

‘A BOOTLEGGED CURRICULUM:’ THE AMERICAN LEGION VERSUS HAROLD RUGG

KAREN L. RILEY
BARBARA SLATER STERN

When the American Legion set out to help bring down one of the Progressive Era’s most prominent progressive educators, Harold Rugg, it did so out of a long-standing conviction that any form of anti-Americanism must be met head on and extinguished in the most expedient manner. Legion members, ever alert to anti-American rhetoric, believed that they had discovered a genuine threat disguised as an educator, whose goal was to turn red-blooded American children away from democratic principles and towards a malevolent political and economic system (i.e., communism) that could bring America to her knees. Rugg, they believed, would accomplish this task through his textbook series aimed at public school children. The heightened patriotism of World War II is the historical context for the American Legion’s attack on progressive education. In 1941, as the United States prepared for war, the Legion was busy writing and distributing pamphlets titled *The Complete Rugg Philosophy*, which, according to Legion officials, outlined Rugg’s plan to indoctrinate students away from what it termed Americanism and toward socialism or even communism.¹ These pamphlets were not the only vehicles for Legion writers. *The American Legion Magazine* was also a forum for the conservative ideas of Rugg’s detractors. To writers whose articles condemned the Rugg materials, the curriculum that Rugg offered American youth was a “bootlegged” curriculum.

Rugg, attacked by the American Legion for spreading un-American ideas through his writings, has yet to be completely understood in terms of his philosophy and where it figures into his textbook writings. His materials were condemned, yet the un-American rhetoric in Rugg materials seems to be lacking. Where did the American Legion get the idea in the first place that Rugg’s philosophy leaned in the direction of Stalin’s Soviet Union? Where are the clues that will help us to understand under what circumstances the Rugg philosophy developed or emerged? In order to assess the nature of the Legion’s attack on Rugg, this article examines the American Legion’s publication, *The American Legion Magazine*, from 1941 until the advent of Sputnik, and its pamphlet series titled *The Complete Rugg Philosophy*. The prevailing progressive educational climate and the scope of progressive thought will also be examined in order to clarify Rugg’s role within progressive education. Additionally, the origins of the American Legion and its stated goals and purpose provide a framework for understanding the intense and systematic attack the Legion launched against Harold Rugg. These origins help to explain two main questions. First, why was Rugg seemingly singled out? Second, why was the Legion so dedicated to Rugg’s downfall?

The American Legion as ‘Watchdog’

Formed in 1919 by United States military and ex-military service men who fought in World War I and wished to preserve the spirit of their collective experiences in the “Great War,” the American Legion held its first national convention on November 11th of that year.² Its stated purpose for proposing such an organization was two-fold—the fear of Bolshevism and the discontent of those under arms.³ From its very founding, the American Legion dedicated itself to the preservation of “Americanism,” and the eradication of any stream of thought that might be construed as un-American. Ironically, the founders of the American Legion insisted that the organization be egalitarian in nature (privates were to have equal

status with generals), yet “cursed” the very system theoretically founded on the notion of a classless society. In less than two decades, the Legion had evolved into a formidable force and one capable of waging a figurative war on a set of progressive ideas that was international in scope and espoused by such luminaries as John Dewey, George Counts, and Harold Rugg. While Legion officials wasted few words condemning the work of Dewey and his followers, they seemed to focus their attention and efforts on curriculum materials developed and written by Harold Rugg.

Although the Legion’s attack was aimed at Rugg’s textbook series as harbingers of his “sinister” philosophy, it is likely that Legion critics drew their conclusions from sources other than Rugg’s textbooks. If one looks at the Rugg textbook series, most of which were developed from pamphlet form in the early 1920s and later refined and published as hardbacks in the late 1920s and early 1930s, one would be hard pressed to conclude, on the basis of these materials alone, that Rugg was a closet communist who sought to sneak his philosophy into schoolrooms across America.⁴ What is more likely is that a philosophy of social reconstruction published in 1934 as a committee report, with Harold Rugg serving as chair, and one which clearly outlined social reconstructionists’ aims in terms of “collectivizing” the energies of citizens in the quest to solve some of the country’s problems, heightened the suspicions of Legion officials who staunchly opposed any anti-American discourse.⁵

Far from being the lone voice for social reconstruction, Rugg was one of any number of educators throughout the United States who believed that education should offer more to the American way of life than graduating students with some form of common knowledge, but with little ability to effect necessary change.⁶ In fact, a good portion of the 1934 proceedings of the National Education Association’s (NEA) annual meeting seems devoted to the notions of unresolved problems and new solutions. Despite the countless numbers of those in education who called for progressive approaches to America’s social and economic problems, it was Rugg who bore the brunt of the Legion’s assault.

For its part, the American Legion played the role that organizations like that normally play—watchdog.⁷ Its ordinary citizen body is ever on the alert to threats against the American way of life. Moreover, the self-imposed mission as “watchdog” was one of the fundamental tenets of its founding. In 1919, at the first meeting of the newly organized American Legion, members passed a resolution providing for

the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of the American Legion to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100% Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system designed to (1) Combat all anti-American tendencies, activities and propaganda...[and] (5) Foster the teaching of Americanism in all Schools.⁸

Hence, the Legion’s objectives were clearly delineated: first, to “watch” for and combat any behavior that might be construed as un-American or anti-American; and second, to foster the concept of “Americanism,” a new word ushered into the American conscience. The term Americanism grew out of American Legion jargon of the early 1920s. It was first defined in the 1923 Legion’s Americanism Commission’s report as a synthesis of “nationalism and patriotism.” The report goes on to state that Americanism also means “the undying devotion and belief in the United States of America.”⁹

Little wonder that Legion members viewed the social studies and social education as a threat to the development of good citizens with its emphasis on scrutinizing the nation’s economic and social system for the purpose of “fixing” obvious inequities. Legionnaires believed that a chronological account of events, particularly wars or conflicts in which the United States was victorious, would be far superior in terms of molding young minds and disposing students to patriotic notions of citizenship than any curriculum that taught students how to evaluate current problems and find solutions. Moreover, fault finding with United States policies and practices was out of the question. The Legion was prepared to challenge any attempt to cast the United States in anything but a favorable light. To this end, an education committee comprised, in part, of Legion writers Augustin Rudd and Hamilton Hicks that called itself “Guardians of American Education, Incorporated,” (originally formed in May 1940 under the name “American Parents Committee on Education,”) took the battle over Rugg’s textbooks directly to the people—the Englewood [New Jersey] Board of Education.¹⁰

The Board deferred the matter to its fall meeting. Nevertheless, these actions demonstrate, in part, that Legion members not only waged a journalistic war on Rugg, they also took direct action. Thus, if one were to support the Legion ideal of education, ideas great or small should be broken down into recognizable forms. What is valid is tradition, custom, and ritual. Slogans are truth; oaths, the highest form of wisdom; and clichés, the ultimate method of explanation. What is more, the story of America is one of grand conflicts with glorious endings, told in chronological order, not one of greedy capitalists, corrupt politicians, or poverty ridden cities.

The American Legion's Attack on Rugg

In the October 1958 edition of the *Legion* magazine, writer Irene Coreally Kuhn, penned an article, titled "Battle Over Books," in which she congratulates Col. Augustin C. Rudd for exposing the evils of Rugg's textbook series and the work of other "Frontier Thinkers," such as George Counts. To Kuhn, the entire Teachers College "bunch" functioned as satellites around the American philosopher John Dewey—described by Kuhn as a "materialistic, shaggy-haired scholar"—and were peddling little more than communism when they advanced their ideas of a new social order.¹¹ Only one year later, the American Legion published a celebration article on the organization's forty-year involvement with American public schools. Its author claimed that Rugg and a "small group of education professors at Columbia Teachers College and some other teachers colleges" had spent an "unbelievable" ten years attempting to subvert the public schools.¹²

According to Kuhn, Rudd viewed Rugg's textbook series as blatant propaganda. He used such terms as "clever" and "stealth" in describing the methods employed by Rugg in his writing. According to Rudd, Rugg, "with gentle language and a pedagogic smile," led the child "through the successive stages of indoctrination." By way of example, he pointed to one of Rugg's student workbooks. In one edition, Rugg posed the question: "Is the United States a land of opportunity for all our people? Why?" According to the teacher's guide, the answer the child should give is as follows: "The United States is not a land of opportunity for all our people; for one-fifth of the people do not earn any money at all. There are great differences in the standards of living of the different classes of people. The majority does not have any real security."¹³ While these statements may seem to hold obvious truth for many of us today, we must recall with clarity the 1940s and 1950s context in which Legion reviewers and sympathizers examined Rugg's work. In Lawrence Cremin's seminal work on Progressive education, the author said of Rugg, "Certainly if any single career symbolizes the constantly changing image of progressive education during the decades after World War I, it was Harold Rugg's."¹⁴

One writer characterized Rugg's passion for progressivism in this way: "There were many who saw new and unprecedented opportunities in the rise of new governments which would reach such composite power as had not hitherto been recorded. Thus, 'there lies within our grasp the most humane, the most beautiful, the most majestic civilization ever fashioned by any people.'"¹⁵ That Rugg's work came to be associated by the Legion with the rise of one of the new governments of which Howard Odum spoke is all too obvious. Yet, Rugg consistently included democracy in nearly all of his discussions on the plan for a "New Education." Rugg may have entertained a certain intellectual curiosity when it came to the fundamentals or theory of communism, but his textbook writings indicate a dedication to a democratic way of life with citizens freed from burdens imposed on them by the whims and fancies of unbridled capitalism. Only when the federal government assumed control of the forces of production and engineered a planned economy could citizens release their creative energies in order to engage in problem solving on a large scale, so thought Rugg.

At the time that Rugg wrote a number of his social science textbooks, in the early 1930s, the world had yet to witness with complete clarity the abuses of the communist state. It was too early to count the millions lost to starvation or brutalized by a draconian secret service. Communism in its infancy likely looked as though it might be the great social and economic equalizer. In addition, the American public at this time had not "digested" the Orwellian version of the communist state in *Animal Farm*. Yet the mere thought of a new social order caused many to dream of social upheaval and displacement. That

was enough to convince any stouthearted, loyal American to resist in any form the slightest talk of a radical change. Hence, when Rugg's textbook series first appeared and his star began to rise, the opposition to his work took on a fierce and strident tone. As Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith have so succinctly stated in *Politics of the Textbook*, the real battle over textbooks and official knowledge generally "signifie[s] more profound political, economic, and cultural relations and histories. Conflicts over texts are often proxies for wider questions of power relations. They involve what people hold most dear."¹⁶ This was certainly true of the 1930's and 1940's conservative view of educational liberalism. Thus, the American Legion, only one organization out of a pantheon of many, took up its figurative sword and prepared to do battle.

As world leaders mobilized for the real war in 1941, American Legion writers began to defame Rugg by characterizing him as an academic dictator, bent on destroying the American way of life and supplanting it with foreign ideas of socialism or worse, communism. Yet, Rugg did not act in isolation. In fact, the Progressive Education Association (PEA), the NEA, and a host of organizations worldwide embraced by both academic and political leaders had been meeting throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s on the topic of "schools for the world of tomorrow."¹⁷ The substance of these meetings could be viewed even today as revolutionary. In fact, the utopian visionaries attending these international conferences, when one looks at their proposed agenda, seem decidedly disconnected from political realities, and thereby fanning Legion fires.

In July 1934, the World Conference of New Education Fellowship scheduled a meeting to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Ralph J. Totten, representing the Legation of the United States of America in Pretoria, South Africa, informed the United States Secretary of State of this meeting in a letter. He stated in his letter that the focus of the meeting would concern "social regeneration through education reconstruction." Some of the main lectures would include "problems of the curriculum; vocational education; vocational tests and guidance; educational and sociological problems of the rural community; training of teachers to meet South Africa's needs...; education in artistic self-expression; problems in social adjustment; and juvenile delinquency." Those expected to attend read like an international array of Who's Who of twentieth century education professors and practitioners: John Dewey; Eustace Percy, former Minister of Education in Great Britain; Frederick Schneider, University of Cologne; Mable Carney, Columbia University; Edmund Brunner, Columbia; Cyril Burt, London; Harold Rugg, Columbia; Helen Parkhurst, Dalton School; Pierre Bovet, Geneva; and B. Malinowski, London to name a few.¹⁸

This international consortium held worldwide meetings throughout the 1930s as the "International World Conference New Education Fellowship." The influence of American educators was all too clear. For example, the theme and rationale of the 1940 conference program were reminiscent of statements crafted in a 1934 NEA committee report credited to Rugg. The theme of the 1940 New Education Fellowship meeting was "Human and Material Resources for the World of Tomorrow." Its rationale began:

Mankind stands at the threshold of a great adventure. He has at his command the material resources to make the good life...he stands at the threshold of plenty and he looks to education to furnish the means for ushering in an age that is nearer mankind's hearts desire.¹⁹

Rugg's committee wrote similar words some five to six years earlier when it delivered its final report on current social problems and their possible solutions.²⁰

Fueled by the excitement of a worldwide effort on the part of educators and political leaders to change the future of the economically disenfranchised, Rugg, as only one of any number of educators worldwide, contributed to the goals of the "New Education" movement through the publication of secondary social science textbooks. With the success of the Rugg materials also came the criticism. To ultra-conservative groups such as the American Legion, Harold Rugg embodied all that was wrong with the New Education efforts of educationists and politicians across the globe—internationalism, which meant un-Americanism. With their founding mission in mind, Legion writers pointed out to readers the real motives of Rugg and his followers, to turn American schoolchildren away from America's traditional

stories of its past and transmission of American cultural values toward a future filled with problems and explanations of how the nation itself helped to create them.

The man who the Legion hired as an expert in the field of education to help rid public school classrooms of “the Rugg philosophy,” was R. Worth Shumaker, a graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan University and a former county superintendent from 1935 until his acceptance as chief education analyst for the American Legion.²¹ In “No ‘New Order’ for our Schools,” the writer opens with equal amounts of scare tactics and platitudes. Shumaker paints a picture for the reader of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini meeting in 1940 in the Austrian Alps for the purpose of forging an alliance to “blackout” democracy throughout the world.²² The author sought to contrast the actions and motives of these two dictators to those of the United States by picturing America as a land where all can come to the figurative floor to be heard and where everyone’s voice counts, while citizens of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany were subject to the whims of despots.²³ While Legion members may have believed these two views themselves—bad guys versus good guys—countless educators, social workers, and intellectuals knew better. They knew that the voices of immigrants and minorities went largely ignored in conservative political circles. This was one of the aspects of American life progressive reformers had hoped to change.

Shumaker’s 1941 article, hardly an unbiased view of progressive education, heaped praise upon America’s educators, pointing out that “[i]n general, the builders of curricula, the writers of textbooks, and the classroom teachers, have performed their tasks most creditably.”²⁴ The author went on to call the NEA an organization that was part of collaboration responsible for “building a great educational system which is the pride of the nation.”²⁵ Interestingly, the NEA some seven years before sponsored the Rugg committee report that stood as a blueprint for progressive educational reform, calling for such things as “A New Education,” one that would vividly present pressing social and economic issues. Rugg’s committee insisted that through every avenue of information and education, the issues must be presented, including such concerns as a “*poverty economy* (italics not added) resulting from an out-moded laissez-faire economic system on the one hand and on the other a *plenty economy* (italics not added) which could result from a designed social system...”²⁶ Amusingly, Shumaker seemed unaware that the NEA had actually sponsored this “detestable” document authored, in large part, by the Legion’s arch enemy, Harold Rugg.

In attempting to convey the Legion’s message in a certain homespun fashion, Shumaker capitalized on the use of clichés throughout. In one such attempt, the author likened the United States to an old ship: “The old ship of State may have sprung a few leaks but there has been no scuttling of any part of our great heritage—the leaks have always been closed up and the ship continues seaworthy.”²⁷ In other words, yes, the United States has problems, but it has always been able to fix them without getting rid of its form of government. Shumaker’s purpose was clear: to convey the idea that what Rugg and other Frontier thinkers were calling for was an overthrow of the existing system as a way to fix any number of social and political problems. He went on to disparage the field of social studies by revealing its integrated nature as though an integrated treatment of social, political, historical, economic, and geographic issues and content were something undesirable. The Legion favored the traditional treatment of social science subjects as isolated subject areas—history, geography, and economics.

Shumaker leaves the reader with little doubt that he and other Legion officials believed that Rugg and other Frontier thinkers were behind a plan to transplant the Soviet Union’s model of collectivism to the United States through the agency of the school. In keeping with the Legion’s original 1919 mission of rooting out un-American activity, the publicity division of the American Legion issued a special news bulletin on April 5, 1941, which stated, in part:

Specific information to aid American Legion Posts everywhere in their discussion of textbooks used in the public schools everywhere is to be supplied by the National Americanism Commission of the American Legion.

Following up his article “No ‘New Order’ for our Schools,” Assistant National Americanism director R. Worth Shumaker is preparing a series of pamphlets to discuss the textbooks that the Legion considers subversive in text and philosophy. These will be distributed in the near future.

Legion organizations in the field interested in the battle to eliminate subversive teachings in the textbooks supplied for classroom work will have new background material for their studies....

A cover message from the publishers cautions Americans to “examine your child’s textbooks. Demand to see the teacher’s guides. Find out if ‘social science’ textbooks have replaced courses in civics, history and geography. Look for subversive material, protest at once to school officials the board of education, and school associations. Remember most of your teachers are loyal. Support them.”²⁸

This level of political activity is surprising if one takes into account that the American Legion’s constitution reads that the organization “shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles.”²⁹

Rugg was also attacked for his call to abolish intercollegiate sports as he believed that they held no academic value. One might recall that many university presidents and faculty, long before Rugg uttered his “sporting” challenge, sought to abolish intercollegiate sports as well and for the same reason. Other charges brought about by Shumaker against Rugg included Rugg’s “lack of emphasis on true American life and too great an emphasis on the unfavorable aspects, failure to give due acknowledgment to the deeds of our great American heroes, questioning private ownership, too favorable emphasis on what has been done in the Soviet Union, the creation of doubt in the minds of pupils and teachers as to the ability of our democracy to function successfully, the dissemination of alien propaganda, statements that the United States Supreme Court favors vested interests.”³⁰ To bolster the Legion’s position on Rugg, Shumaker quoted extensively from Rugg’s work, most notably his *Great Technology*, which was not a book designed for secondary school consumption, yet offered little criticism of Rugg’s actual textbook content for secondary students.

An examination of Rugg’s textbook, *Problems of American Culture*, reveals that far from being a vehicle of propaganda, it takes a sort of straightforward approach in dealing with pressing social, political, and economic issues. For example, Rugg posed this question: “Is there a place for better planning in the development of the press?” He added that since the advent of universal elementary education, more and more individuals were reading newspapers, magazines, and books. To Rugg, the greater the ability to reach individuals through the written word, the greater the responsibility for accuracy in reporting. Although not alone when it came to exposing the problems of the press, he was, nevertheless, a prime target of the Hearst papers, itself allied with the American Legion for the purpose of disposing with Rugg and his ideas.³¹ But what had he actually told students or young people about the press and its problems in his textbook? In *Problems of American Culture*, Rugg simply posed the question of whether or not there was room for better planning in the development of the press. He challenged youngsters to consider that

We have noted the important role of advertising and business in determining the content of newspapers and magazines. We have seen the widespread tendency for tabloid picture newspapers and other sensational periodicals to print ‘news’ without too great regard for accuracy. Hence, although reputable publishers are already doing much to improve the character of the press, insistent problems present themselves. Underlying them are difficult questions of propaganda and censorship. Similarly, there emerge the equally important problems of the more fundamental education of our people, of the cultivation of a taste for better literature and of a demand for a more scientific attitude in the press.³²

Rugg was certainly not the first to speak of things like sensationalism in the press. Recall the allegations leveled at press organs that sensationalized the “Sinking of the Maine,” in the Havana harbor some thirty years earlier. The first quarter of the twentieth century, it seemed, had been devoted to exposing this or that falsehood and flashy deal making. Why were Rugg’s proposals on journalistic practice treated as something new?

Make no mistake, Rugg certainly advocated change. The type of change that he and others, many others, sought to effect might even be considered radical or drastic. However, these radical changes could be viewed as proportional to the problems that progressive reformers perceived and sought to ameliorate. However, as Anita Oliver succinctly reminds us in her discussion of how the “right” functions, “[t]hroughout the United States, national organizations have been formed by conservatives to fight against what counts as ‘official knowledge’ in schools.”³³ This was certainly true of the battles that took

place from the 1930s to the 1950s during which ultra conservatives attempted to destroy the progressive message of Rugg and his followers.

A second article on Rugg appeared in the next issue, May 1941, of the *American Legion Magazine*. Henry Hicks, in “Ours to Reason Why,” opened with a more scholarly, but no less damning account of Rugg and his proposal for a New Education than Shumaker had in the April issue. However, when one reads past the first several pages, the article begins to break down into a confusion of surreal images of youngsters tricking their parents by leading them into the chaos of a totalitarian state after years of subtle Rugg propaganda in their schools. Hicks actually went further in condemning Rugg than did Shumaker when he likened the Frontier thinker to Hitler. In fact, Hicks boldly said, “*The Great Technology is Rugg’s Mein Kampf*.”³⁴ As proof of Rugg’s malevolent methods and motives, Hicks pointed out that a Legion post held an essay contest for high schoolers. Students were given a plan to stabilize business based upon both a Soviet and a Nazi government model. Students were asked to write an essay without benefit of consulting any texts, dictionaries, or other printed materials. The results of the essay startled Legion members. The students, all of whom had attended a school which utilized the Rugg materials, responded as follows: three recognized the plan as either communist or Nazi inspired; three others pointed out the pros and cons; and, three thought the plan to be excellent. These outcomes likely confirmed what Legion rank and file believed all along, as long as Rugg and his sort were allowed to influence American youth, our country was doomed.

As with Legion articles published in the early 1940s, those produced in the 1950s linked Rugg to the most perverse type of subversive activity—teaching the youth of America to find fault with its government. Also like the articles of the early 1940s, the authors likened Rugg to Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Mussolini, although Hitler remained the favorite. Unlike the 1941 Shumaker article, in which the author heaped praise upon the NEA, Kuhn’s article, entitled “Your Child Is Their Target,” alerted the reading public to a different NEA. She was quick to point out:

One of the strongest forces today in propagandizing for a socialistic America is the hierarchy of the National Education Association. They have had things pretty much their own way for a long time, too, but the public opposition and nation-wide parents’ rebellion which have sprung up in the past two years may force the N.E.A. into a re-examination of itself. It is too soon, though, to say how the organization will eventually react. Some of its performances have been more typical of the tactics of a captured labor union complete with goon squads, than of a respectable national organization of more than a half million teachers. The N.E.A. has no reason to be proud of those goon squads which have turned up to do a discrediting job on citizens whenever there has been an uprising in a community against ‘progressive’ education.³⁵

The mistrust of ordinary citizens such as the Legionnaires and other ultra-conservative groups of their schools, teachers, administrators, along with professional teaching organizations, is palpable in this 1952 article. Nearly twenty years after the 1934 Cleveland meeting of the NEA, when Rugg and his committee took up the challenge of articulating a philosophy of social reconstruction presented as a committee report on America’s social and economic problems and their implications, the Legion continued to beat the same drum in its organization’s publications. Kuhn, like Shumaker some twenty years before, trotted out all of the data on that decades-old meeting as if it were a current red flag.

Although the *American Legion Magazine* published other articles excoriating Rugg and his contemporaries, the few presented here suffice as examples of the type of message and method of delivery employed by one of the largest ex-servicemen’s and patriotic organizations. Perhaps far more than magazine articles, the Legion’s three volume series on the philosophy of Harold Rugg was the most damaging of its written publications. In *The Complete Rugg Philosophy*, the Legion laid at the doorstep of one educator the entire blame for what its members collectively believed was a communist plot to subvert the minds of American children. This step-by-step analysis of the “Rugg program” relied on excerpts from Rugg’s work juxtaposed to original interpretations by Legion-employed experts of his work. In volume two, writers assert:

The Legion recognizes the right of freedom of speech. This is a precious heritage which must be preserved. The Legion is firm in its position, however, that this right ceases to be a privilege when controversial issues

are presented to children through textbooks which serve as an instrument of propaganda to promote the personal ideas and program of the author.³⁶

Although Rugg clearly held ideas that America could and should be a better place to live for all of her citizens, he never advocated the kind of collectivism as practiced in Stalin's Soviet Union. Perhaps he used the wrong language—democratic collectivism—to introduce his ideas, or perhaps his terminology was correct and the term was simply perverted by totalitarian-minded Soviet leaders. Whatever the case, Rugg was only one of hundreds if not thousands of educators in the United States and worldwide who eagerly sought the promise of progressivism and the hope for mankind ushered in by a New Education.

Conclusion

What set Rugg apart from other intellectual reconstructionists of the 1920s and 1930s and thus made him an easy target for patriotic watchdog organizations, such as the American Legion, was that his writings and materials actually made their way into the public school system, the stronghold and incubator of American traditionalists. Additionally, Rugg's talk of collectivism in his 1934 NEA Committee Report sounded eerily to Legion ears like the brutal system and economic policies of Stalin's Soviet Union; never mind that Rugg throughout his writings and textbooks for children referred to democracy in a positive light. No matter that what he and other reconstructionists envisioned was what they called democratic collectivism, his opponents remained unconvinced. Rugg's reconstruction of society embraced a dual strategy: first, a planned economy in which the federal government would control the production of goods, as well as the financial and transportation infrastructure, which in turn would free the people from the whims of capitalism; and second, allow Americans to release their collective spirit and work together to solve America's problems, especially in the area of social justice.

While Rugg's detractors rarely referred by direct quotes to his textbooks as clues to a far left ideology, they routinely pointed to the NEA's 1934 Cleveland meeting and "Rugg Committee Report" as the tell-tale irrefutable evidence and smoking gun that showed that what Rugg advocated was a revolution of some sort. Others might be fooled by talk of reconstruction, but not folks who belonged to patriotic groups such as the American Legion. To them, reconstruction was just another word for revolution and they knew what that meant. Always vigilant, patriotic groups like the American Legion kept watch over America's schools, lest those with un-American ideas sneak anti-American rhetoric in through the back door of change. Rugg and his committee certainly gave them something to think about when they delivered their report at the 1934 Cleveland meeting. It was filled with all of the ills and injustices suffered by the underclass and lower working class at the hands of a few at the top of the socio-economic ladder.

What the report pointed out again and again was that now, unlike ever before, Americans possessed the technological skills to effect the radical change called for by the Rugg committee and international educational community. It urged members of the NEA to stand united and to put into place far reaching changes in areas such as curriculum, teacher-education programs, adult education, and a new philosophy of change. Thus, in one report, Rugg and his committee had put to paper what had been discussed at NEA annual meetings years before. For Rugg the individual, his authorship as chairman of the committee may have sealed his financial doom and legacy as Legionnaires and their hired experts took a long look at the Cleveland meeting and saw the red handwriting on the wall. In the end, Rugg never reconciled his new-world-order political beliefs with his social criticism of American life found in his textbook writings to the satisfaction of his opponents, especially the keepers of the spirit of Americanism—the American Legion. For its part, the American Legion held true to its founding principles of promoting "Americanism" by eradicating ideas that its leadership believed smacked of un-American activity. Its self-proclaimed mission to serve as a bulwark for anti-American propaganda needed ideas like Rugg's to serve as a common enemy and "rally the troops." Thus, under the glare of the un-American spotlight and watchful eye of the American Legion, Rugg and his philosophy of social reconstruction fell from grace as quickly as his high school textbooks fell from the shelves of school libraries and classrooms across the American educational landscape.

NOTES

1. *Rugg Philosophy Analyzed*, vol.II (Indianapolis, Ind.: The American Legion, 1941).
2. W. Gellermann, *The American Legion as Educator* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1938), 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. For a discussion on the Rugg textbook controversy, see N.T. Bagenstos, "Social Reconstruction: The Controversy over the Textbooks of Harold Rugg" (paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1977, ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 137 190); E. Bosenberg and K.S. Poland, "Struggle at the Frontier of Curriculum: The Rugg Textbook Controversy in Binghamton, N.Y.," *Theory and Research in Social Education*, (Fall 2001): 640-70.
5. Committee Report of the NEA, "Our Social-Economic Situation and the New Education," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 7 (May 1934): 9.
6. For an extensive treatment of Rugg other frontier thinkers, see Carbone, 1969 and 1971, and Murry Nelson 1977, 1978, 1982.
7. For a discussion on "extreme" patriotism, see B.E. Chmaj in "Paranoid Patriotism," *The Atlantic Monthly* (November 1962): 91-97.
8. *Summary of the Proceedings of the First National Convention of the American Legion* (1919), 39, in Gellerman, 68.
9. *Reports to the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Legion* (1923) in Gellerman, 70.
10. M. Nelson, "Building a Science of Society: The Social Studies and Harold O. Rugg" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1975), 154-55.
11. I. C. Kuhn, "Battle Over Books," *The American Legion Magazine* (October 1958): 20.
12. R. B. Pitkin, "The American Legion and the Schools," *The American Legion Magazine* (September 1959): 40.
13. Kuhn, 38.
14. L. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 181.
15. H. W. Odum, "A New Deal Popular Bookshelf: How Much Social Realism, How Much Social Science, How Much Grinding Grist?" *Social Forces* 12, no. 4 (May 1934): 604.
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