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Response Paper #1

To the victor goes the spoils. That statement couldn’t be more true when it comes to the hush-hush, back-door deals that were supposedly involved in the making of the educational system in America. Upon reading an excerpt from Mark Bauerlein’s book, *The Dumbest Generation*, about how America’s intellectual genius has gone down as a whole over the years, I couldn’t help but trace the problem back to it’s source. If students in America are slowly pulling further away from the top of the educational charts, then maybe the problem isn’t the student’s, but the system. After digging deeper into the origins of America’s general education history, the glaring facts-whether truth, or just speculation-started to pull together around the dishonorable ideals of using money and power for personal gain.

With the era of technological advances growing into a giant snowball effect, one would expect that the extra, and more easily accessible resources that the new technology has to offer would go hand in hand with superior thinking and innovation on the student’s part. However, Bauerlein makes his claim clear on this subject and suggests that, while the resources are there and plentiful, students are lagging behind because, “the enlightenment hasn’t happened,”(Bauerlein 168). This newer generation of people under the age of 30 are in fact, less smart than the older population. The immediate response of many in that category of “30 or under” would be to blow Bauerlein off the face of the planet with accusatory arguments and ridiculous insults which would only prove Bauerlein’s claim to be more true than originally thought. However, my first-ish thought brought me to thinking about the origins of education. A little birdy once told me about the origins of the American education, and I wished to see if their thoughts were valid.

As Agent Mulder from the X-Files would argue, “the truth is out there,” and the supposed truth that I uncovered came from a particular article by author, Jamie Lee, on the web magazine, *Waking Times*. Lee’s article presented facts about early 19th century entrepreneurs such as, John D. Rockefeller, JP Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie which imply that these men used their incredibly large wealth to design a system for which they could always stay at the top of the economical “food chain.” These rulers of the industry sought to retain their status by refraining the working class from ever gaining more power or authority by controlling their resources of development, mainly in the form of schooling. Lee provides the fact that Rockefeller founded the General Education Board in 1905 and also had a hand in creating other associations with the help of Carnegie and JP Morgan, that appeared to be for the public’s interest. In reality, these Robber Barons created these organizations to become the masterminds behind the American system of education and orchestrated things so that their funding was what controlled how much went into educational teachings, and how much was left untouched.

While this information could be false, I find it to be a likely possibility. These “Titans of the Industry” were known for their vertical and horizontal integration. Their wealth was amassed through pooled efforts to monopolize their fields of business and by controlling every single step of their production. Why would they treat their labor source any differently? If what Lee brings to the table is true, then it would explain the deficit in intellect that people such as Bauerlein are finding in our younger generations. The world of knowledge is growing profusely, but the way in which students are taught is not conducive for higher levels of intellect that spur innovation and genius. Thus causing an ever growing divide.

Works Cited

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