



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on January 25, 1993

Bill Clinton: A “Rhodie” in the White House

Cecil Rhodes would be proud to see as President one who has been educated in the “English ruling class tradition.”



By now everybody knows that President Bill Clinton is a Rhodes Scholar, a member of that select cadre of exalted Oxonian intellectuals whose celebrated cerebral prowess, civic commitment, and genteel culture destine them for distinguished accomplishment and top leadership, no matter what career paths they choose. Anxious to divert attention from charges of draft dodging and other character flaws. Mr. Clinton’s ideological soulmates in the media have been much inclined to focus on his purported intelligence and Oxford pedigree. Thus, for example, during the President-elect’s Little Rock economic conference and media extravaganza in December, pundits and participants alike praised Clinton’s “brilliance” and expressed awe at his depth of knowledge and his grasp of both theory and policy.

Influential “Rhodies”

When it comes to politics, “Rhodies” had already made a notable impression on the American landscape long before November 1992. As the *Los Angeles Times* has reported: “American Rhodes Scholars have produced three U.S. Supreme Court justices (John Marshall Harlan, Byron White, David Souter); six U.S. senators (J. William Fullbright of Arkansas, Richard Lugar of Indiana, Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, David L. Boren of Oklahoma, Larry Pressler of South Dakota and Bill Bradley of New Jersey); a speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (Carl Albert of Oklahoma); two U.S. governors (Clinton and Richard F. Celeste of Ohio); a secretary of state (Dean Rusk); a chief of the CIA (Stansfield Turner); a top-level presidential adviser (Walt W. Rostow); one singer-songwriter-movie star (Kris Kristofferson); and a host of achievers in the fields of law, business, education, medicine, science and the arts.”

“Indeed,” noted the *Times’* Charles T. Powers in a lengthy article on December 1st, “the election of a U.S. President was about the only niche still vacant in the distinguished list of achievements notched up by former Rhodes Scholars.” But with the election of Clinton, says Powers, “the Rhodes Scholars have got themselves – at last! – an American President, a man destined to be (if he isn’t already) the most famous former Rhodie of them all.”

It goes much further than that, however. Not only have “they” got “their” man in the White House, the Clinton retinue features other Rhodies in positions of prominence. They include: Clinton’s Oxford classmate Robert B. Reich, the Harvard political economy guru and the Administration’s designee to head the Labor Department; Ira Magaziner, another economic adviser and a Clinton classmate at Oxford; R. James Woolsey, nominated to head the CIA; Bruce Reed, the Clinton campaign issues



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director; and campaign spokesman George Stephanopoulos. Congressman Les Aspin (D-WI), Clinton's choice to head Defense, while not a "Rhodie," is an Oxford alumnus.

Rules of the Game

The Rhodes scholarships, which provide at least two years of study at England's Oxford University in any field of the scholar's choice, are, arguably, the most prestigious and coveted prizes in all of academe. Established at the turn of the century in the last three of the fabulously wealthy Cecil Rhodes' seven wills, the scholarships were to be given without regard to race or creed. But they were limited to men - until, that is, the British Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 caused the Rhodes Scholarship Trust to change the will. Admission of "the fairer sex" as Rhodes scholars began in 1976. In 1992, women accounted for half of the 32 scholarships allotted annually to the United States.

The scholarships are given to students of countries that were formerly part of the British Empire, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Pakistan. The United States and Germany are also included. Candidates from the U.S. must be American citizens 18 to 24 years of age, single, with at least junior standing in college. Scholastic achievement, character, leadership qualities, and physical vigor, usually exemplified by accomplishment in sports, are the winning attributes most often cited of the recipients. Cecil Rhodes' biographer Sarah G. Millin, cited other traits. Referring to the characteristics most desirable in Rhodes Scholars, Millin wrote that Rhodes "defines them with that defensive cynicism of the romantic, as: smugness, brutality, unctuous rectitude, and tact."

Frank Aydelotte, American secretary to the Rhodes trustees, wrote in *American Rhodes Scholarships* of the Americans selected for the great honor: "If he has the capacity for assimilation, if he can become a part of what he meets, he may return from Oxford to the United States a citizen of the world." But Aydelotte was writing to obfuscate and conceal, not to reveal. Rhodes was not interested in spending his fortune merely to promote slobbery sentimentalism about universal brotherhood. He had grander and more concrete aspirations. As biographer Millin put it: "The government of the world was Rhodes' simple desire."

Seeds of Socialism

That "simple desire" had been firmly implanted in Rhodes' bosom at Oxford by John Ruskin. Ensclosed as the first Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford in 1870, Ruskin's influence reached to all corners of the earth and is still widely felt, though seldom recognized, today. "He hit Oxford like an earthquake," wrote historian Carroll Quigley, "not so much because he talked about fine arts, but because he talked also about the empire and England's downtrodden masses, and above all because he talked about all three of these things as moral issues." Tolstoy regarded him as one of the greatest minds of any time or nation. Gandhi carried his message to India. G.B. Shaw and his Fabian Socialist confreres popularized Ruskin's thought worldwide.

Wolfgang Kemp, in his acclaimed biography of Ruskin, *The Desire of My Eyes*, writes that "if we consider all the concrete reforms proposed by Ruskin which in fact were finally carried out, we may feel that he was one of the most successful social theorists of the nineteenth century. Government-run education, vocational training centers, fixed minimum wages, support and retraining for the unemployed, old-age pensions, government quality controls on goods, work-creation schemes...."

These statist fixtures — and more — are his legacy. He was indeed "successful" - in sowing the seeds of socialism with the help of some of the world's great fortunes.

Some of Ruskin's most revolutionary social and political writings are to be found in his self-published



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newsletter *Fors Clavigera*. In one issue he wrote: "For, indeed, I am myself a Communist of the old school - reddest also of the red." Professor Wolfgang Kemp explains Ruskin's "old school communism" as "an agrarian communism of the kind advocated by Thomas More, from whose *Utopia* Ruskin liberally quotes - combined with authoritarian power structures."

Fors Clavigera, notes Kemp, "was also the circular letter of a utopian society, the Guild of St. George, which Ruskin had rounded to help him create this ideal system." Like the communes of Robert Owen and other utopians who had preceded him, Ruskin's "ideal" communes failed miserably. With an arrogance typical of his kind, however, he did not question the false dogmas and assumptions of his own faulty world view. Of course not; it was the world - society and civilization - that was all wrong. Ruskin's struggle in *Fors Clavigera*, says Kemp, "was the war of one against the world," the work of an author "who fought for a redistribution of society's wealth."

The Oxford seer's newsletter, says Kemp, "is also a chronicle of ongoing destruction. The skies are getting darker, the glaciers melting, and Scotland's rivers have so much oil in them that they can be set on fire." It seemed to Ruskin that everywhere he cast his eyes "the energies of mankind are devoted all around me to the pollution of skies and the desolation of fields."

Ruskin was one of the early ecological doomsdayers and technophobes who saw in the industrial revolution only evil. His pseudo-scientific meteorological study, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), predicting cataclysmic environmental retribution for man's violation of Mother Nature, were appropriately dismissed by the press and the scientific world as the rantings of a bedlamite. They were, after all, written largely during the latter period of his life when he was lapsing in and out of bouts of insanity. Equally mad ravings today from Amory Lovins, Barry Commoner, Stephen Schneider, Al Gore, and a host of other Chicken Littles are met with hosannahs from a dotting press.

In Ruskin we also see the forerunner of today's industry-bashing, pantheist, Gaia worshipping apocalypics. "Fors [Clavigera] has been called Ruskin's Apocalypse," writes Kemp. "The form and content of Fors were dictated by the insight that hell is not the end but the perpetuation of the present - combined with the ancient belief that everything on earth is linked to everything else."

This profound insight Ruskin took not from an earlier incarnation of Shirley MacClaine, but from Rousseau, the great infidel philosopher of the French Revolution. "I know no one whom I more entirely resemble than Rousseau." Ruskin once said. A terrible admission intended, undoubtedly, as a self-serving compliment. But like Rousseau, who glorified "the noble savage," inveighed against property, civilization, Church and State, and urged a return to nature, Ruskin lived quite comfortably from the fruits of the system he condemned.

Ruskin's Disciples

Ruskin's disciples at Oxford included Arnold Toynbee, Andrew Lang, Alfred Milner, and Cecil Rhodes, all of whom would later attain fame and spread the Ruskin influence through their respective roles as historian, poet, statesman and empire builder.

"Ruskin's message had a sensational impact," Professor Carroll Quigley records in *Tragedy and Hope*, his massive study of the Insider network. "His inaugural lecture was copied out in longhand by one undergraduate, Cecil Rhodes, who kept it with him for thirty years. Rhodes (1853-1902) feverishly exploited the diamond mines and goldfields of South Africa, rose to be prime minister of the Cape Colony (1890-1896), contributed money to political parties, controlled parliamentary seats both in England and in South Africa, and sought to win a strip of British territory across Africa from the Cape of



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Good Hope to Egypt and to join these two extremes together with a telegraph line and ultimately with a Cape-to-Cairo Railway.”

With financial support from Lord Rothschild and Alfred Beit, records Quigley, Rhodes “was able to monopolize the diamond mines of South Africa as DeBeers Consolidated Mines and to build up a great gold mining enterprise as Consolidated Gold Fields. In the middle 1890s Rhodes had a personal income of at least a million pounds sterling a year (then about five million dollars) which was spent so freely for his mysterious purposes that he was usually overdrawn on his account. These purposes centered on his desire to federate the English-speaking peoples and to bring all the habitable portions of the world under their control. For this purpose Rhodes left part of his great fortune to found the Rhodes Scholarships at Oxford in order to spread the English Ruling class tradition throughout the English-speaking world as Ruskin had wanted.”

Quigley explained that Ruskin’s most devoted disciples, including Toynbee, Alfred Milner, Arthur Glazebrook and George Birchenough at Oxford, as well as Cambridge men Reginald Baliol Brett, Sir John B. Seely, Albert Grey, and Edmund Garrett, devoted their lives to carrying out the ideas of Ruskin.

In February 1891, with Rhodes and journalist William Stead (whom Quigley describes as an “ardent social reformer and imperialist”), these men formed a secret society which Rhodes had been planning for years. Quigley explains: “In this secret society Rhodes was to lead; Stead, Brett (lord Esher), and Milner were to form an executive committee; Arthur (Lord) Balfour, (Sir) Harry Johnston, Lord Rothschild, Albert (Lord) Grey, and others were listed as potential members of a ‘Circle of Initiates’; while there was to be an outer circle known as the ‘Association of Helpers’ (later organized by Milner as the Round Table organization)... Thus the central part of the secret society was established by March 1891.”

Quigley states that after Rhodes’ death in 1902 this group gained access to Rhodes’ fortune, as well as that of some of his wealthy supporters, and thus were able to “extend and execute the ideals that Rhodes had obtained from Ruskin and Stead.”

“In 1919,” Quigley noted, “they founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) for which the chief financial supporters were Sir Abe Bailey and the Astor family (owners of *The Times*). Similar Institutes of International Affairs were established in the chief British dominions and in the United States (where it is known as the Council on Foreign Relations) in the period 1919-1927.”

Enter Bill Clinton

Dr. Quigley, a highly respected scholar who had taught at Georgetown, Princeton, and Harvard, was for two years permitted access to the “papers and secret records” of the Rhodes network. Bill Clinton was one of his students at Georgetown. Candidate Clinton, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, paid homage to his former professor, mentioning him by name in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention last summer.

In his posthumously-published book, *The Anglo-American Establishment*, Quigley states: “The scholarships were merely a facade to conceal the secret society, or, more accurately, they were to be one of the instruments by which members of the secret society could carry out [Rhodes’] purpose.”

In *Tragedy and Hope*, Professor Quigley relates that Rhodes’ plan for the scholarships, in the words of fellow conspirator William Stead, “was that after thirty years there would be ‘between two and three thousand men in the prime of life scattered all over the world, each one of whom, moreover, would have been specially - mathematically - selected towards the Founder’s purposes....’”



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Bill Clinton, one of those “specially selected” men, now occupies the White House.

Photo of Bill Clinton giving his inaugural speech, Jan. 20, 1993: AP Images



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