



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

On the subject of...

Socialism—Feeding at the public trough

By contributing editor, R. T. Mason

I couldn't have said it better, so I won't!

My handsome sailor husband, who was stationed at Pearl Harbor back in the 1960s, has a special place in his heart for December 7th. This week he submitted the following story to me which looks at the Japanese attack that took place 66 years ago and provides thoughtful analysis of how the attack still affects our country today. It is, I think, worthy of your kind attention. Besides, I have some holiday baking to do.. See you next week. VEM

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, changed America in more ways than one. That attack brought our country together in the effort to defeat the Axis powers in an unprecedented manner. Admiral Yamamoto, the planner of the attack, said it best when he proclaimed, "We have wakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve."

That Sunday morning so many years ago awoke a nation, and caused President

Franklin Roosevelt to declare it "a date that will live in infamy." He was right, of course, but his words proved to be an epitaph to the freedoms that our citizens once enjoyed.

At the time of the stock market crash on October 29, 1929, Herbert Hoover, a Quaker, was our President. Being a Quaker, he believed that each community could solve its own problems, but unemployment was so rampant that more help was needed, which President Hoover refused to provide. The American people wanted help, and they elected Franklin Roosevelt to give them that help by electing him as the next President. History will show that Mr. Roosevelt was not a good choice, but unfortunately, at the time, he was the only choice Americans had.

To give Mr. Roosevelt the credit he sincerely deserves, he made a strong effort to improve employment and produce prosperity for our country. He started several programs that enabled some people to become employed, but

these federal employment programs had little long-term effect on the national unemployment rate. That rate remained high until the commencement of World War II.

Most people who survived our Great Depression have long been supporters of President Roosevelt. They believe that he saved America. I disagree. Instead, I believe that he brought about the destruction of America, and his politics are still alive and well in every community in the nation. He started a concept of federal government that is far more divisive, more intrusive and more socialistic than the founders of this country could possibly have dreamed.

In his efforts to re-employ America, Roosevelt's government directly employed citizens in his programs instead of helping business to employ people. In essence, he initiated the idea of public feeding at the federal trough. Then, in 1935, President Roosevelt signed into law the Social Security Act, which brought

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Only in Aberdeen

By contributing editor Don Rowe

Show me a successful coach at any level, and I'll show you a coach who has, first and foremost, great players. But those same successful coaches also point to a qualified staff of assistants as being equally important to a winning program.

That same principle applies to both the private sector and to various governmental entities such as educational institutions. In other words, successful programs

not only have top quality people at the top, but also have effective leaders in subordinate roles. And therein lies the main problem with the Aberdeen school district the past 12 years: an inability to hire, promote and retain qualified people for key positions throughout the school system.

Aberdeen school superintendent Lavon Fluker-Reed is a prime example and her ill-advised hiring can be laid directly at the feet of the Aber-

deen school board who ignored the findings of a Delta State search committee which had passed her over in favor of other more experienced candidates. Instead, the local school board hired Reed despite the fact her only previous experience as an administrator was as an elementary school principal in Meridian.

And through the years, Reed herself has also consistently hired, promoted or

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Socialism—Feeding at the public trough

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more Americans to that public feeding trough. Although social security is funded by contributions from the employer and the employee, the funds go to the federal government, which then doles out money as it sees fit. What social security recipient could object when the government wants to increase his or her monthly check? If one candidate for public office wants to increase social security payments and the other does not, then for which candidate is a social security recipient more likely to vote?

At the beginning of World War II, Roosevelt very much wanted the United States to enter the war, but he lacked the public support for such an action. As evidenced by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Mr. Roosevelt was correct in wishing our involvement. Had we entered the war sooner, it is doubtful that the Pearl Harbor attack would have succeeded, but like today, Americans were fickle by believing that Americans could bury their collective head and ignore a tyrannical terrorism that was devouring the world. Nevertheless, due to Roosevelt's Lend-Lease Act which provided American built war machinery to the Allies, the wheels of American enterprise finally began to turn and the Great Depression ground to a halt. How long our continued support to the Allies would have lasted had the Japanese not attacked Pearl Harbor is anyone's guess, but the United States would certainly have become involved in the war at some point.

Timing is everything, and the attack on Pearl Harbor came at an especially good moment for President Roosevelt. I don't blame him for the attack, nor do I believe that he knew about the coming attack in advance, as some people claim. However, I do believe that his Lend-Lease Act and the attack on Pearl Harbor saved Mr. Roosevelt's presidency. Had the Lend-Lease Act not provided business for the American economy, and had the attack on Pearl Harbor not provided us a solid reason for entering the war in 1941, the Great Depression would have lasted several more years until we eventually entered the war. By that time, we might have been fighting the Axis powers alone, but we might also have realized that Roosevelt's programs were not working, and

America's march to socialism might have been stopped.

As a result of Franklin Roosevelt's Social Security Act and his welfare system, in the early 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson was able to push through his Great Society Program, establishing both the Medicare and the Medicaid systems, attracting more people to the federal feeding trough and providing them with a higher level of support. The grip of socialism was tightening.

Since Roosevelt's road to socialism began, our government has also used the income tax to control and engineer society by

controlling state governments. For example, the federal government can withhold highway funds from any state that does not require a certain percentage of seatbelt usage or that does not require a certain speed limit on its roads. So, now, not only are individuals trapped at the federal feeding trough, but all 50 sovereign states are trapped also.

Today, all the Democratic candidates are supporting a universal health care system that will bring the rest of us to the trough, and end any hope we have of ever being released from the deadly talons of socialism. After sending payments to the federal government for almost 75 years, and having that government virtually steal all those funds, why would any of us want to send the government more money in the form of insurance? The thought baffles me, yet we will eventually do just such a thing, and in doing so, we will lose our country.

What sets our country apart from all the other countries of the world? Quite simply, it is our right to own property, our right to work for our own prosperity and our right to the freedom to live

our own lives without interference from our government. During the Great Depression, we began to give away those rights and those freedoms and today we are only an empty shell of the nation our ancestors founded – a nation of hope, a nation of vision and a nation of liberty.

Local leaders have learned their lessons in socialism well. In every city around the country, they are "providing for the common welfare" by establishing ordinances that take away our liberties and by hiring more people for the local government payroll trough. The policy of taking away from the few to give to the many is a powerful political tool, and one wielded by politicians even in little Aberdeen, Mississippi.

Today, we do not enjoy the freedoms that were enjoyed by our parents, and our children will never know the freedoms that we have enjoyed. It is doubtful that our grandchildren will even know the meaning of the word. If we fail to halt the spread of socialism in our country, then today's United States of America will become tomorrow's United Soviet Socialist Republic of America. Pearl Harbor brought Americans together to defeat a common enemy of tyranny. It is time that Americans come together again to defeat another enemy, an enemy which comes from within our borders and from our own countrymen. It's the enemy called socialism, and it is devouring us every day.

Please join the fight to end socialism. Remember Pearl Harbor!



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Only in Aberdeen

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retained key staff members who – in many cases – were totally unqualified. (Her first major hire, head football coach and athletic director Royce Stephens, was stripped of his AD duties less than six months after taking over and was then asked to resign a year and a half later when he was caught using the AHS field house as a make-shift lumber yard where he was caught cutting out plywood Christmas figures which are frequently found in people's front yards during the holiday season.) Now, that's not to say every person she's hired, promoted or retained was incompetent and/or unqualified, nor does it mean they weren't otherwise good people.

A case in point was the position of chief financial officer for the school district. In 1998-99, a series of articles in the *Aberdeen Examiner* detailed a near-calamity for the district when its financial books were in such disarray that Reed was forced to take a disclaimer on the 1998-99 budget when it was submitted to the state auditor's office (which meant the accounting firm doing the state-mandated yearly audit was unable to sign off on its work). The problem with the 1998-99 audit was due to the fact auditors were not able to determine which district funds went into which accounts.

The following year, Reed told members of the school board in a special

meeting the district had missed the original deadline for submitting its audit, which had been changed from March of 2000 to December of 1999. Once the mistake was realized, financial statements were prepared and submitted to the accounting firm, but the audit was postponed because the firm was in the midst of tax season and was unable to complete the work. Eventually, the dis-

trict was reportedly forced to hire an accounting firm from the Jackson area to clean up the books for 1999-2000 so Reed wouldn't have to take a disclaimer two years in a row. Two consecutive disclaimers would have meant the state would have stepped in to take over the books.

What wasn't mentioned in the articles, however, was the fact that Reed had hired a person with little more than bookkeeping experience to be the chief financial officer of a multimillion dollar organization. Reportedly, this person (Donnette Spight) knew she was in over her head and wanted out after the first year's fiasco, but Reed convinced her to stay on a second year.

Principals are arguably one of the most important members of a superintendent's staff and, as a State Department of Education website correctly pointed out several years ago, "Good schools with bad principals are virtually impossible to find." The past 12 years, Aberdeen has been blessed with several excellent principals – all of whom have been employed at the junior high level and below. However, we've had some doozies in this high profile position at the secondary level over the years, one of which was Teresa Price.

If memory serves me correctly, Price, currently a teacher at Shivers Junior High, was named interim principal at Aberdeen High School for the 1998-99 school year and, despite a petition calling for her ouster signed by a dozen or more teachers, Reed and the school board eventually gave her the job on a permanent basis. However, she was secretly placed on a "plan of improvement" which lasted for a year and a half. Several years later, she was put on a second "plan of improvement, one that according to a school board member "was for real this time."

A common practice with any number of businesses, a plan of improvement is usually a warning to the employee that an improvement in his or her job performance is required for continued employment. Shape up or ship out is the message intended to be conveyed and it is generally a short-term proposition, not a year and a half process. Too, rarely does an employee get a second plan of improvement, so the burning question here is just exactly how did Price keep her job as long as she did? More importantly, how many plans of improvement can an employee complete before he or she is deemed incompetent and how can any principal on a

plan of improvement possibly evaluate any teacher on his or her staff?

Although Price's failings are too numerous to mention, several incidents stand out as proof of her incompetence – one of which involved a write-up for a head football coach who was approached by Price during the middle of one of his practices and ordered to drive the volleyball team to an out-of-town game. Quite naturally, he refused and was subsequently disciplined as being insubordinate. She also suspended a basketball coach without pay, which is a blatant violation of the Mississippi Codes. Her most infamous incident, however, came during an interview process in which she told the prospective employee, "When a kid jumps up in your face and calls you a (expletive deleted), we don't discipline them here in Aberdeen – we counsel them because of their cultural differences."

School guidance counselors, who are by law required to be certified, are also vital to the success of a high school. Qualified counselors have a huge impact in any number of different areas, but one of their most important duties is to maintain the students' permanent records and to provide the proper documentation on the student transcripts which are forwarded to colleges and universities.

Faye Harris-Gathings held the guidance counselor's position for several years at the high school and during her tenure there were dozens of documented incidents in which student transcripts were in error. More importantly, however, there was one incident in which a student actually graduated from the high school who failed to pass two required subjects and who failed to accumulate a sufficient number of credits. Despite failing to meet the state's graduation requirements in two different areas, the student in question was accepted at a local junior college.

Incredibly, the past 12 years the school board has virtually ignored Reed's questionable hires, the obvious incompetence at the highest levels of our school district and the low test scores. At the same time, the board has raised Reed's salary until she is one of the highest paid superintendents in the state. Thankfully, Reed has announced her retirement and a new superintendent will take over January 1. Now, if we could just convince the entire school board to do the same, maybe the new superintendent can turn things around and we can once again have a school system in which we can all take pride.



This sign was posted at a school function—no wonder our kids can't speak English!



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112 East Washington Street
Aberdeen, Mississippi 39730
Phone: 662-369-0449

Email: AberdeenAdvocate@bellsouth.net
viki@vikimason.com

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Subscription Rates:
12 Weeks— \$12.00
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