

SOCIAL SECURITY SOPHISTRY

By Malcolm A. Kline

Those who bemoan the lack of faith on the part of academics are looking in the wrong place for their spiritual fervor. To see how inspired their worship can be, these observers should examine the devotional fidelity of the professoriat to government programs that have proven to be demonstrable, monumental failures.

"Social Security needs to be reformed so that it can provide as well for future generations of beneficiaries as it does presently, but diverting funds into

private accounts is not the right means to do so," Suzanne Mettler of Syracuse University writes. "Likewise, helping less-advantaged Americans to save money and establish wealth is a laudable goal, but it should not be carried out at a cost to America's most valuable social program."

Dr. Mettler is an associate professor of political science at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. "Privatization would not only undermine this trusted program's capacity to provide economic security across the income spectrum but would also diminish its remarkable power to broaden and invigorate democracy," she concludes.

On what planet is this woman living?

"One out of every eight dollars that poor women earn now

goes into Social Security," Carrie Lukas, a policy analyst with the Independent Women's Forum, said at Accuracy in Academia's summer conference last year.

Formerly, she worked as a policy analyst with the U. S. Congress.

The train wreck that she hinted at has been a long time coming. "In 1977 it was announced that the Social Security program had 'unexpectedly' accrued a deficit of \$4.3 trillion, triggering the widely-held belief that there existed a

'crisis' in Social Security," Carolyn L. Weaver wrote in a 1979 policy analysis for the Cato Institute. "Elimination of this deficit would, it was suggested, require massive tax increases."

"Payroll tax rates projected in 1972 to peak at 11.9 percent early in the twenty-first century were projected only three years later to reach nearly 30 percent by the year 2050."

Currently, the effective Social Security tax rate is 12.4 percent. The current occupant of the White House is the only president in the 27 years since Weaver's piece was written who has not raised social security taxes, yet.

But what of the risk of putting in the stock market all or part of what we now pay in social security taxes? "For example, although it is difficult to project future equi-

ty returns, the Social Security Administration's estimate of a 6.5 percent average annual return to equities is well within the range of reasonable estimates," the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner writes. "Indeed, it may even be low by historical standards."

By way of contrast, Tanner puts the rate of return on Social Security Classic at about 5 percent, max. But that is based on a workforce that is willing, or forced, to shell out as much, or more, for this "retirement" program as laborers today do.

Tanner, who directs the Cato Institute's Project on Social Security Choice, is the co-author of *A New Deal for Social Security*. I got about the same results as Tanner did when I asked an economic consulting firm to run a Social Security/Stock Market comparison a decade ago.

Conversely, I have had the chance to read several decades worth of reports from the Social



Carrie L. Lukas of the Independent Women's Forum had it right on Social Security

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How you can Tell When a Horse in Gay?

Although Oxford student Sam Brown didn't realize it at the time, a remark he made in jest during a night on the town with friends ended up stretching the envelope of political correctness.

It all started when Brown and his pals were doing a bit of carousing to wind down from a tough exam schedule. Suddenly, Brown, a grad student in English Lit, felt the need to exercise his skill with words. When the students ran into a mounted policeman, Brown looked up and asked: "Excuse me, do you realize your horse is gay?"

Cute? Yes. Witty? Yes.

Harmless? Apparently not.

PCblogspot.com reported that only moments later, two squad cars pulled up and arrested Brown under Section 5 of the Public Order Act for making homophobic remarks.

Although "his remark was deemed likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress," the Act didn't make clear "whether equine alarm and distress are covered by its provisions—or whether it was the human beings who could have been harassed."

Brown spent the night in jail, and was fined 80 pounds, which he refused to pay. Although the cops took his case to a higher authority, they eventually decided that there wasn't enough evidence to prove that his behavior was disorderly



Stupid in America?

Although correspondent John Stossel admitted that "Stupid in America" was a nasty title for a recent episode of ABC's "20/20," "some nasty things are going on in America's public schools and it's about time we face up to it."

For example, students at Abraham Lincoln High School in New York City told him that their teachers are so dull that the kids routinely sleep through class. One student told Stossel: "You see kids all the time walking in the school, smoking weed...It's a normal thing here."

Requests to videotape classrooms were denied—except by Washington, D.C. school officials who "allowed '20/20' to give cameras to a few students who were handpicked at two schools they'd handpicked."

At Woodrow Wilson High School, named by Newsweek as one of the country's top schools, "one teacher didn't have control over the kids. Another '20/20' student cameraman videotaped a boy dancing wildly with his shirt off, in front of his teacher."

Although Gallup surveys show a 76% satisfaction rate with public schools, education reformers say there's a lot going on that parents don't know about.

For example, most people believe that spending money on schools is the answer. But Jay Greene, author of "Education Myths," pointed out that "If money were the solution, the problem would already be solved. . . We've doubled per pupil spending over the last 30 years, and schools

still aren't any better."

After comparing American students' test scores with those of students in other countries, Stossel concluded that "American schools don't teach as well as schools in other countries because they are government monopolies, and monopolies don't have much incentive to compete.

The other problem is the difficulty involved in firing bad teachers. In New York City, it's just about impossible, according to Schools Chancellor Joel Klein. He said it took six years of litigation to fire a teacher "who sent sexually oriented e-mails to 'Cutie 101,' a 16-year-old student. During that time, the City had paid the teacher more than \$300,000.

"Klein said he employs dozens of teachers who he's afraid to let near the kids, so he has them sit in what are called rubber rooms," Stossel writes "this year he will spend \$20 million dollars to warehouse teachers in five rubber rooms. It's an alternative to firing them."

Klein noted that "during the past four years, only two teachers out of 80,000 were fired for incompetence."



Sexual Harrastment Surveys Unfair to Service Academies

Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness (CMR), reported that the 2005 Service Academy Sexual Harassment and Assault Survey (SASA) was just another case of needless bad news.

SQUEAKY CHALK

Continued

Donnelly noted that the “data published in the recently released SAS report, compared to similar surveys in the 1990s, indicate that rates of sexual harassment have actually dropped at service academies.”

Unfortunately, “privileged and powerful victim advocates are using tax dollars to demand a long list of programs that will do great harm to our military,” she said.

For more information on this subject, go to www.cmrlink.org/social.asp?docID=260



Dumbing Down a College Education

When was the last time you recall a political science professor, complaining about the dumbing down of college students?

Michael Kryzanek, a poli-sci prof at Bridgewater State College (Virginia) noted in a recent column on Boston.com that results of a National Center for Education Statistics survey found that only 31 percent of college grads could read a “complex book and extrapolate from it.”

Prof. Kryzanek said that after 30 years of teaching, he was hardly surprised by the data. “Frequent discussions with colleagues from a wide range of colleges and universities, both public and private, tell me the findings are accurate. ...

“Behind the dismal data on college graduate literacy is the new reality of higher education in America. Students today have little interest in what past generations of college students accepted

as an essential education. Reading the literature of ‘dead white guys,’ studying the relevancy of a 400-year-old historical event, and thinking about the meaning of life’s mysteries are not of great interest to a growing number of college students.”

Today, observes Kryzanek, popular culture and the availability of information on the Internet have leveled the playing field. Now, the ideas of “Oprah and Tom Cruise’s blog musings have the same stature as Plato’s ‘Republic’ or Shakespeare’s ‘The Merchant of Venice.’”



Attention Surplus Syndrome

Prof. Mike Adams, who teaches criminology at the U. of NC, Wilmington, is starting the new calendar year by publicizing a new psychological malady that he says is sweeping the nation. It’s called “Attention Surplus Syndrome,” and has four major symptoms.

LATENESS: Adams says that in his classes, students will not long be able to come in late and tell him that “they really felt like they were on time.”

Instead, they are required to buy a watch and “set it to the real time that is accessible on the Weather Channel.”

INTERRUPTIVE-NESS: Adams’s new rules state that “It is better to raise your hand and allow the professor to call on you than it is to simply blurt out your commentary before the professor has completed a thought or sentence.”

CELL PHONE ADDICTION: Adams does not allow cell phones in class. “The reason is

really simple. You can’t seem to remember to turn off the ringer and so your phone interrupts me.” Moreover, if Adams sees a student with a cell phone in class during an exam, that student is “presumed guilty of cheating” until he/she can prove otherwise. “Your trial will have one juror. That juror is named Mike Adams.”



Deborah Lambert is a regular columnist for Campus Report

SOCIAL SECURITY SOPHISTRY

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Security trustees. Their reports on the health of the program make for dismal reading indeed.

Their gloomy records are understandable since even the program’s defenders admit that there is nothing in the Social Security Trust Fund. When he led the Senate Democrats, Sen. Tom Daschle admitted as much to syndicated columnist Robert Novak.

The notes accumulated in our name in the Social Security Trust Fund are non-interest bearing and non-negotiable. Thus, they are less valuable than tokens from Chuckie Cheese’s.

Ignoring all of these trends can make making the case for Social Security much easier. In other words, ignorance truly is bliss, particularly if you are a college professor trying to defend a fraudulent government program.

Malcolm A. Kline is the executive director of Accuracy in Academia

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Malcolm A. Kline



March, 2006

Dear Reader,

At first blush, my cover story and Miss Lambert's column in this issue may seem like two separate sections sharing newsletter space. But there is a link: The decline of literacy standards that Miss Lambert writes about makes the perpetuation of Ponzi scams like Social Security possible.

In that connection, a survey done by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows that in the United States, students report getting the highest grades in Mathematics among nine nations while pupils in Korea and Japan record the lowest scores. But, when the OECD measured mathematical literacy, Korea and Japan nearly tied for first among those same countries while the U. S. came in dead last. "The economic boom in Asia leaves that region rich in Math and Science majors," Professor Dennis Looney of the University of Pittsburgh said at the Modern Language Association conference late last year. Here's a quarter, Dr. Looney: Go buy a clue.

You can read our stories on the MLA's annual convention at www.campusreportonline.net. You can also download the compilation of our dispatches on the MLA at www.academia.org. We will be printing up a limited quantity of compilations that we would be happy to make available to you upon your request.

The 121-year-old association is more than just an arcane academic society. Just about every English department in the country sends representatives to the MLA's yearly get-togethers. Professors frequently use this venue to try out new courses. Here you can see the bait-and switch of course catalogue descriptions vs. actual lectures. For instance, one of the first panels at the MLA's Washington, D.C. meeting was on "Women and Devotional Writing in Middle English." The very first paper presented to that panel was on "Mystical Eroticism Revisited: A Drag Act in the Anchorhold?"

Similarly, the panel on "Travel Writing and Empire," which ran in that same time slot, featured a presentation entitled, "Beauty and the Breast: Ideals of Beauty and Economies of Sexuality in Slave Voyages." And that was just in the first hour of the three-and-a-half-day gathering.

We try not to miss meetings like this because they give us a feel for what is being taught in classrooms that we can pass on to you. To continue our work, we are grateful for whatever support you can provide.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mal Kline". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mal Kline
Executive director