



# Revised History

## *The Never-Ending Battle Over Public-School Textbooks*

By Al Benson March 30th, 2022

In going through books in my research library, some of which I am going to be forced to get rid of, due to severe space limitations in our new living situation, I came across a book I didn't even remember. It was one written by James C. Hefley called "Textbooks on Trial" and it dealt primarily with the efforts of Mel and Norma Gabler to get decent textbooks approved for kids in Texas public schools' way back in the 1960 and 70s. It was published in 1976, while the West Virginia Textbook Protest was still fresh in people's minds and my family and I were still in West Virginia. I recall my wife and I hearing Norma Gabler speak at a God and Country rally back in the early 70s.

Mr. Hefley told us that the idea for a centralized school system was credited to Horace Mann. Mann was a Massachusetts Unitarian who did not like the influence church schools had on the people in his state and his plan to lessen that influence was a public school system that all children would be compelled to attend. Hefley observed that "In 1837 Mann persuaded the Massachusetts State Legislature to create the first State Board of Education in the U.S. As the first appointed secretary of the board, Mann visited Europe in 1843, where he was favorably impressed by the Prussian system of mass education. Returning home, he persuaded the Massachusetts legislature to establish a similar, tax-supported system. Massachusetts became the model for other state centralized systems."

The Gablers, in their quest for better books for Texas kids, also noted the influence John Dewey had on public education and the book pointed out that "Dewey and other liberal ideologues built on Mann, but gave religion a lesser place...Religion, Dewey thought, was human in origin and would eventually wither away...The schools were, as Dewey had taught, to be the main tool for shaping behavior and therefore indoctrinating children into a pluralistic, democratic society," A society that was anti-Christian.

The Gablers, who were devout Christian folks, were justifiably horrified by all this. They started going to meetings of the State Textbook Committee in Texas and lodging their protests against textbooks that were totally unsuitable for the children of Texas to be subjected to.

Since, at that time, Texas was the largest textbook purchaser among the states, the meetings to review textbooks were open to the public so they could comment on possible new books for Texas schools. The Gablers eventually got their commentary process on possible new texts for public schools down to an art. They could look at new textbooks and find lots of problems with and errors in them. And there were lots of problems with and errors in many of them. It got so the textbook people and those on the state textbook committee hated to see the Gablers coming because they knew the Gablers had done the homework on what they were trying to peddle to the schools in Texas and they were going to be forced to make changes in the books they didn't want to have to make.

So you see, the battle over what the public schools could try to get away with is not new. It has gone on for decades. It is still going on and the situation does not improve. Ask the people in Virginia how they are making out with this problem in regard to things like Critical Race Theory being taught in their public schools.

The one blessing we now have is that there are a lot more options open to parents who want to get their kids out of public schools. There are classical Christian schools, home school co-op programs and all kinds of new home-schooling programs. Ron Paul has a home-schooling curriculum and so does the John Birch Society to name just a couple.

You will never reform the public schools. They are doing what they were created to do—indoctrinate not educate—so don't waste your time in futile reformation efforts. Get your kids out of them and check out some of the many other options.