was unwanted, it was thrown on the sidewalk. People ‘air mailed’ trash out the windows. Many phone booths didn’t work, were used as urinals, and were vandalized for change.

I couldn’t get insurance on my apartment. When I had people over, they had to come by cab. Kids didn’t yell when playing; they screeched. You never knew when it was an emergency. The laundromat had plexiglas windows and ‘iron putty’ covering the bolts holding the washers down.

Once I stopped a 7th-grade boy from beating a terrified girl. He couldn’t understand what I was doing.



on
a

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The local SAFEWAY was the only supermarket in one neighborhood. It had Plexiglas windows. Kids ran in and out flirting, chasing, and stealing. People double parked, left their shopping carts in the middle of the aisle, and coughed on you in the slow-motion line.

A nearby social agency sent around flyers saying, 'Let's stop SAFEWAY from abusing the neighborhood,' 'Let's get SAFEWAY to lower prices and improve service.' These came through the mail slot on a regular basis. Then a long interval. Finally one came through: 'Since SAFEWAY closed, let's car pool to the nearest market.' Incredible. Instead of bugging SAFEWAY, the social agency should have been trying to keep it open.

The agency held LOUD dances. The decibels could have taken the paint off the walls. They blasted out of the building like a locomotive, practically shaking the windows across the street. Inside no one could even shout. These were put on with no notice to neighbors and lasted until 2:00 a.m.

The slums had dogs on three legs, blaring stereos and TV's, babies crying and dogs barking for hours, rock-throwing, windows used as doors, baleful, sullen stares, graffiti, and horn blowing right outside your window in the middle of the night from cab drivers scared to leave their cabs.

The pets were vicious or spooked; and when you told a kid to stop doing something, he took it as a challenge to be smart-aleck.

Many of the poor didn't like themselves nor each other. Life was cheap. People spat, cursed, threatened, fought, drank, and took drugs. There must have been a higher percentage of accidents.

The mailboxes in some buildings had been broken into so often, people waited out front for their welfare checks. The apathy and the danger affected teachers, police, and other city workers. Some must have done only the minimum amount of work, burned out, or transferred. Chain stores, banks, and supermarkets avoided the area because of: bad checks, shoplifting, phony accidents and claims, shopping cart losses, crime against employees, vandalism to buildings and cars, and time lost in handling food stamps. (I read Ralph's in Calif. lost money in nine out of ten of its inner city markets.) That is why prices are higher.

The slums didn't need the peace corps; they needed the marine corps. Everything was down 40 notches. But this isn't what we hear. Somehow the media and academia are compelled to excuse those who live in the slums and blame everyone outside:

1 Blame 'society'

Most of the problems are the fault of the poor. Where are ambition and responsibility? In sending to school kids who haven't bathed in days? In the TV on all night instead of homework? In the empty library, the lack of interest in schools, markets, parks, or voting? How long do you have to live in a slum before losing 'understanding and compassion' for people who abuse you, their pets, kids, property, and each other? How long do you believe it is 'racial, economic, or political?'

2 Blame the police

Some cities put their worst cops in the slums, but this doesn't account for all the nonsense.

3 Money is the answer

False. Millions have been spent on social programs and we still have slums. In fact,

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many programs have done more harm than good by causing dependence and resentment.

4 No dignity in poverty

Only partly true. Slum living and slum schooling are undignified, but being poor isn't. I have known many who were poor in money and rich in everything else. (Many of our parents and grandparents were poor and didn't feel they had less dignity or that the government owed them a living.)

5 The poor are ambitious

Many people, poor or not, are not ambitious.

6 Mix the slums with better areas

This is idealistic, unfair, and enrages middle class people of all colors, some of whom have worked hard to escape the slums.

What's the answer?

a Look at history

Poverty has been helped more by capitalism than by government programs (socialism). The definition of poverty has been expanded over the years. The American poor have consistently been told they are bad off, when they live like kings compared the way most Americans lived 80 years ago. Our elderly can tell us about this (and how the poor then had more hope and pride). Our poor are far better off than the poor of many countries

b Be realistic

Approach the subject without rhetoric or emotion. Find the literature that describes slums honestly and doesn't excuse the poor who mismanage their affairs. Learn about the poor from merchants, insurance companies, creditors, realtors, city employees, bus and cab drivers, and the working and sensible poor. Learn that higher prices in the slums are the result of the added costs of doing business there. Study how the good people in slums there raise good kids despite enormous odds. Study how poor immigrants do the same and pass our poor.

c Avoid liberals

Most of those in the media, academia, social work, and the ACLU are liberals. Most have never lived in a slum, nor been poor. They are the 'excuse industry.' Even after the facts about many of the poor mismanaging their affairs are glaring clear, liberals are still turning over every rock looking for 'oppression, cultural deprivation, inequity, exploitation, violation of rights,'

d Plain Language

No jargon, rhetoric, psychobabble, feel good, or slum jive.

e Fair share

of services and competent city workers. This is difficult as better workers gravitate to better neighborhoods, and some cities dump their worst workers into the slums.

f Fix responsibility

for noise, rundown property, abandoned cars, illegal dumping, crime.

g Law enforcement

The small matters of noise, litter, parking, panhandling, vagrancy, add up. They are symbolic, they affect morale, and cleaning them up causes interest in going after bigger problems.

h Traditional values

Whether the law enforcer is from the slums or not, he has to understand the slums on one hand, but BELIEVE in society's values on the other. He doesn't think noise, threats, screeching, drunkenness, crime are normal. Such enforcers need maturity, confidence, and conviction as their work is all uphill and totally thankless in today's permissive society. Such people are usually clean cut. The disheveled ones are often ineffective. They often have more problems than the poor.

i Privatize

Housing

Turn housing projects over to tenants. In part of Wash. D.C. this raised rent collections 105%, cut vacancy rates 13%, and cut administrative costs 60%, crime 5% and teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency 50%. In other cities the same arrangement cut vacancy 18%, robbery 77%, and crime 66%. Next comes tenant ownership.

Phase out rent control; it creates inequities and a housing shortage. Allow cheaper housing, urban homesteading, and subletting of rooms.

Work

Allow 'right to work' and 'work at home.' Allow kids under 14 to work part time. Study lowering (or phasing out) the minimum wage. This would create thousands of jobs for drop-outs, delinquents, criminals, derelicts, addicts, the homeless, and others - many of whom need to develop work habits. They should be able to offer their services at a competitive wage.

Education

Allow parents to teach their kids at home and to have a choice of schools with vouchers. Schools would have to compete for students and teachers.

Misc.

Privatize fire depts., parks, transportation, mail, education, justice, and charity. These have been successful. Welfare reform: see chap II, c, 4th essay

All of these would let the poor who are motivated get ahead, and not be held back by those who aren't. People could live with more dignity and hope - as they did in the past.

(Some of the above came from the N.Y. Times, G. Gilder, E. Banfield, H. Hazlitt, Wash. Post, the L.A. Times.)

Domestic version of the peace corps

I was two years out of college and floundering in social work when I got a telegram urging me to quickly volunteer for VISTA (the domestic version of the peace corps). It said my background would be good for working with migrant farm laborers. (It wasn't, but they were looking for bodies.) This was the start of the War on Poverty in 1965.

We volunteers were flown to Oregon for 'intensive' training - three weeks of classes (no tests), and three weeks of living in migrant camps (best part). There some of us picked crops for an hour before we got tired, played with and taught migrant kids a few things, dug dry wells, helped a tuberculin family, looked for Job Corps prospects, looked into migrant wages and living conditions, improved privies with lumber we solicited, and worked on a contaminated water problem. Some volunteers got into a labor dispute and were kicked out of one camp.

Living with the poor and receiving volunteer wages were basic to VISTA. We were paid \$180/mo., which seemed more than what some poor families lived on.

We were asked by outsiders what we were doing and found it hard to answer. We asked our trainers what we were supposed to do when we got to our assignments and were told, 'You'll find out when you get there.' When we got 'there' and asked, our sponsors said, 'We don't know; what were you trained to do?' (while telling the papers we were receiving 'in-service, on-going orientation.' As it turned out, only a few volunteers were assigned to migrant farm labor.)

I was assigned to Pecos, a half hour outside Santa Fe, New Mexico. It had 1200 people (and lots of gossip). Outside town there were bald peaks of 13,000 feet and alpine valleys, quiet but for the ring of a cowbell. Six miles away was a town of 13 families without electricity, and below was the Pecos River, from which farmers channeled water with 300 year old 'ditches,' governed by 'ditch associations.' On the horizon were silent storms with constant lightning.

The reddish, clay soil when dry was like cement and when wet, was sticky enough to pull your shoes off. During the rains it washed into the river, turning the falls a reddish color.

Some of the adobe homes had this coloring, which gave them a glow at sunset. When I arrived, I drove past these becoming enchanted. It seemed like a Shangri-La. No travel log had shown such a place (nor captured the deep gazes of the Spanish beauties. a good beginning).

The people were said to be descendants of the conquistadors; and the towns were supposed to be some of the oldest in the U.S. The people and ballot were bilingual.



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