

Darwinism, Progressivism, Eugenics and the Movement to Rewrite History

In the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries the world was awash in Progressive fervor. The need to direct and control society, to make it better through application of scientific methods was the essence of progressivism. Not all ideas advocated by progressives were bad, but they always involved increased government control and oversight. Food and drug safety were their causes, but to fair it was an issue outside progressive circles as well. Women's suffrage was seen as progressive, as were increased democracy overall. On the other hand, the person who introduced the nineteenth amendment was Republican Aaron A. Sargent, a friend of Susan B. Anthony. Neither were progressives.

One thing that was popular at the time, and whose proponents were completely progressives, is eugenics. While Social Darwinism is quoted around the internet, and even some university web sites, as originating with Herbert Spenser, and associated with conservatives, there is no evidence to support either. All evidence shows that Spenser, an advocate for the poor and opponent of Imperialism in all its forms, never supported Darwinism in the social context. Those that did, like Woodrow Wilson, were the quintessential opposite of Spenser. If one wants to read the who's who of Darwinism, and its associated pseudo-science, Eugenics, look up most the great progressives of the Progressive Era.

In the United States, besides Woodrow Wilson, a very short list of Eugenic supporters included people like Margaret Sanger, Irving Fisher, Justice Wendell Holmes Jr., Sidney Webb, Henry Rogers Seager, as well as Journalist like Paul Kellogg, Walter Lippmann, and Herbert Croly. In Britain you had Progressives like H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb of the Fabian Socialist Society touting the benefits of controlling human evolution. In Canada, it was such Progressive luminaries as Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung and James Woodsworth who joined the band wagon. What you don't find, despite liberal revisionist's efforts, is conservatives in the Social Darwinian book of Who's who. Plenty of its crusading opponents who were conservative, but Eugenics supporters among them are as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth.

Mussolini look to Wilson and the Progressives as the model for his government, and Hitler followed Bernard Shaw's advice and gassed those he considered less desirable. Despite the best efforts of those who wish it otherwise, the albatross of Eugenics is one tied securely around the necks of Progressives.