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HOME SCHOOLING

While the home education of children has been practiced in many countries, it is most popular and widespread in the United States. Recent estimates indicate that well over a million U.S. children are being home schooled. American public education is currently under attack, given state fiscal crises and the move toward standardization and accountability. Home schooling is a growing, heterogeneous movement of organizations and individuals acting collectively in an effort to better their children's lives. This alternative is becoming increasingly publicly acceptable.

While the roots of education in America can be traced to home and family initiatives, today's home schooling movement has arisen as a reaction against the public educational system. It originated during the 1960s and 1970s within the countercultural or libertarian political left. These pedagogues stood against the bureaucratization and professionalization of public schools and sought personalization and decentralization under family control.

By the 1980s, another influential group began to argue for home schooling from a Christian perspective. Such "ideologues" came largely from the political right, "crusading" against the secular forces of modern society, seeking to impart religious values upon their children. The religious right came to dominate home schooling in the mid-1980s as the libertarian left group diminished. Throughout the 1990s and continuing through the present, home schooling has grown tremendously and has become much more mainstream, advocated for a variety of reasons by average, "mainstream" Americans.

Overall, there is a general consensus among researchers that the decision to home school is motivated by four broad categories of concern: (1) religious values, (2) dissatisfaction with the public schools (safety concerns and negative peer influences,

for example), (3) academic and pedagogical concerns, and (4) family life (such as scheduling and children's special needs).

Home schoolers are not a random cross-section of the United States. Home schooling families differ from the average American family in that they are more likely to be white; to be headed by a married, heterosexual couple; to have greater numbers of children; to have college-educated parents; and to have larger annual incomes. Also, this is largely a women's movement as the mothers usually provide about 90% of the home instruction. Unlike most American women, the majority of home schooling mothers are not in the paid labor force.

Scholars of activism and social movements have neglected this large, growing movement. Home schooling is an alternative to public education that has collective components. Home educators do not tend to act in isolation. They work together through networks and organizations. By sharing teaching materials and ideas, taking their children on group fieldtrips, and engaging in other social activities, home schooling parents build a community. Such interaction is likely to reinforce their decision to home educate and to contribute to the formation of a collective, "us" feeling. The actions that parents take in this everyday social movement are powerful—they are history making as parents are influencing the conditions and terms of everyday life for their children.

—Ed Collom

See also Alternative Movements

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HOMESTEAD RIOT

The Homestead Riot, also known as the Homestead Strike, was a gunfight between union members and private security guards that occurred on July 6, 1892, in Homestead, Pennsylvania. In the 1880s and 1890s, Andrew Carnegie had built the Carnegie Steel Company into one of the largest and most profitable steel companies in the United States. The Homestead steel mill, located a few miles upstream on the Monongahela River from Pittsburgh, was one of the largest of Andrew Carnegie's mills. Over the course of the previous decade, Carnegie had broken unions at most of his other mills, but in 1892, the workers of the Homestead mill were still represented by the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers. These workers were overwhelmingly eastern and southern European immigrants and their sons, and had formed a tightly knit community surrounding the mill.

In June of 1892, the contract between the union and Carnegie Steel expired, and Andrew Carnegie, who was in Scotland at the time, gave his operations manager, Henry Clay Frick, *carte blanche* to break the union. Frick opened his campaign by cutting the workers' wages. The Union, understandably, rejected the wage cut. On June 28, Frick responded by locking the workers out and building a massive, barbed wire topped fence around the plant. On July 2, Frick fired all 3,800 of the workers, and on July 6 sent a force of 300 Pinkerton Agents—private security guards, up the river in two covered barges to occupy the plant.

The workers understood this was the prelude to replacing them with nonunion labor, known to the

workers as “scabs.” Virtually the entire town stormed the plant and rushed the pier where the guards were trying to dock. Inevitably, shots were fired, and for the next 12 hours, the Pinkertons and the workers exchanged intense fire. Eventually, the workers accepted the surrender of the guards, who were led off the boat and to the local jail for protection. However, they were savagely beaten by the crowd along the way. Seven Pinkertons and at least nine workers were killed, and at least half of the guards were injured.

Frick asked the Pennsylvania governor for help; he responded by sending in 8,500 soldiers of the state National Guard, who occupied the plant. By July 15, the plant was again operational, using replacement workers.

Public support for the strikers, undermined by the brutal treatment of the surrendered Pinkertons, suffered more damage with an assassination attempt on Frick by an anarchist on July 23. In the meantime, waves of criminal charges were lodged against scores of union leaders and workers. While almost all were eventually acquitted, the charges meant the union leaders languished in jail, out of touch with the members, as the strikebreaking proceeded.

The conflict between the union workers and the strikebreakers, meanwhile, took on racial overtones. The union prohibited blacks; many of the strikebreakers, therefore, were blacks brought in from the South. Given the alternatives they faced in the rural South, the steelworker jobs even at the lower wages, provided them with a better life. Incidents of fire bombings and other violence culminated in another riot in November of 1892, this time directed primarily at the black strikebreakers in town.

The union had been broken, however. By October of 1892, the last of the National Guard troops were withdrawn, and by mid-November, some of the workers began reapplying for jobs at the mill.

—Joseph Adamczyk

See also Union Movements

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