

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
312

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will focus on July 4, 1826. That, as you can easily figure out, was the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was on this historic Jubilee that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died. These two pillars of the revolution were the principal architects of the Declaration of Independence and also two of the last three living patriots who signed that historic document. Charles Carroll of Carrollton outlived them by five years dying Nov. 14, 1832.

It was also on July 4, 1826 that Robert Owen delivered his infamous address in New Harmony, Indiana. He called it "The Declaration of Mental Independence". Owen was a wealthy man who was disgusted with America. He used his vast wealth to start a utopian colony in New Harmony to deliver mankind from what he deemed the *"trinity of the most monstrous evils that could be combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon the whole race"*. In the mind of Robert Owens these three "evils" were: marriage, religion, and the private ownership of property.

Adams and Jefferson met at the first Continental Congress in 1775. They immediately became friends. This was an interesting friendship as these men held radically different political views. Adams was a staunch Federalist promoting centralized national power. Jefferson was a Democratic-Republican who opposed a strong central government. He preferred to give power to the states. Over the next five decades these two great patriots exchanged 380 letters with one another. After Jefferson's wife passed away in 1782 he became a regular guest in Adam's home. Both men were assigned to diplomatic posts in Europe, Adams in London and Jefferson in Paris.

For a time their friendship waned and fewer letters were exchanged. These differences were probably greatest when Adams defeated Jefferson to become Washington's vice-present, and later narrowly defeating him again to become president. In 1812 Dr. Benjamin Rush convinced these great men that their friendship was more important than their differences, and their letters once again began to flow. They wrote about politics, philosophy, life, and love and yet their friendship triumphed over their differences.

As we have said, both men died on July 4, 1826. Adams was 90 and his last words were: "Thomas Jefferson still survives". He was wrong. Jefferson had died five hours earlier at Monticello at the age of 83. The country they founded, however, lives on.

But now let us return to Robert Owen. On April 27, 1825 he welcomed 800 enthusiastic followers to the banks of the Wabash River to participate in his great social experiment. He called it "Utopian Socialism". As we have said, it was on the following fourth of July that he proudly delivered his infamous Declaration of Mental Independence. Owens insisted that *"society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment except ignorance to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."*

Owen was confident of success. He addressed Congress and eagerly outlined his beliefs to anyone who would listen. Eventually he attracted hundreds of leading thinkers, artists, scientists, and workers to help him create a "superior social, intellectual and physical environment." Unfortunately, these "intellectuals" were "thinkers" and not "doers". Too many preferred philosophizing to working.

Finally, after only two years, and after several re-organizations, and after seven different constitutions, Owen's great social experiment collapsed. According to Joshua Muravchik in his 2003 book "Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism" Owen had a very hard time acknowledging the failure. After many months when everyone around him, including his sons, was saying, "Things are falling apart," Owen denied reality and said: "Things are going great here." When he was finally forced to admit failure, he blamed the people not socialism. He "knew" socialism was right, therefore the failure had to be due to the poor quality of his citizens. His great social experiment failed in only two short years. The country he detested is still going strong after 200 years. Wikipedia also notes: *"Between 1825 and 1830 more than a dozen such colonies were established in the United States, inspired by the ideas of Robert Owen. All of these met with economic failure and rapid disestablishment within one or a comparatively few years."*

Owen's son, Robert Dale Owen, stayed at New Harmony after its collapse and went on to serve two terms in Congress. He had his own assessment of his father's experiment, writing: *"All cooperative schemes which provide equal remuneration to the skilled and industrious and the ignorant and idle must work their own downfall. For by this unjust plan they must of necessity eliminate the valuable members and retain only the improvident, unskilled and vicious."*

The cynic has said: "One thing we learn from history is that people do not learn from history". So today we have a new generation of people who are attacking marriage, religion, and the private ownership of property. Unfortunately, they share the same arrogance and condensation of Robert Owen. Many are ready to completely destroy the U.S.A. that has survived for 244 years and replace it with Owen's socialism that failed in two. They have already had some limited success. Have you noticed that for the last half century marriage rates have plummeted? Have you also noticed state and local leaders using our present pandemic as a pretext for closing down churches and synagogues? Have you noticed that rioters routinely believe that they are entitled to loot and steal because they have been systematically oppressed by the rich? Can anybody say: "Deja vu"?

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce