



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on January 6, 2020

Published in the January 6, 2020 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 36, No. 01

CFR Pushes Central Planning to Fuse Education With Economy

The globalist-minded Council on Foreign Relations is urging state and local officials, as well as other leaders, to transform the education system, claiming that looming changes in the economy and the workplace will require workers who are properly “educated” and “trained” for the new paradigm. The effort seeks to “reverse-engineer” every part of the education and workforce training system, and ensure that components are “all walking in lockstep.” In interviews with *The New American*, two of the CFR task force members involved in developing the recommendations warned of major problems ahead for America if the organization’s ideas were not acted upon — and soon.



However, also in interviews with *The New American*, education experts, critics of technocratic governance, and leading lawmakers all sounded the alarm about the CFR’s proposed schemes. One expert argued that the educational policies advanced by the task force resemble the tools used by totalitarian regimes such as the communist dictatorships of the Soviet Union and China. Another expert condemned the ideas as moving America toward technocracy. A prominent educator expressed shock that the report made no mention of the very real and very serious problems with the current education system. And considering the CFR membership’s long history of betraying America and liberty around the world to advance globalism and tyranny, lawmakers warned that there are very good reasons to be concerned.

According to the CFR’s Task Force report, dubbed “The Work Ahead: Machines, Skills, and U.S. Leadership in the Twenty-First Century,” America will be facing massive changes in the years ahead. Especially concerning to the CFR’s panel behind the report is the growth of automation and technology, which will displace large numbers of American workers across a broad range of industries. All of that is true, of course. But any effort to sell drastic changes including even bigger Big Government and an enormous array of new unconstitutional policies must have at least a kernel of truth to sound palatable. This effort is no exception.

The plot is audacious and comprehensive. In the article entitled “CFR: U.S. Needs More Mass Migration, Bigger Welfare State,” *The New American* explored the enormous transformations that the powerful CFR is pursuing relating to social-welfare programs and immigration. In short, under the guise of preparing America for the future, the CFR argued that the U.S. government must massively expand the size and scope of government, ranging from healthcare and retirement to increased immigration. Sweden and Denmark, two of the nations with the most bloated governments on Earth, are



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praised as successful models. Interestingly, even while warning of huge looming job losses for American workers, the CFR report advocated a surge in immigration.

The other key component of the CFR's "Work Ahead" agenda deals with "education." Indeed, the CFR report claims America needs "dramatic" so-called transformations in the education system. Much of this must be driven by government, the globalist group argued. Simply "waiting and hoping that the market will sort out the challenges," according to the CFR report, "is not an adequate response." It was not made clear why. Rather, the CFR claimed only that failure to provide "the education" that apparently helpless Americans supposedly "need" for the future would be dangerous. It was also not clear why Americans could not take responsibility themselves for their education.

In a phone interview with *The New American*, CFR task force project director Ted Alden said the goal of the effort was to "make it a top national priority to prepare the American workforce for the changes that are coming." According to Alden, the thing that the United States did "better than any other country" was pushing ahead with tax-funded education for everyone. "In the early 20th century, the U.S. led every country in terms of moving Americans into secondary education, then into post-secondary education with the G.I. Bill," he said when asked why the market system could not deal with the coming changes. "A lot of this came from state and local government. This is a familiar history that we handled well in the 20th century."

Alden argued that there is "probably a lot that needs to be fixed in K-12 education." In particular, offering internship programs in South Carolina as an example, he said linking education and workforce development would be crucial. "We're trying to build a practical bridge between education and the jobs of the future," he said. "General improvement in education is an urgent national need." And that is why many of the recommendations and outreach efforts are directed at state and local officials, in addition to the federal government.

However, the CFR narrative appears to start off with multiple false premises. For instance, it argues that the United States became the world's most successful economy not because of free markets, private-property rights, or Christian civilization, but rather because of government "education." What the CFR left out was that the architects of America's government education system were almost all communists, eugenicists, collectivists, socialists, or humanists, or some combination of the above. And they were working not to educate America, in the true sense, but to fundamentally transform it away from a free Christian republic toward a collectivist, secular society. The consequences have been catastrophic, as the CFR inadvertently admits throughout the report when pointing out the tragic outcomes from America's government-run education system.

Another phony premise relied on by the CFR to advance its policy demands is the fact that employers are having trouble finding employees to fill jobs. That is true. But it is easy to demonstrate that the problem is *the very government education system* that the CFR claims is so crucial to America's success. Today, the federal government's own data reveal that American children are being dumbed down at an unprecedented rate. More than two-thirds of eighth graders are not proficient in *any* core subject, according to the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress data. Prior to the government-education system becoming ubiquitous, Americans were far better educated, as vast amounts of statistical and anecdotal data reveal.

The CFR does want reform. But it would make the crisis in education even worse than it is now,



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completely severing ties to traditional liberal education while undermining freedom.

Recommendations

Among the various changes and recommendations that the CFR is peddling:

- Ensure that college and university are “within the reach of all Americans,” presumably by either forcing taxpayers to pay for it all or by shackling young Americans to ever-greater levels of debt they cannot pay.
- Link “education more closely to employment outcomes.” “A change in thinking is needed, from seeing education and work as distinct and separate activities to considering them as closely linked,” the report continues.
- Provide “expanded counseling for students to set them on successful education-to-work paths,” since apparently government knows best what “path” those children should be on. The government schools should also lay out “guided pathways” to direct students toward what the central planners believe will be needed in the future.
- Collect more data on students to be disseminated by government, on everything from education to career, to make all the central planning work. “Washington should expand and improve its own data gathering and dissemination,” the report says, adding that the private sector must also be conscripted into this Big Data scheme.
- Concentrate greater emphasis on “lifelong learning,” which will “require changes in behavior” by employees. This means adults need to be constantly ready and willing to go back to the government for more so-called education to keep up with changes in society and the economy.
- Insist state and local governments do a better job of central planning and incorporating their ideas about what society and the economy need into the education system. Among other policies, taking a page out of the Soviet playbook, authorities must “undertake detailed skills assessments of the population and the workforce needs of local employers,” the CFR task force argued. “Devising and implementing appropriate educational options depends on a solid assessment of the workforce needs of local employers and the education and skills level of the state workforce.” Also required: “close collaboration among state governments, educational institutions, and employers.”
- Include new “workplace readiness standards” in middle- and high-school curricula, requiring the education establishment to predict the future of the economy and prepare all children accordingly. “Skills readiness standards would be aligned with skills that are or will be in demand for quality jobs in the future or present,” the report added, noting that the standards would be continually revisited by “standard setters.” These standards should include “habits of the mind,” the CFR said cryptically, without elaborating.
- Have the federal government create “lifelong learning accounts” to provide money for everyone to pursue “lifelong learning.” This would be “a national program to help finance mid-career retraining,” the CFR said without citing any provision in the U.S. Constitution that would authorize such a program.
- Have the federal government develop a national ranking system for schools, building on the Obama administration’s efforts. While this would ostensibly help students decide which colleges offer the best value, it would also help the federal government demonize and marginalize educational institutions



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such as Christian colleges that resist the growing extremism that has infected higher education.

- Launch propaganda campaigns through the federal government and state governments involving public figures from sports and entertainment to “encourage young people to make the best possible educational-to-work choices.” It was not immediately clear how authorities would determine what the best possible education and work choices would be. Social media and other tools should be used, the report said.

In a phone interview with *The New American*, CFR task force member Chike Aguh, a former teacher who now works for the McChrystal Group, seemed well intentioned and highly intelligent while defending the CFR’s proposals. When asked about the purpose of education and whether it included more than just being good workers, for instance, Aguh demurred. “The type of skills and mindset that make people good citizens make them a good part of the workforce,” he said, calling for students to learn both “timeless” skills and “just-in-time” skills. “There is no silver bullet. There are a myriad of things that have to happen.”

Asked about concerns over central planning and the Sovietesque element, Aguh again downplayed concerns. “Industry will be telling educational institutions what they need, not committees of bureaucrats, so honestly I wouldn’t worry too much about that,” he said. “There is a huge array of players that has to work together for this to happen: the federal government, local governments, state governments, universities, and employers. No one player can solve the problem. We need the entire system of players.”

Aguh also explained why the Council on Foreign Relations was reaching out to state legislators to promote this agenda, when the CFR is much better known for focusing on the federal government’s foreign policy. “On a broad level, no one level can do it by itself,” he said. “If you think of where the power lies on education, the state has a lot of power. To be frank, in terms of the urgency, they can’t wait for the federal government to figure it out and save the state and local governments, so that’s a refrain we hear. They are also right on the ground with employers. In many ways it will be about how the federal government can support state and local governments.”

Government needs to focus on creating enough jobs, he explained in a conference call with state legislators. “Secondly, once we have the jobs, how do we make sure that there are the people who have the skills to do them?” he asked. “This is where I think you all, and the role that you serve, how do we — how does government and all of the other relevant institutions have an idea what that private sector’s going to need now and in the future? And then how do we reverse-engineer our education system going as early as pre-K all the way up through workforce development to make sure that that’s happening? ... How do we make sure that all of those parts of the education system, from elementary to tertiary to advanced and workforce development, are all walking in lockstep to make sure that those workers have those skills.”

Education Critics

In interviews with *The New American*, though, critics slammed the CFR’s ideas. Former senior policy advisor on education Charlotte Iserbyt, who served under President Ronald Reagan, blasted the globalist move to replace education with “workforce training.” But she was not surprised by the effort. Iserbyt, author of the must-read book *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*, once leaked key



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documents from the U.S. Department of Education. Among other horrors, she exposed efforts even in the 1980s aimed at Sovietizing the American education system.

Before offering her own thoughts on the CFR program, she quoted famous Christian writer C.S. Lewis. “If education is beaten by training, civilization dies,” wrote Lewis, adding that “the lesson of history” is the fact that “civilization is a rarity, attained with difficulty and easily lost.” Lewis also noted that a liberal-arts education frees the student, transforming him from “an unregenerate little bundle of appetites” into “the good man and the good citizen.” By contrast, workforce training “aims at making not a good man but a good banker, a good electrician, or a good surgeon.”

Speaking of the transformation of education into workforce training, Iserbyt expressed alarm. “This sort of educational vision means freedom of choice disappears for everyone,” she said. “If the government decides there will only be 10 welders needed, then your child will not be allowed to pursue welding if the 10 spots are already filled, even if he is only number 11. Same with other career choices. The government will be deciding who learns what and when. This is the kind of the phony education the Soviet Union provided. Education should never be workforce training. Americans should be allowed to choose their own future.”

The term “lifelong learning” was also a red flag, Iserbyt warned. “The danger of lifelong learning is that it puts everything under the umbrella of the tax-funded school districts and agencies,” she said. “That means government schools become the center of the community, even for elderly Americans. That is wrong. This is a police state being brought in through education, the COPS program [Community Oriented Policing Services] and other related mechanisms. This has been going on for a long time, but we have got to resist it. This is horrific. It’s the Chinese Communist learning system, preparing people to live in a police state.”

Other education experts also expressed serious concerns. Southern Methodist University Professor Emeritus of Teaching and Learning Dr. Patricia Mathes, founder of Hoot Education, Inc., acknowledged not being fully versed on the CFR’s agenda and programs. But what she saw in the report and documents was enough to raise serious concerns, Dr. Mathes told *The New American*.

“What I was most struck by was a lack of recognition that our schools are failing large swaths of our children in that most of youth are leaving high school unable to read, write, do mathematics, or think critically at levels to allow them to succeed in additional educational opportunities,” she said. “As such, these students, largely from poor and minority backgrounds, are essentially locked out of the American dream.”

“For these students, it is not enough to offer additional educational opportunities since often these students don’t possess prerequisites necessary to profit from additional opportunities,” Dr. Mathes warned. “The issue is much bigger than undergraduates graduating with liberal arts degrees of little job value. Thus, if our nation’s youth is going to be able to succeed in the highly technological world with its ever increasing needs to literacy and numeracy ability, then our nation need[s] a laser on ensuring every student achieves adequate literacy and numeracy as the first step.” Of course, that is not addressed anywhere in the CFR report.

Author Patrick Wood, perhaps the world’s leading critic of technocracy, warned that the entire CFR report advances a dangerous form of governance that is alien to America and incompatible with human liberty, using education as a tool. “This is a social engineering scheme that bonds government with the



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economic system for the sake of control,” explained Wood, who has written two books on technocracy and co-wrote *Trilaterals Over Washington*, the most important book exposing David Rockefeller’s CFR-linked Trilateral Commission. “One could call it Fascism, but more likely it is properly called Technocracy.”

Addressing the CFR’s call to link education more closely with “employment outcomes,” Wood asked an important question. “The problem here is, who sets the ‘employment outcomes’? Again, social engineering,” he warned. “If Americans were first taught critical thinking skills along with basic skills such as math, basic science, how to communicate, etc., the rest would sort itself out automatically.” The end goal, in any case, is to foist a top-down technocratic form of government on Americans that would use education and other tools to socially engineer the public.

State Senator Regina Bayer, an Idaho Republican who was invited to join the CFR’s conference call for state officials, also warned of a sinister agenda being pursued under the guise of helping America. “Both the conference call and the Independent task force report are full of global-government ideologies,” the conservative GOP senator said, blasting the push for even more Big Government involvement in all facets of life. “There seems to be the same old pitch that government can solve all problems.”

The CFR’s report occasionally contains statements that are true, or recommendations that may be helpful and desirable. However, the CFR has proven itself to be dangerous to America and liberty, and it very clearly has an agenda that is deeply at odds with Americanism, God-given individual rights, self-government, and the U.S. Constitution. It has openly supported the undermining of national sovereignty, and defectors such as Admiral Chester Ward have warned that its membership is pursuing a dangerous plot to submerge America into a one-world government.

Technology has always advanced, and work has always changed. Yet a true education does not view children merely as “human resources” to be groomed by government into being an efficient cog in the machine. Rather, real education transcends all that: It teaches children about God, eternal moral values, right and wrong, how to think, how to educate oneself, how to be a self-governing citizen of a free republic, how to reason and use logic, and much more. That begins with a solid foundation in reading, something that the federal government’s own data show clearly is not happening now.

The educational nightmare envisioned by the CFR — a seamless national indoctrination system aimed at producing compliant worker drones — must be stopped. In fact, the quackery and fraudulent education of the last few generations, at least, must be totally reconsidered. To prepare for an uncertain future, the most important single thing Americans could do is get the out-of-control government and Deep State institutions such as the CFR completely out of their children’s education. That is far more urgent than any of the CFR’s dire prognostications. And without dealing with the education crisis that the CFR proposes to intensify, America may not survive another generation as a free society.

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This article originally appeared in the January 6, 2020 print edition of The New American.



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