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THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION**

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Abstract

A humanist educational model can be defined as a system in which human values, dignity, reason and fulfilment in harmony with nature predominates. By contrast, the present system is based on utilitarian values to transform knowledge into commodities. Within this context we see the dehumanization of our children, young people and students.

I assume that the function of higher education is to reify ruling class values into the social consciousness of students, and to train students to serve the capitalist machinery. Rulers have long sought domination and dehumanization through technology and imposed their regime through models of industrial education (via factory manufacturing and military training models). Today we see computers replacing teachers since they are easier and cheaper to control as this goal serves industrial progress and capital accumulation. In this period of history there is rapid acceleration of this process marked by huge profits for the world's one thousand billionaires, the collapse of worker's rights and global environmental destruction.

This paper will also investigate the tenuous situation of the part time teacher work force at universities. Issues of salary fairness aside, the overwhelming issue facing part time university teachers in Japan (and workers of many trades globally) is the lack of job security. This is a form of violence inflicted by owners and managers upon the so-called contingent workers. In reaction to this globalist agenda, a counter hegemony of radical educational, critical, cooperative and non-violent yet confrontational strategies must occur in order to

insure the well being of future generations of humans and the natural world.

Preface

In my paper *Technology and the Coming Global Totalitarianism (2006)* I documented the trend of dehumanization due to capitalist and technological dominance in society. In this paper I touch on similar themes as they relate to education. Since I am from the US, the tone of the paper sometimes conflates ideas about American culture with my teaching experience in Japan. I see these topics through a lens which is cross cultural and from American to Japanese. This is not surprising considering the large influence America has on Japanese culture, politics, economics and military affairs. Generalizations about education can also be considered within the context of industrial society, but I am aware that heterogeneous as well as homogenous aspects exist between cultures.

The purpose of this paper is to *gut the filthy underbelly of the universal system of indiscriminate class exploitation* as it relates to the field of education and not to expose racial discrimination, which has been documented in the foreign press in Japan.

This paper is written in essay form for ease of style but if readers have any doubts as to the veracity of claims they can be assured that my opinions are based on a wide reading of the topic over several years, relying on a scholarly, mainstream and alternative media (internet) bibliography, as well as reflections from my own experiences (send inquiries to wilcoxrb@ybb.ne.jp).

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1. Introduction

This essay is a wake-up call to educators to jump up and take notice that when the cafeteria is on fire you stop fiddling with the power-point presentation. Today the world is engulfed in chaos: environmental, political, social-- you name it. It may seem like a normal state of affairs ("the world has always been this way"), or to be happening in slow motion, or seem surreal or inevitable, but in human evolutionary and historical terms it is a very real, rapid and large scale change. Consider some of the crises:

- * Of 400 biologists surveyed by *New York's American Museum of Natural History*, nearly 70 percent believe that the global biosphere (the living layer of the planet) is rapidly collapsing and that we are in the early stages of the Holocene extinction event. This is the greatest mass extinction of species since the dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago.
- * The Amazon forest is decimated by the minute to grow soy beans for cattle so that rich consumers can have their *Big Macs*.
- * The world's soil, the living layer upon which all terrestrial life depends, is being rapidly depleted due to industrial farming methods.
- * The United States, once a bastion of relatively free thought and democracy, is turning into a police state that negates constitutional protections. The US economy and financial system are in a shambles.
- * The illegal US invasion and occupation of Iraq has killed over a million people and turned the country into an unspeakable nightmare of ecological and human horror. The US and Israel are now planning another unprovoked bloodbath against Iran.
- * An earthquake over the summer of 2007 caused damage and fire to the world's largest nuclear power plant in Japan, yet few people noticed that this could have resulted in catastrophe and millions of deaths.

These are just a few examples from the litany of social catastrophe and ecological destruction. Why do we let this go on? For one, the mass media is a "faked as accurate" mishmash of half truths, brain deforming info-tainment and public relations advertisements dressed up as news topics, if not outright lies. The *CIA* itself plays a heavy role in influencing the news media, not to mention the handful of corporations and Media Moguls that shape news and entertainment. *Project Censored* is an organization that documents the top twenty five news stories that the media ignore every year.

At best, the mass media is embedded with multiple levels of bourgeois assumptions in order to purvey political and cultural hegemony. At worst, it is a crass weapon which demonizes the poor and glorifies greed and glamor. A very striking example of this trend is the visceral degradation of Arab and Muslim culture that has gone into high gear since 9-11. As witnessed by innumerable

faked-as-accurate news reports and the blurring of TV shows and movies with themes of Muslim terrorism, this political propaganda is passed off as reality despite volumes of evidence that the vast majority of Muslims are peace loving people. Much of US TV programming is degrading to civilized values and culture.

In Japan the media sensationalizes trivial issues and shifts attention away from corporate criminality and pillage while blaming social ills on gangsters, the *yakuza*, who are a mere freckle on the huge tumor of corporate capitalism.

Like the media which is supposed to inform, there is also something profoundly wrong with the focus of much academic research that does not tackle these topics, or which acts as gatekeeper to ensure a select canon of knowledge is transferred to young minds.

Academia is no longer an *Ivory Tower* in a noble sense, rather, the opposite configuration-- a dank, stagnant well contaminated with depleted uranium in the Iraqi desert. Many professors are not interested in applying their research to the everyday problems of society. They prefer to be shielded from the glare of reality by confining themselves to quiet research topics rather than promote civic involvement or political radicalism. In Japan, this is may be due to a combination of the social pressures which do not reward independent behavior along with the convenience of being left alone to pursue matters of personal interest.

A glance at some of the social science journal articles around indicates that professors often devote their time to obscure topics which give meaning to the world in only very minute and indirect ways, and coincidentally do not threaten the power structure. Research in the natural sciences and engineering is often devoted to that which empowers the complex of intertwined corporate interests from which professors may gain funding and status.

If a professor does speaks out he is sure to be chastized, as was *Ui Jun*, *University of Tokyo* professor of science, who never gained tenure because he exposed the web of corruption between government and industry and environmental pollution in Japan. In the university, dissonant elements (radical professors) within the organ (the university) will be expelled with green tea (limited term contracts) cleansing the bowels (university boardrooms) of

carcinogens (irritating individuals that ask pointed questions about injustices in society). No system seeks to destroy itself, and yet, the best thing for our world would be radical change in the established institutions.

Researchers studying unpopular topics will get little help from the universities or government. They will meet with the black hole of information and bureaucratic intransigence. If knowledge is power and people with power want to maintain it, they are not going to make finding out about how the world really works easy for those who want to change it. Teachers who promote unorthodox content or praxis may be marginalized or fired.

For example, environmentalists are seen as infringing on corporation's legal rights to plunder the planet, thus making environmentalists, "terrorists." Curriculum that does not fit within mainstream discourse will be frowned upon by the those in the upper ranks of the university. In order to insure that ideas that threaten the ruling hegemony are kept at the margins, professors and administrators who embrace bourgeois values will excel within such a system. In the meantime, university students pay ridiculously overpriced tuition costs to be taught by inexperienced graduate students (in the US) or harried part time teachers (in US and Japan) who can't even remember which department they work for. This doesn't mean educators promoting a counter hegemonic agenda should miss opportunities to challenge conventional wisdom whenever possible.

Like *Neo* in the film *The Matrix*, who choose to swallow the blue pill and awaken from his slumber of slavery, we must choose a path of resistance to the daily iniquities. To do nothing or to choose a milquetoast political strategy is cowardly, foolish and self destructive.

2. The attack on children

The secret of education is respecting the pupil. -- *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

As soon as you're born they make you feel small, By giving you no time instead of it all, Till the pain is so big you feel nothing at all, A working class hero is something to be,...They hurt you at home and they hit you at school, They hate you if you're clever and they despise a fool, Till you're so - crazy you can't follow their rules, A working class hero is something to be,...When they've tortured and scared you for twenty odd years, Then they expect you to pick a career, When you can't really function you're so full of fear, A working class hero is something to be,...Keep you doped with religion and sex and TV, And you think you're so clever and classless and free, But you're still - peasants as far as I can see, A working class hero is something to be,...There's room at the top they are telling

you still, But first you must learn how to smile as you kill, If you want to be like the folks on the hill, A working class hero is something to be...If you want to be a hero well just follow me... -- *John Lennon, ("Working Class Hero," John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band, 1970, EMI Records)*

Institutional wisdom tells us that children need school. Institutional wisdom tells us that children learn in school. But this institutional wisdom is itself the product of schools because sound common sense tells us that only children can be taught in school. Only by segregating human beings in the category of childhood could we ever get them to submit to the authority of a schoolteacher. -- *Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society*

If the secret to education is respecting the students, then killing, enslaving, neglecting, abusing or threatening children with draconian policies is not the answer. But that is what is happening. A civilization can be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. Even though the concept of childhood has changed depending on historical context, children of tender age can be considered vulnerable. Today children throughout the "Third World" (the source of the rich world's natural resources and cheap labor) are abused and neglected. According to a recent *UNICEF* report, about 170 million children worldwide work in semi-slave conditions. The report also states that over 140 million children are orphans and that a million children are in jail. The children that slave away in Mumbai sweat shops or who are sold into sexual slavery are contributing to the total capital worth of the global wealth pot from which we all feed.

Children in developed countries are increasingly under strict controls at school or suffer corporate assaults on their health and dignity. Sociologist *Juliet Schor* writes in *Born to Buy* that children are cynically targeted by corporations as a significant source of revenue:

High consumer involvement is a significant cause of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and psychosomatic complaints. Psychologically healthy children will be made worse off if they become enmeshed in the culture of getting and spending. Children with emotional problems will be helped if they disengage from the worlds that corporations are constructing for them.

Kids get it from both sides, drawn into addictive lifestyles and then chastized for getting sick. The *New York Times* reports a recent example of class warfare in the US where the Bush administration is fighting "to stop states from expanding the popular *Children's Health Insurance Program*." This program delivers insurance to middle income families who are treading water. As of August of 2007, news services reported that 36.5 million live in poverty in United States and that

Americans without health benefits rose to 47 Million. Teen suicide rates in the US are soaring and childhood obesity is an epidemic in the US and other industrialized countries. In the UK, children's health suffers because of lack of outdoor playtime.

Where are our educators in raising awareness about these issues? Some English language educators in Japan are informing us (*David Peaty's* textbooks) but informing is not the same as action. As *Professor Denis G. Rancourt* of the *Activist Teacher* website notes:

Critical pedagogy is not about the message. The message must be accompanied by action that involves confrontation and personal risk. Critical pedagogy is praxis. It's practitioners need to be fighting oppression, not just becoming 'informed' about it. The backlash is what informs you and your resistance is what builds you. What is your oppression? Action-risk-backlash-solidarity-reflection-outreach-more-action.

In the US and UK, public schools are turning into day-camp jails with growing surveillance of students and police enforcement of school rules. *Steve Watson* of *Prison Planet* website writes that "[s]chools have become hi-tech prisons. Children all across America and the UK are being conditioned to accept that they are not free and that they must submit to draconian laws and measures for their own safety." Watson provides a long list of disturbing news articles to support his assertion. This is especially true in inner cities where racial profiling and police brutality have always always existed, but the trend is spreading. Even in my own meek and mild home town of Coldwater, Michigan, a few years ago the high school finally got it's first armed police guard. This was not out of necessity but out of fear of "terrorists" or "school violence" (See: *Michael Moore's* film *Bowling for Columbine* on the exaggeration of crime incidents in the US in order to scare people into submission).

Instead of concentrating on appreciative forms of learning and conflict resolution, the US prefers handling problems with "three strikes and you're out" and iron fisted discipline. Of course, schools were never really meant to be places to have fun and goof around. Activist scholars *Rich Gibson* and *Wayne Ross*, writing for the newsletter *Counterpunch*, note that schools in the US are highly specialized in terms of class and race where the main purpose is indoctrination.

Schools serve to train the next generation of workers, from pre-prison schooling in some urban and rural areas, to pre-military schooling, to pre-middle class teacher training, to pre-med or pre-law, to the private school systems of the rich; schooling is divided along razor sharp lines. Schools do skills training, and depending on where a child is, some limited intellectual training. In public schools, the key issues of life: work, production and reproduction, rational knowledge, and freedom, are virtually illegal.

This trend was identified by political philosopher *Ivan Illich*, who in 1970 decried the dehumanizing process of schools in his book, *Deschooling Society*.

[T]he institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery. All over the world the school has an anti-educational effect on society: school is recognized as the institution which specializes in education. The failures of school are taken by most people as a proof that education is a very costly, very complex, always arcane, and frequently almost impossible task....School appropriates the money, men, and good will available for education and in addition discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks. Work, leisure, politics, city living, and even family life depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education.

For Illich, it would be no surprise to learn that schools are literally becoming locked-down since their institutional role has always been to lock down the mind. Due to the oppressive environment and the lack of decent salary inner city schools have difficulty finding qualified teachers. The US military preys upon schools to find cannon fodder for their endless wars. When they cannot find enough immigrants to join the military in exchange for legal residency, they infiltrate schools to promote propaganda. As *Mike Ferner* wrote in the *Counterpunch* newsletter in 2006:

Since 2002, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has spent a half-million dollars a year creating a database it claims is "arguably the largest repository of 16-25 year-old youth data in the country, containing roughly 30 million records." In Pentagonese the database is part of the Joint Advertising, Marketing Research and Studies (JAMRS) project. Its purpose, along with additional millions spent on polling and marketing research, is to give the Pentagon's \$4 billion annual recruiting budget maximum impact.

In Japan the public is resistant to remilitarization, but the country is gradually moving in that direction. It was reported by the *Japan Communist Party* that the Japanese military is currently spying on anyone in Japan involved in anti-war activities, including teachers and students on campuses.

At a more sinister level, the US military and corporate researchers are

spending untold sums of money on developing *GNR* technologies (genetic-nanotech-robotics). A couple of recent examples: rat's with implantable mind control electrodes which can make them do things they would never do willingly; and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) computer chips that can be surgically implanted under the skin of children, nominally to protect them from kidnappers.

These sorts of techno-solutions are being brazenly touted more and more. I saw a program on *BBC World's* weekly show for "techies" that promoted the liberating wonders of video game software. This is the BBC's social conditioning of children and the public, revealing the method, sometimes critically, sometimes subtly, but relentlessly, instructing us about our future (and how it is unwise to resist). The dream of the future classroom was illustrated by what the BBC saw as the ideal gaming space: a windowless room full of computer cubicles with each player separated by a partition. Students were playing online games while not knowing with whom (the BBC thought that was just nifty). They may as well all have been playing solitaire in order to illustrate the fulfilment of *George Orwell's* classic book, *1984*: a totalitarian hell of perfect obedience, loneliness, despair, isolation and helplessness. In a virtual classroom of the near future, students will study preordained web pages from the *Ministry of Truth* which monitors their involvement and progress in real time. Human teachers will no longer be needed.

Why the police state for kids? In a world of *Haves* and *Have-nots*, the Haves mean to protect their interests by imposing a variety of subtle, coercive and brutal police state measures. The ruling establishment is uneasy about the fact that America is no longer a land of rising expectations. As the *New York Times* reported in 2006, 60 million Americans survive on just 7 dollars a day. The United States has one of the highest proportions of imprisoned populations in the world (mostly non violent offenses). Leading anti-imperialist scholar *James Petras* (<http://petras.lahaine.org/>) notes that global economic disparity is exploding:

The world's billionaires grew in number from 793 in 2006 to 946 this year. The total wealth of this global ruling class grew 35 per cent year to year topping \$3.5 trillion, while income levels for the lower 55 per cent of the

world's 6-billion-strong population declined or stagnated. Put another way, **one hundred millionth of the world's population (1/100,000,000) owns more than over 3 billion people.**

Stephen Lendmann writes at *Global Research*, in his recent article, *The War on Working Americans*, that organized labor has not addressed the problem:

In a globalized world, the law of supply and demand is in play with lots more workers around everywhere than enough jobs for them. It keeps corporate costs low and profits high and growing...the result is a huge reserve army of unemployed or underemployed working people creating an inevitable race to the bottom in a corporatized marketplace. It harms workers everywhere, including in developed nations.

The situation in Japan is heading in the same direction as the US/UK. While Japan's top corporations rake in billions of dollars in profits from overseas investments and the living standards of a small class of super-rich skyrockets, millions of other people in Japan are losing their jobs and the social and environmental fabric of the country is collapsing. Workers are being returned to the role of feudal serfs as they can no longer afford to buy the products they produce. How has this situation come to be? The renowned Japanese political commentator, *Uchihashi Katsuto*, author of the article, *Japanese Deregulation: Big Corporations are Destroying People's Lives*, notes:

[T]he Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, the Office for the Promotion of Regulatory Reform, and Keidanren—have a tight grip over authoritative opinion. These [business] organizations use various tricks to manipulate overall trends and influence the opinion of regular people. In turn, the business community, led by Keidanren, holds sway over the government. The result is made clear by the resurrection of political contributions that allow companies to make political donations even if over 50 percent of their shares are foreign-owned. Keidanren is guiding the government by ranking government policies according to its business priorities and then suggesting to companies the target and size of political contributions. Should corporations that don't have the right to vote be allowed to exercise much more power than voters? The bureaucracy is not acting as a check to the current government but supporting greater deregulation. Japan is the best example of a modern state in which the bureaucracy is dysfunctional.

Whatever the flaws, there are many attributes to the educational system in Japan and it has been noted that primary school is more humane in Japan than in the US or UK. But Uchihashi warns that as the economy is "liberalized" it "will definitely lead to the destruction of public institutions" such as public schools. How this will square with school's role to prepare children to become cogs in the capitalist machinery is unclear. In *Brian J. McVeigh's* book, *Japanese Higher Education as Myth*, he bursts the bubble about Japanese education after primary

school. Junior high school and high school emphasize rote learning and exams in order to fulfill the four purposes of Japanese university: socialization; job sorting mechanism; holding tank for immature youths; and lastly--academic achievement.

3. The business of education

Universities are dictatorships, devoid of real democracy, run by self-appointed executives who serve private capital interests. Producing obedient employees and publicly funded intellectual property transfers are in fact the university's only business, as is evident from its research, programs, curricula, and coercive methods. -- *Denis G. Rancourt, Professor of Physics, Ottawa University, Canada*

Universities...are not democratic institutions. Really, they're like corporations. The people who have the most power are the people who have the least to do with education. -- *Howard Zinn, Historian and author of A People's History of the United States*

A university should not be a democracy. -- *John Silber, former president of Boston University*

When I asked how such a small group of elite criminals (the capitalist ruling class) could enslave so many people and gain control over their governments, one friend noted, "Money, Organization and Ruthless Commitment and indifference to the rest of humanity which is itself indifferent to its own future and well being" (J. Blankfort, personal communication, July 25, 2007). One of the organizational means by which the Public Mind is shaped in this dialectical process is through the education system. *Leonard Minsky* notes in the introduction to *Lawrence Soley's Leasing the Ivory Tower*, a book about the corporate take-over of higher education in the US in the 1980s and 1990s:

The corporate assault on universities has been part of a deliberate corporate campaign to reintroduce power onto campuses, after the activism of the 1960's had largely discredited corporate sponsorship. With science and technology-oriented industries perceived as the wave of the future, corporations were eager to exploit the heavy federal investments in university-based research.

Indeed, as establishment apologist *Samuel Huntington* and other authors for the *Trilateral Commission* wrote in 1975 in their ironically titled monograph, *The Crisis of Democracy* (meaning an excess of substantive public participation in the political arena during and after the upheaval of the 1960s),

At the present time, a significant challenge comes from the intellectuals and related groups who assert their disgust with the corruption, materialism, and inefficiency of democracy and with the subservience of democratic government to "monopoly capitalism." The development of an "adversary

culture" among intellectuals has affected students, scholars, and the media.

In fact, 1960s radicals were upset with the abuse of capitalist power and the atrocity of the *Vietnam Slaughter*, not with the inefficiency of democracy as the authors imply. Formal democracy and substantive democracy have different meanings, the former serves the elites and the latter the masses. As for the public's disgust with corruption and materialism, these were healthy responses to the ecocidal path of the permanent war economy and near-nuclear holocaust that the Trilateral Commission promotes. As Illich noted at the time:

There is no question that at present the university offers a unique combination of circumstances which allows some of its members to criticize the whole of society. It provides time, mobility, access to peers and information, and a certain impunity-privileges not equally available to other segments of the population. But *the university provides this freedom only to those who have already been deeply initiated into the consumer society and into the need for some kind of obligatory public schooling.*

The rollback largely worked, defusing radical politics on campuses while fueling "identity politics" (promotion of parochial causes that de-emphasise class oppression). By the 1990s, the corporate take-over of universities was nearly complete. Soley writes that, "[t]he real story is about university physics and electrical engineering departments being seduced by Pentagon contracts; molecular biology, biochemistry, and medicine departments being wooed by drug companies and biotech firms." Universities have largely abandoned their mission for a well rounded "liberal" education in favor of turning "a trick for anybody with money to invest; and the only ones with money are corporations, millionaires [billionaires these days RW] and foundations."

During this period the most prominent promoter of right wing corporate education was *Boston University* president, *John Silber*, who insisted that "a university should not be a democracy." All the while he exemplified the CEO type of university president who excelled at fund raising (and was rewarded with huge salary and bonuses) as educational quality went into the dumpster.

In recent years, *The New York Times* reports that "[p]residents of some of the nation's biggest public universities are closing the salary gap with their rivals at private institutions, with the number of top executives earning more than \$500,000.... seven presidents of private colleges, universities and medical

schools currently receive more than \$1 million in compensation.”

The losers in this game have been the people that universities are supposed to serve: students. Although youths may be becoming smarter in the world of consumer culture (what an “iPod” is or fashion trends), it is well known that US youths (and many Americans) have dismal skills in basic subjects such as geography, not to mention the maths and sciences.

Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration and is today an astute critic of political and economic affairs. He reports that the US is exporting its jobs overseas and therefore universities are losing their purpose.

US colleges and universities continue to graduate hundreds of thousands of qualified engineers, IT professionals, and other professionals who will never have the opportunity to work in the professions for which they have been trained....Except for a well-connected few graduates, who find their way into Wall Street investment banks, top law firms, and private medical practice, *American universities today consist of detention centers to delay for four or five years the entry of American youth into unskilled domestic services.*

3.1 Testing as heavy blunt instrument

There are two main elements to the renewed concern for falling standards of students in both the US and Japan: money and power. As Gibson and Ross note about the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* educational reforms which are meant to help students who are struggling with basic skills:

NCLB and its key components (like textbooks, test production, and test tutoring) are more than profitable for some of its backers. According to the American Association of Publishers sales of standardized tests tripled to nearly \$600 million since the introduction of NCLB. The testing industry oligarchy of CTB-McGraw Hill, Harcourt, and Houghton Mifflin control 80 percent of the total market, which is valued at over \$7 billion.

In Japan we see similar trends in the English industry with the *TOEFL* and *TOIEC* tests, which according to applied linguistics specialists with whom I spoken, are of questionable value in assessing student’s language ability. The tests *are* useful at making lots of money for the companies who sell thousands of textbooks every year and charge high prices for the tests. Japanese students are coerced into taking the the *TOEIC* test in order to get better jobs.

If education is about money-money-money for some, it also has other unintended consequences that are ultimately irrational, both in terms of serving

the common welfare of people and planet, but also in serving capitalism's narrow prerogatives to create a skillful, efficient and obedient work force. As Gibson and Ross noted about NCLB, the socio-economic reality behind the rhetoric of saving children reveals a deep level of hypocrisy. The authors place NCLB within the context of the rollback of democratic rights won in the upheaval of the 1960s. Ideas such as "critical pedagogy, whole language reading programs, inter-active, investigatory teaching" needed to be put out of people's minds since schools have been shown to be dangerous gathering places for rebellious youth. If there is any illusion about who is behind this disciplining of the mind, a new governmental report called *Tough Choices for Tough Times* was authored by "the director of the militarized Lockheed-Martin, and university presidents whose incomes are frequently dependant on grants from the military, earmarked for 'research'." Gibson and Ross make the following points about NCLB/Tough-Tough, heavy-blunt-instrument approach to education:

- * Tough-Tough calls for national curriculum standards as a means of recapturing the witless patriotism necessary to get people to work, and eagerly fight and die, for what is abundantly easy to see are the interests of their own rulers.

- * NCLB and Tough-Tough aim: (1) to focus on low-performing kids and schools; (2) to strengthen the federal role in schools via curricula standards and high-stakes tests; and (3) to use "scientific methods" to evaluate the techniques and products of educational work.

- * The primary thesis proclaimed by NCLB supporters is that every child deserves a good education as a leg up in the US meritocracy. The reality is that doing school reform without doing economic and social reform in communities is, as our colleague Professor Jean Anyon says, "like washing the air on one side of a screen door--it won't work."

Compare this with the method *David Levine* advances in *Rethinking Schools*: "Since teaching for democracy means helping students become highly competent, sensitive, and independent human beings, it is a complex undertaking beyond the ability of teacher as technician. It requires the effort of a teacher who is aspiring to treat her or his profession as an art." The sage Washington journalist, *Sam Smith* (<http://prorev.com/>), opines that, "[a]bove all is the need to enjoy what you're reading or writing. The greatest sin of NCLB is to make what should be a lifelong joy into a tedious, bureaucratic exercise - making words far harder to learn and infinitely harder to love." *Roni Natov*,

author of the award winning *The Poetics of Childhood*, a book that celebrates literature written for children, had this to say about NCLB: "I think it really amounts to every child left behind--or rather, childhood completely left behind. Deadly, wrongheaded, unimaginative, quantitative rather than qualitative."

The pressure of tests causes students to have a negative identification with learning. Regarding McVeigh's study of Japanese education, he found that since examinations are prioritized, students fail to gain the critical thinking skills that they would through other kinds of learning experiences. As a result, people believe what is spoon fed to them by the corporations (advertising), government and media (news). Some Japanese universities where I teach have students who are really "false beginners," veritable high school dropouts in terms of language acquisition or other academic subjects. It is not uncommon to come across students who behave childishly and expect the teacher to spoon feed every instruction (often repeatedly even as they ignore you while you are speaking directly to them in either Japanese or English). Note Illich's warning about how schools strip the learner of independent will:

[L]earning is the human activity which least needs manipulation by others. Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. Once a man or woman has accepted the need for school, he or she is easy prey for other institutions. Once young people have allowed their imaginations to be formed by curricular instruction, they are conditioned to institutional planning of every sort [which] smothers the horizon of their imaginations....[The] transfer of responsibility from self to institution guarantees social regression, especially once it has been accepted as an obligation.

Grades and class attendance are simply perfunctory relics of what schooling is "supposed to be" while limiting "academic achievement" to those who play by the rules by passing tests. Socialization is often a subtle way to reinforce cultural-nationalist consciousness. When I teach political-content issues I rarely begin by criticizing Japan since students will be suspicious of what a foreigner has to say. Furthermore they are often quite ignorant of their own country's geography, environment, history and political system. On the other hand, if I show how my own country (USA, which Japanese identify as a noble ally and powerful cultural symbol) is involved in causing war, poverty and environmental destruction in the world, and how Japan is complicit in this system, they can

form their own conclusions.

Writing for *Information Clearing House*, Walter C. Uhler posits that in the US, American cultural history has “engendered a moral rot” and “culture of conformism” in the population that has rendered people “incapable of withstanding manipulation and seduction by self-serving business/political interests.” Knowledge has been disassociated from an inherent curiosity and joy for understanding the world. This has created a dangerous situation in which “most Americans have proven themselves incapable of distinguishing between the true and the false throughout our history.” Those who remain ignorant of history are sure to repeat its mistakes.

Susan Rosenthal, MD, writes in her wonderful book *Power and Powerlessness* that the kind of social alienation that is a result of institutionalized education and hierarchical workplaces leads to hopelessness. Rosenthal believes that alienation “and dissociation re-enforce each other in countless ways. Workers who must function like cogs in the social machine have dissociated relationships with the other cogs. There is no direct and conscious sharing of the creative, productive process.” Interestingly, globalization is a part of the problem since instead “of relating to each other as fellow producers, directly exchanging what they want and need, workers relate to each other as dissociated consumers, you pay my boss for what I made and I pay your boss for what you made.” Our educational system reinforces this division of labor, training computer techies but not farmers. Nowadays most people live in urban areas and don’t even know how to grow food.

Rosenthal decries our social alienation, noting that “despite living, working, commuting and shopping together, most people feel estranged from one another. We talk about what we can’t control (sports, the weather) to avoid discussing what we aren’t allowed to control (our work, the world).” Or as in the case of Tokyo, people rarely converse to each other in public in a casual manner and talk to strangers only if it involves an exchange of goods and services for money.

3.2 Technology’s double-edged sword

Dale Allen Pfeiffer’s essay, *Technology Addicts*, notes how in the good old

days, people used to live simpler and happier lives. Apologists for modernism try to discredit this idea by saying that people weren't happier and life was really nasty, brutish and short, but that is not quite true either. At any rate, it is undeniable how mindless and docile people in modern society have become. In these circumstances, education can either serve corporate interests or help to undo the pernicious influences that surround us. Pfeiffer offers a grim but unarguable assessment:

We spend most of our lives in artificial environments, either in our cars, our place of business or our homes. All of our input there is artificial and abstracted....Studies have shown that our critical mind turns off as we watch television. We disengage and zone out. It is, in fact, the perfect frame of mind for indoctrination and brainwashing. And it is in this condition that we take in the vast majority of our sensory input, from which we build our view of reality. Our reality is dictated to us by news shows, talk shows, sitcoms and one hour dramas....We are a society of addicts. We have been addicted since birth. As such, we all fit the psychological profile of addicts; we are all subject to the dysfunction, the codependency and the denial of addiction....Our leaders know this. In fact, they depend upon it. No one is as easily controlled as an addict. Our corporations are all pushers, and our economy is a gigantic methadone program....And we will line up at the stores to receive our [microchip] implants, so that we can have our own personal interface with technology, and become thoroughly monitored and managed in a new corporate police state.

I have learned more from using the internet than all my years in an institutional setting of a classroom. Of course, face to face meetings cannot be replaced by a keyboard and computer screen, and I did enjoy many positive experiences during my public school days, but in proper proportion the internet is an amazingly effective and egalitarian system of learning. However, though the internet has been a boon to political critics and activists, computers can also be used to control teachers or even make them redundant. As Illich pointed out in 1970: "[w]e need research on the possible use of technology to create institutions which serve personal, creative, and autonomous interaction and the emergence of values which cannot be substantially controlled by technocrats." It is no wonder that corporations promote shopping on the internet's "information superhighway" while trying to crush cyber-activism through fees and censorship.

One astute critic of technology and capitalism has been *David Noble*, a professor of politics teaching in Canada. His essay, *Technology and the Commodification of Higher Education*, was published by *Monthly Review* in 2002.

Noble found that distance (online) education has been identified "with a revolution in technology" and has "thereby assumed the aura of innovation and the appearance of a revolution itself" for the future of higher education. There are many attributes to online education such as making education accessible a large number of people. However, the "seductive enchantment of technological transcendence" has been rapidly adopted by educational planners who have a mind for business efficiency rather than humanistic education. Noble argues that there is "a price for this technological fetishism, which so dominates and delimits discussion."

One price is a dehumanizing effect which reduces human interactions to saleable commodities. Computerized education has increased the ability of planners to make education into an experience which is disintegrated and distilled "into discrete, reified, and ultimately...packages of things" such as "syllabi, lectures, lessons, and exams."

Categorization of knowledge legitimizes the proprietary practice of copyright and ownership of knowledge. Yet, "[a]s anyone familiar with higher education knows, these common instruments of instruction barely reflect what actually takes place in the educational experience." As Illich notes:

The result of the curriculum production process looks like any other modern staple. It is a bundle of planned meanings, a package of values, a commodity whose "balanced appeal" makes it marketable to a sufficiently large number to justify the cost of production. Consumer-pupils are taught to make their desires conform to marketable values.

Curriculum materials and overpriced pap textbooks at some universities where I teach are often loaded with bourgeois assumptions and rely on and promote mass media propaganda as pedagogical source material.

Teaching is really an art form and denying the autonomy and spontaneity of an interactive learning experience is killing the spirit of education. This is leading to increased pressure on teachers to comply with paperwork (cyberwork) rather than time spent with students. Noble concludes that:

Under this new regime, painfully familiar to skilled workers in every industry since the dawn of industrial capitalism, educators confront the harsh realities of commodity production: speed-up, routinization of work, greater work discipline and managerial supervision, reduced autonomy, job insecurity, employer appropriation of the fruits of their labor, and, above all, the insistent managerial pressures to reduce labor costs in order to turn a profit.

The English language industry is buzzing with terms like "computer aided learning" and "online teaching networks." Consider these examples:

- * US universities are increasingly computer/internet oriented. Educational procedures and learning activities often take place online. "Distance learning" degrees allow students to email their reports to professors. In other cases, students can check out video taped lectures from a distant location and watch and report upon it for credits.

- * Universities are developing surveillance systems whereby a professor can monitor student's use of assigned webpages and the number of times and duration of use in order to better evaluate performance.

- * New spyware from a company called *SpectorSoft* is being touted for workplaces that could also be used in schools. The software "records Web sites visited, emails sent and received, chats and instant messages, keystrokes typed, files transferred, documents printed and applications run." And can you imagine teachers being monitored by some pointy-headed administrator while trying to teach? "Through a first of its kind surveillance-like camera recording tool, Spector 360 shows an exact visual detail what an employee does every step of the way."

- * Adherence to factory efficiency: one major university makes teachers follow a preselected English language textbook and have students take tests during exact intervals during the term. Teachers are offered stopwatches to measure length of interviews: precision precision precision!

- * Some universities have adopted an attendance system whereby the student swipes her or his microchip personal ID card on a wall device. Not only is this degrading to the teacher (who is often ignored by students in any case when trying to take attendance), many students forget to swipe the device and are marked absent. Attendance in Japan is already a ritual whereby students may arrive for class with no intention of studying.

In addition to these dehumanizing procedures that increase administrative efficiency at the expense of human experiences (with their inherent "inefficiencies"), modern society is now overwhelmed with computer gadgetry: bombarded with rude and radiation-spreading cell phone users/addicts;

microchipped cards for shopping, working or entering public transport systems; biometric passports; increased use of RFID chips in consumer goods (See: *Spychips* by Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre); preoccupation with video games, computers and the online world of shopping, sex, friendship, entertainment and other normally real world activities. Within such a brain altering environment we should not be surprised if students have shortened attention spans and an inability to think.

3.3 The commercialization of schools

[It is a] system of selfishness; is not dictated by the high sentiments of human nature; is not measured by the exact law of reciprocity; much less by the sentiments of love and heroism, but is a system of distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness.

-- *Ralph Waldo Emerson's description of American capitalism, 1841*

If you saw the excellent documentary, *Super Size Me*, by Morgan Spurlock, there was a revealing clip of a high school student who thought a balanced lunch consisted of some french fries, ketchup and milk. The film exposed the junk food industry's blatant exploitation of students. Food company's are now allowed to sell unhealthy products in cafeterias while healthier whole and organic foods are generally not on the menu. There was some good news in the film, one special school proved that a healthy, whole-foods oriented diet helped students to improve physical and mental well being and their ability to learn. But that doesn't make money for *Mickey Dees!*

Robert Weissman of the *Ralph Nader* founded *Multinational Monitor* magazine writes that,

Commercialism has become ubiquitous, in ways barely imaginable a quarter century ago. Corporate marketers target small children in the most devious of ways, and advertising is pervasive in schools. A new speciality known as neuromarketing is doing brain scans to gain "unprecedented insight into the consumer mind," as one neuromarketer put it....Marketers can't seem to stop thinking about the spectacular marketing opportunity afforded by schools. That's the kind of thinking that led to the creation of Channel One, which wraps 10 minutes of pap news and entertainment around two minutes of ads broadcast into classrooms.

Consider these examples to turn schools into shopping malls and students into consumer zombies:

* Increasing numbers of endowments from corporations to influence university curriculum, including a "school of advertising" at the University of South Florida.

* *McGraw-Hill* and other textbook publishers have been touting the gold mine that awaits corporate clients if they place advertisements inside textbooks. The placement of advertisements (billboards) on the sides of school buses, school walls, toilet stall doors and at athletic facilities.

* US universities are increasingly relying on business models whereby professors can carry out research in service of private interests. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* reported "that a major academic study — which found that antidepressants were safe and effective for pregnant women — was tainted by undisclosed conflicts of interest." By the same token, *Johns Hopkins Medicine* has allowed its name to be used to hawk cosmetics products.

* *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reporter *Daniel Hong* found that universities themselves are marketed as soap products, depending on how bubbly, fluffy and clean are their finished products. *U.S. News & World Report* rates universities according to superficial criteria but ignores issues of "access to faculty, social climate, financial resources, quality of academic resources (library, labs and computers), housing and food service quality, sports program, job placement, advance studies in graduate and professional schools, and fostering of students' lifelong intellectual and psychological development."

Some people are fighting back such as the group *Commercial Alert* at www.commercialalert.org.

3.5 US academia blind to political bigotry

Although a politically charged subject, it is worth noting another way in which US academia is perverted. One of the world's most respected human rights journalists and documentary film makers, *Jon Pilger*, made a film exposing how Palestinians suffer without proper fresh water, food or electricity inside of Israel's iron cage and torture chamber, "the occupied territories." Pilger wrote in August of 2007 in a piece on the *Israel Boycott*:

As John Chalcraft of the London School of Economics pointed out, "the Israeli academy has long provided intellectual, linguistic, logistical, technical, scientific and human support for an occupation in direct violation of international law [against which] no Israeli academic institution has ever taken a public stand". The swell of [an Israel academic and economic] boycott is growing inexorably, as if an important marker has been passed, reminiscent of the boycotts that led to sanctions against apartheid South Africa. Both Mandela and Desmond Tutu have drawn this parallel; so has

South African cabinet minister Ronnie Kasrils and other illustrious Jewish members of the liberation struggle. In Britain, an often Jewish-led academic campaign against Israel's "methodical destruction of [the Palestinian] education system" can be translated by those of us who have reported from the occupied territories into the arbitrary closure of Palestinian universities, the harassment and humiliation of students at checkpoints and the shooting and killing of Palestinian children on their way to school.

Haaretz, Israeli's leading newspaper, reported in 2007 that "[m]ore than 10,000 people have signed a petition denouncing attempts to mount an academic boycott against Israel" and included signatories who are "academics from various countries" who agreed that "singling out Israelis for an academic boycott is wrong." The petition was drafted by "Professor Alan Dershowitz of Harvard, a well-known legal scholar." Dershowitz stated in an announcement that, "[i]f the union goes ahead with this immoral petition, it will destroy British academia. We will isolate them from the rest of the world."

Backed by the power of the *Israel Lobby*, Dershowitz's threat to "destroy" British academia should not be taken lightly. Most recently *Professor Norman Finkelstein of DePaul University* was denied tenureship by the university and ultimately fired. He is a prolific and widely recognized scholar and had received the highest teacher evaluations in DePaul's political science department as well as the support of most faculty who voted for his tenureship. The real reason behind his rejection was because he exposed Alan Dershowitz as a plagiarist and for his ongoing critique of Israel. Pilger notes that

Intimidation has worked in the past. The smearing of American academics has denied them promotion, even tenure. The late Edward Said kept an emergency button in his New York apartment connected to the local police station; his offices at Columbia University were once burned down. Following my 2002 film, *Palestine is Still the Issue*, I received death threats and slanderous abuse, most of it coming from the US..."

Other than ugly threats from the Zionist bigot, Dershowitz, and his henchmen at the *ADL ("Arab-Defamation League")*, this begs the question as to why liberals in US academia would not support the boycott. Recent books by *President Jimmy Carter, Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*, and *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, by professors *John Mearsheimer of Harvard University* and *Stephen Walt of the University of Chicago*, provide possible answers to the question. *James Petras* writes in *The Power of Israel in the United States* that there "is presently an

inability to even formulate or sustain discourse related to the subject of Israeli influence on the United States." Since such a critique is often be met with the knee-jerk accusation of "anti-Semitism," "neo-Nazi" or "Holocaust denier," it is no wonder that most people avoid the topic. Petras notes:

Jews in North America, South America and Europe are disproportionately in the highest paid positions, with the highest proportion in the exclusive, prestigious private universities, with disproportionate influence in finance and the media. It is clear that "anti-Semitism" is a very marginal global issue and, in point of fact, that Jews are the most influential ethnic group.

Jimmy Carter was smeared as an anti-Semite and Nazi for writing his book while being stiff-armed by his own Democratic party. That the US Left, antiwar movement and progressives in academia are not calling for the boycott of Israel when they would have been active on the hot-button issues of East Timor, Nicaragua or apartheid South Africa is revealing. *Noam Chomsky*, who as a boy was sympathetic to the Zionist cause, and today is probably the most influential dissident scholar in the US, dismisses the critique of the Israel Lobby as irrelevant to understanding US policy in the Middle East. As author of *Damage Control*, *Jeffrey Blankfort* put it, "Chomsky has done a massive disservice to the Palestinian cause" in this regard.

4. The attack on teachers: Redundancy and injustice on campus

History shows that if you don't get turned on to politics, politics will turn on you. -- *Ralph Nader, Consumer advocate and US presidential candidate*

Anything less than equality is exploitation. -- *Peter Osbourne, Scientific researcher in Japan referring to the government's double standard on race and nationality*

Will university teachers in Japan still have their jobs in ten years-- in five years? This may be an over stretching concern but evidence points to a trend to further oppress teachers through a variety of draconian and techno-business strategies.

For the purposes of our inquiry, the question has three parts: a) to what extent will ALL university teachers be in danger of being "downsized" b) will only the social sciences and humanities be targeted and why; c) and are foreign language teachers in Japan the most vulnerable? Consider this opinion from a foreign full time professor.

In the future the humanities will get less funding, the applied sciences more. There is resistance to that from professors and administrators (and probably

some government officials), but I think it will prove inevitable. Before demi-semi-privatization, the faculty budgets were allotted rather equitably, but I expect the language people will find themselves getting less and/or more strings (e.g., "offer TOEIC or get zilch"). I expect we will see an increasing movement toward teaching standardized tests, because employers want those test scores. They also don't want to pay employees to learn English that arguably should have been taught in school/university. With an emphasis on standardized tests will come greater reliance on more structured, discrete point content, which is well-suited for computers, which means fewer teachers teaching more low-interaction classes; fewer students also means less money for personnel.

This person emphasizes the view that the humanities, social sciences and languages will tend to get less funding and the "hard" sciences more, which is plausible from the perspective of utilitarian uses of knowledge. His interpretation echoes warnings we have heard in previous chapters regarding the use of universities as sources of cannon fodder to serve the capitalist war machine. If schools produce thinking and caring people instead of pre-programmed robots, they will be harder to control.

On the other hand, all of the fields do indeed contribute to the hegemony of the capitalist system (for example, public relations, media, public policy, marketing, etc). English is also necessary for graduate studies at university.

* **Virtual classrooms** With one teacher online (or "on screen" in "interactive classrooms") who can instruct innumerable students in TOEIC, skilled but lowly paid English teachers from India could replace a higher paid staff that presently exists. Indians are well educated, diligent, excel in the maths and sciences and can speak English.

* **Evading accountability through legalized fraud** At one university in Tokyo they now hire part time teachers but have them sign a contract which stipulates that although the teacher works at their campus, teaches their students, and is paid by them, he or she is not actually "employed" by that university! This kind of byzantine logic which is characterized by elaborate obfuscation and misrepresentation of truth was invented by feudalistic systems of governance and corporate lawyers who use language as a weapon to exploit and oppress.

* **Outsourcing** A basic contradiction to the idea of using part time or outsourced teachers as that, in theory, the least qualified personnel spend the most time with the greatest number of students. This is an embarrassing irony that full

time professors are unable to address. And yet, many universities are moving toward Dispatch (*haken*); and Subcontracting (*Inin, Itaku*) systems of employment. Some of these practices are technically illegal in Japan, but corporations are pushing the limits of the law to see how far they can exploit employees within legal boundaries. If corporations/universities can exploit the most easily targeted groups such as foreigner workers, and have their practices sanctioned in the courts, the rest of the domestic workforce will be targeted for "downsizing," and radical "restructuring." As author of over seventy books on economic and political issues, Uchigoshi Katsuto notes (<http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2518>):

[M]ajor Japanese corporations are engaged in destroying humanity. Japanese global corporations are engaged in fraudulent employment contracts. In Japanese factories, hierarchal stratification persists and managers are now able to mobilize workers without even dealing with employment issues. Through subcontracting, managers are able to pass costs down to subcontractors below, and as a result, their workers become increasingly vulnerable. A similar hierarchal situation exists in the contractor labor market, and a number of industrial accidents have occurred involving companies using workers hired by subcontractors three levels below. Lately, there have been a number of incidents of "industrial accident shuffling." For example, in the case of Sharp's Kameyama factory, top executives did not want global investors to know that an accident had occurred at a high-tech factory, so they claimed it happened at a different location. It should have been designated as an industrial accident, but because the victims were workers contracted by a third-tier contractor, no one wanted to take responsibility.

Individual contracts are the most despicable aspect of this system. Companies use these contracts to cut costs normally incurred by guaranteeing the basic rights of workers. Losses are born by individuals rather than by companies. The only way to correct this is for the Labor Standards Supervision Office to increase enforcement. Under these conditions, Keidanren is promoting the rise of foreign and immigrant workers. If more foreign workers come to Japan, their children will need to be educated and those costs will be passed onto the public. In this way, major corporations are destroying the lives of workers. "Industrial accident shuffling" is one example of this. Corporate executives cut costs and avoid employment responsibilities any way possible and expose workers to risks in the pursuit of unprecedented profits. Such a system is highly unlikely to be sustainable. *We are barreling toward a system where global corporations prosper and societies crumble.*

4.2 Part time university teachers in the US: Good work, bad living

In Joe Berry's book, *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower* (2005), he documents a lifetime's experience of working as a part time (adjunct or contingent) professor and union organizer within the US higher education system. In his research he found that:

* Over half of university faculty, the contingent workforce, "are the equivalent of day labor."

* From 1979 to 1986 the number of contingent teachers versus full time teachers increased by 133 percent versus 22 percent respectively.

* In the 1990s the majority of teachers became contingent.

* Since 1995 the majority of full time hirings have been off the tenure track: 24 percent of full timers at universities with the tenure system have no chance of tenure.

* Average salary of part time teachers is 12,100 US dollars per year, well below a living wage. Most part timers earn the bulk of their income from other employment.

* Regarding pay rate, when all work-time including class-time is included, part timers often make "less than \$10 per hour," not including commuting time or transport costs!

* On the other hand, full time tenured professors receive an average of \$72,400 per year and an additional \$8,800 from other part time teaching work.

* Holders of Ph.D.s are 67 percent for full timers and 27 percent for part timers.

Part time teaching originally began as a specialized niche for experts in certain fields but now dominates universities. Berry notes that part time teachers have "good work" but a "bad living." Many teachers in the US love teaching but hate the burdensome workload, pathetic salary and lack of job security. One friend who earned his Ph.D. in history at a prestigious US university was offered a couple of courses at the university after completion of his program. The salary was so abysmally low that he asked them how he would be able to survive? They asked him if he could live with his parents. No joke!

Other than the those at the elite level of academia, most teachers in America have it pretty tough. As a person writing under the pen name of *Wilson* asked in the *Inside Higher Ed* newsletter, "[w]hat is it about college teaching that makes it so demanding?...First, for most, the teaching load is overwhelming." She recorded some common complaints:

* On many campuses, professors report that they feel more like security guards than instructors. Telling students to sit down, separating students who are shouting and fighting, taking away cell phones and electronics, and confiscating

notes during exams is very discouraging.

*Being "on" in the classroom is draining. Many introverted friends told me that they collapse in their offices after a 50-minute class. If they are lucky, their schedules allow breaks between each class (or between every two classes) to re-energize. One colleague told me that she now understands the life of a comedian.

* With a VH1- [music TV] influenced culture, many instructors feel compelled to "edu-tain" rather than educate. With iPod and MP3 Players in hand, many students have come to expect to be entertained in class; anything less may result in grade review and tenure denial. Even for extroverts, teaching demands everything we have. While delivering a lecture, we are constantly checking for understanding. Constantly switching teaching methods can be tiring for instructors; yet we feel compelled to keep students' attention. Seeing students as an audience to be entertained can also give an instructor the false sense that students are indeed "getting it," when they are actually just responding to new stimuli in the most basic sense.

It is interesting to note both similarities and differences between the US and Japan. Many foreign teachers in Japan complain that Japanese students are *substandard*, but being young and foolish is now a universal human right as protected by the United Nations. Given these circumstances, how are teachers to fulfill *Albert Einstein's* dictum that, "[i]t is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge"?

4.2 Japanese university governance

Most universities in Japan are privately owned which means that in principal they are profit making entities. Most of the national universities are becoming semi-privitized after the educational reforms that were implemented a few years ago. Many universities can't find enough students to pay the bills due the the "demographic crunch," a social phenomenon that is ironic given that Japan is such a densely populated country. The falling birth rate, however, does not address the many other exploitive issues and is a smoke screen to carry out policies that benefit the rich and harm students and teachers.

University governance in Japan is fairly simple on its face. Our concerns are focused on the Executive, (*gakuchou*); Board of Trustees (BoT) (*rijikai*), academic administration (AA) (*kyomuka*); rounded out with the full time faculty committee (FTFC) (*kyojukai*). It is an essentially undemocratic, top-down pyramid where important decisions emanate from the BoT and university owners.

4.3 Profile of average university part time teacher in Japan

According to *Part-Time University Teachers 2007: The Voices and the Realities: Conditions of Part-Time University Lecturers (2005-6), Survey Result. (2007, April 1)*, (<http://www.hijokin.org>), there are a number of objective problems that affect part time teachers regardless of nationality. This survey built upon data from the 2004 survey entitled *The University Teachers Union Survey of Foreign Nationals at Japanese Universities*. Neither survey was scientific since data on total numbers of teachers in Japan was not included and only findings of those who choose to participate were presented. Since the survey was voluntary it can be presumed that the results are biased in favor of union-organizing issues versus those teachers who may be satisfied in their jobs, indifferent or anti-union. However, the government keeps insufficient statistical data on such matters which makes presenting a scientifically rigorous study difficult. I believe this data is roughly accurate and uncontroversial in most of its findings.

The survey showed that a majority of part time university teachers in Japan are females, 55%; 76% Japanese nationality, the rest foreigners; average age 45.3; average length of service 11 years; average annual income 3,060,000 yen (44% under 2.5 million yen); average lesson and research preparation costs not covered by universities 270,000 yen; average number of workplaces 3.1, classes per week 9.2; only 4% of teachers have workplace social insurance, 75% are self enrolled in *National Health Insurance* at an average cost of 8.6% of annual income, not including national pension which would incur a total of 13% of annual income; 50% have experienced a contract non renewal; Only about one in four teachers know that they are qualified for *Workers Accident Compensation* or that some universities have annual paid vacation systems for part time workers; 95% feel some dissatisfaction regarding working and educational conditions citing lack of job security, low wages, lack of social insurance, and not being treated as researcher as main complaints (the entire report should be available through <http://hijokin.org>, or <http://www.utu-japan.org/>).

4.4 Hierarchical exploitation of part time teachers

Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his and her pursuit of self affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation...constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false

generosity....The oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on *having more* as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves. They cannot see that, in the egoistic pursuit of *having* as a possessing class, they suffocate in their own possessions and no longer *are*; they merely *have*....If others do not have more, it is because they are incompetent and lazy, and worst of all is their [the oppressed classes'] unjustifiable ingratitude toward the "generous gestures" of the dominant class. Precisely because they are "ungrateful" and "envious," the oppressed are regarded as potential enemies who must be watched. -- *Paulo Freire, one of the most influential educators of the 20th century, from The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

A main reason that universities are moving to hire part time or subcontracted employees, or moving to replace teachers altogether with computerized educational systems instead of employing full time human workers, is the same reason that worker's rights are collapsing around the world. The process has hastened in the wake of the bipolar *Cold War* world (See: *James Petras, Rulers and ruled in the US empire, 2007; Michael Hudson, Super-Imperialism: The economic strategy of American empire*). *Stephen Lendmann* writes of the class war against US workers:

George [W.] Bush tipped his hand straightaway in office. He's a company man and union-hater,... His policies range from: a one-sided support for management; stripping workers of their right to unionize; cutting pay raises for 1.8 million federal workers on the pretext of a "national emergency;" denying millions of workers overtime pay; appointing anti-union officials; scheming to weaken (and then end) retirement security...; weakening environmental...protections; and more in an endless war on workers in service to corporate interests that elected and own him.

The more money that businesses and government can save on costs for maintaining the commonwealth, the more money that can be siphoned up to the ultra-rich ruling class. *CNN* reported that the CEOs of US corporations make 364 times the salary of workers while "private equity and hedge fund managers...made an average of \$657.5 million in 2006 - more than 16,000 times what the average full-time worker makes."

Let us remember that most of the world's wealth has been recklessly plundered from the Earth causing destruction to cultural and biological diversity and depleting natural resources for all (including the non human flora and fauna that depend on the Earth). One limitation in a marxist analysis is that the

masses are owed "their share of the pie" while forgetting that everyone who participates in the system (even if unwillingly) is exacerbating these problems. The further we climb up the ladder, the more income we earn and the more we consume, the greater is our guilt. In an objective sense, the middle class is already highly "overpaid." But since the cost of living keeps rising due to the complex machinations of the *Global Monetocracy*, people need to keep running on the treadmill (due to inflation, taxes and stagnant wages; See the amazing dvd by *Paul Grignon, Money as Debt*).

Tenured full time teaching employment in the US and Japan has advantages over part time or other contingent forms of teaching employment (such as limited term "full time" contracted teachers). But everyone's jobs are on the line: the tenure system itself is being tested and eroded.

There are variables in the conclusions below so allowances for region, type, reputation and economic stability pertaining to the university should be made. Any inaccuracies or biases of interpretation are my own fault. In general, these conclusions are across the board but mainly pertain to the situation in Japan (Tokyo).

*** Job security** Since there are few remaining commons for people to survive on and most humans must now rent themselves to capitalist employers, *job insecurity* is a form of violence against the employee. Tenured full timers presently have job security whereas part timers do not. Some universities have yearly contracts which means they can legally not renew a teacher's contract the next year. Many universities do not have teachers sign yearly contracts so they have less legal ground for firing teachers. In practice, it is a major headache to fight an employer once you have been let go. I have worked at twelve universities and never been fired in this way but have had classes cut or schedules altered on rare occasions.

*** Job instability** Full timers know more or less what their schedule will be from year to year and can usually choose the more interesting classes. Part timers are often left floating in the breeze. Contingent work creates stress for a teacher who does not know what is going to happen from one year to the next. If the university changes their program or schedule, they may not let the teacher know

until late in the semester. It makes life-plans such as starting a family, buying a house, starting a retirement fund, or seeking additional schooling or career paths difficult. Part timers have to deal with paperwork from each separate institution. Part timers lose opportunities for better jobs from year to year because their employees may not notify them of the next year's schedule in a timely manner or due to abrupt schedule changes. Many universities send out a form during the summer vacation asking if teachers would like to renew their contract and require that it is returned by a certain date. If one misses the mail or there is a slip up of some kind, presumably a teacher would lose her/his time-slot/job! Part time teachers are treated like mushrooms: fed manure and kept in the dark.

*** Salary, benefits, working conditions** As seen above, tenured full time employment in the US pays a much higher salary than part time employment. Part time teachers cannot earn a living wage in the US, no matter how hard they work. In Japan, part time teachers are paid much better (three to four times better; transport costs are also covered) than their US counterparts. There are intangible stresses, burdens and finances that foreigners living in Japan must endure, and advantages as well (but this is part of being an immigrant).

In Tokyo, for a part time teacher to make the salary of a full time teacher he/she would have to teach 25 courses or more per week. Figured at 30,000 yen per course, which is probably above average for part time salaries*, 20 courses per week would yield 7.2 million yen per year (*note: part time foreign language teachers often make more money per course and are given more courses than their Japanese part timer colleagues). However, I know of full time teachers in my age bracket who make between 9 to 12 million yen per year, some of them teach as few as four courses per week. These may be extreme cases, but the data is revealing . Some full timers may have the luxury of teaching graduate seminars which only convene occasionally and include small numbers of students. Not only is the content more interesting but the work load is less demanding. Part timers are given large classes of unmotivated learners.

As long as part time teachers (or any workers) are earning at least a living wage (that is based on socially just and environmentally sustainable standards)

that can support a modest-sized family, it could be argued that it is not their salaries that need to be increased but that *full time teachers and the strata of rich business interests above them whose salaries need to be decreased in order to match their real contributions to society*. This would be true for society as a whole.

Most full timers teach between 4 - 8 courses per week and must attend some meetings and committee work. Some full timers do more than their share of committee work while others do less (but this is not the responsibility of the part timers). One foreign full timer admitted that, "full timers complain about the meetings but they only have a couple per week. At certain times of year there are more duties, but it is a ridiculously unfair system for part timers who have to scramble from here to there to patch together a living."

I know of one full time professor, who in addition to his normal teaching and administrative schedule, works at several other universities earning part-time teacher income on top of regular salary. One might ask, rhetorically, if there are so many burdensome duties for full time professors, how do they manage the logistics, time and energy to work at additional universities? If the committee work and so on is really so awful, why don't more full timers switch to part time work? The fact is their salaries are being subsidized by the part time teachers. Full timers earn roughly 75 percent higher wages than part timers.

What do full timers themselves have to say about this situation? One told me he would be happy to share the full time work load for less salary but could not envision how to create such a system. One retired professor reported that full time employment was much better salary than part time and that there were "many other benefits" that go with the job such as interesting classes and a handsome pension check every month after retirement. But he also admitted that "my experience of faculty meetings was almost enough to make me give up on my fellow human beings."

*** Pension and health insurance** This is a major issue for all sorts of workers. In the case of foreigners it is assumed that they are transient so they don't join these systems or are barred from joining them. I have created my own retirement fund through an investment company. Full timers usually get substantive benefits such as health insurance and pension. Part timers are

barred from joining the social insurance system at most universities so must rely on the expensive national health care and unpredictable pension systems.

*** Research budget, logistical advantages** Full time positions offer fulfilling opportunities to do reading and writing (research) about interesting topics (this should generally be considered a privilege rather than a burden). I asked one full timer if he needed a long list of publications to get his position: “[n]ot really in my case, I was just lucky that someone on the committee pushed for me to be hired.” Part timers receive no research budget, office space, research assistants or research sabbaticals (paid year-long holidays meant for research) as do the full timers. Full timers may receive discretionary budgets for entertainment (drinking parties!), travel, computer and book costs.

Most full timers have some office space, either shared or private. This is a notable advantage over part timers who must lug their materials across the *Kanto plain* in bulky backpacks on crowded trains. A full timer could presumably decide to reside near where his main office is located. Having office space makes doing research easier because research tools are close at hand. It makes planning lessons easier and more organized since lesson plans can be efficiently stored in filing cabinets or on shelves. The irony is that since part timers may teach many more courses per week than full timers, they are in greater need of planning and storage spaces. The only space university’s offer part time teachers is a ten centimeter deep draw in the part time teachers room, sometimes lockers are available.

A voice Part timers usually have no opportunity for promotion or in helping to decide the direction of the university. Full timers presumably have a voice in curriculum development. This should be an exciting and challenging aspect to educational planning. I have many ideas for course content but am rarely given opportunities to develop them. Part time teachers are sometimes not informed in a meaningful way about what the purpose of the university department they work for is, what kind of relationship it has with other departments, or what the vision of the university is in general.

*** The credential Catch 22** Because part timers may be teaching fifteen or twenty courses per week, it makes it difficult to find the time to search for a full

time job. Writing journal articles, joining academic societies, hobnobbing at academic conferences, even filling out job applications which require innumerable details, documents and references, is all stressful and time consuming. It is also rumored that any teacher who has been part time for many years will be considered "damaged goods" ("burned out" or "knows too much") by the administration which will often go outside the university to bring in a "fresh face" for a full time position. This sends a strong message to part time teachers who have devoted chunks of their lives at a university: we do not value your service.

* **Labor Unions** Most universities have an in-house labor union on campus for full time teachers but there are none for part time teachers. It is well documented that the establishment general labor unions in the US and Japan are controlled by the same capitalist interests that they are meant to oppose. At a part time union meeting I attended I learned that their union has no connections with any full time unions. I don't know who's fault this is, but at *Sophia University*, a limited term contract full time teacher was told he could not join the full time union. One full timer told me that most teachers don't want to get involved in union issues for fear of "rocking the boat." An obvious reason that part timers would not be allowed to join full timer unions is that issues of workplace inequity would be exposed.

4. 5 Improving the learning and working environment: Comments from Professor Antony Boys

[*Professor Tony Boys* worked for many years as a full-time member of the teaching staff at *Ibaraki Christian University Junior College*. He shared with me some of his ideas about how to create a more productive learning environment for students. - RW]

* Schools need dedicated leaders with vision and direction, who know how to find staff who will be a real asset to their institution, either as office staff or as people who excel in both teaching and research, and know how to organize teachers for raising educational standards (strong and knowledgeable educational leadership). (Note that I write "school" because this is not necessarily limited to universities). Good university leaders will work toward improving the situation through faculty and staff on a consensual basis - in

other words, by meeting with individuals or groups of teachers and office staff to find out what people really think and how to move towards the goals.

- * Schools need evaluation systems for testing student satisfaction. The results should be thoroughly analysed (with individual interviews for all teachers with someone in authority) and people who have good evaluations requested to explain to others what they do that is so good and people with "bad" evaluations helped to reform what they are doing wrong. People with average evaluations have to commit to trying to raise their scores each year.

- * Leadership should make it clear that the MAIN purpose of the school and the MAIN job of teachers is to teach students, who are the most important people in the school (because they are the next generation and because their parents are paying the fees that makes everything possible.)

- * BUT: the Board of Trustees (BoT) tend to think with their calculators. Many of their decisions are in the opposite direction to the above (in terms of teacher motivation and so on.) Many BoT members as well as the academic administration (AA) are not professional educators and have only a very subjective and amateurish idea of educational issues. The Board and the administration set the agenda. However, there is no rule preventing full time teachers presenting the full time faculty committee with a proposal. It just doesn't happen very often. Usually the FTFC is doing little more than rubber stamping proposals from the BoT and the administration.

- * Teachers are often treated as if they were wind-up toys who get wound up at the beginning of each academic year and who are then expected to perform like clockwork till the following February with virtually no input. The AA is treated in exactly the same manner by the executive and BoT, unless some problem pops up.

- * Most teachers, for lack of leadership, are rudderless and recede into their offices to do research, as that's the easiest strategy. No small group (let alone individual) can change the system by example - for example, by starting a valid evaluation system or having meetings to promote better education. It doesn't work because those who do not like it crush it by ignoring it or making snide comments about it. Thus, many teachers describe themselves as

"researchers" and the "worth" of a teacher is reckoned solely by the number (sometimes quality) of academic papers. Full-time teachers generally hold the decision-making powers because they sit on the committees, but should be careful not to allow AA too much power over implementation of decisions. Unfortunately, full-time teachers often do not know how decisions are being implemented.

* School/university education "should" be a cooperative enterprise in order to be realistically useful for students. However, the situation is generally a l-o-n-g way from that, with both full-timers and part-timers working in a near-vacuum, and some of them deliberately setting up walls around their classroom work to prevent others from knowing what is going on; for a variety of reasons, but some being defensive. Perhaps they have no confidence in their teaching ability and do not want other teachers to know about it. Asusual, the students don't count.

* Full-time and part-time teachers SHOULD work together to solve the problems of fair labor conditions AND take back the control of educational policy for the benefit of the students, the parents who are paying fees, and the future viability of the school. Full timers may not understand the necessity for doing this. They WANT to delegate work to office staff, but don't know what they lose when they do so. Let's face it, what do office staff know about what's happening in the classroom, or what should happen, or how to improve it? Generally, they are more interested in serving their own convenience than helping teachers.

* The AA control (in most places) far too many aspects of classroom teaching that they should not. For example, how students are placed in or prevented from taking courses (through random selection procedures which they consider "fair"), which classrooms are used and how desks are arranged (!), class sizes and several other aspects which can have a large influence on how a teacher can teach a class. (Boys, A., personal communication, August, 2007).

4.6 "Union" is not a four letter word

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.
-- *Frederick Douglass, abolitionist, 1857*

To maintain their stranglehold over society, the people-in-power use divide-and-rule strategies that keep the majority feeling isolated, fearful, and powerless. Nevertheless, the criminal behavior of the ruling class compels ordinary people to organize in self-defense. -- *Susan Rosenthal*

As Boys notes, full and part time teachers should work together to improve educational institutions. However, full timers seem to feel they have no obligation to risk their significantly higher salaries and benefits by involving themselves with the people who are directly subsidizing their incomes. It would result in a tremendous amount of face and income lost. If part timers demanded more job stability and equitable salary distribution, they could share in more of the administrative work load. Part timers have the real power because there is power in numbers: if they were to go on strike (in solidarity with students) this would cripple the entire university system. However, today's teacher's unions are very tepid. Even the foreigner's *UTU* is quite mild and non-militant in their prescription for how to proceed (which is not clear beyond "join the union"). This is not the fighting spirit that *Mother Jones* would have approved of in a trade union.

As Gibson and Ross note about labor organizing problems in the US, "[i]t is illegal in California, for example, to teach positive things about the communist movement, and hence nearly impossible to teach about unionism." Allowing schools to teach about the history of labor unions would contradict school's role as supplier of raw material and cannon fodder for the capitalist-imperialist machinery. I am always amazed at how many people cringe at the notion of labor unions (bad connotation) let alone communism (very bad connotation). Despite many of their backward tendencies the *Japan Communist Party* is the only party in Japan with a lick of concern for the common citizen.

This kind of deprivation of information leads to a profound ignorance among workers regarding their rights. One man I met who teaches classes to Japanese banks only gets two holidays a year but didn't want to complain and just laughed it off. Such excessive tolerance of working conditions is not only

harmful to the individual who has less time to spend with family but drags down the working conditions for everyone. Undoubtedly it never occurred to this chap to join a union.

Bob Peterson writes in *Rethinking Schools*, teacher unions “must not only work to defend the rights of their members, but must also advocate for the needs of the broader community, in particular the needs of their students.” Unfortunately, the strategy of many unions is to “circle the wagons....and to take a strictly defensive posture, concentrating on bread-and-butter issues.” Consider Peterson’s observations in relation to the mentality of teachers and unions in Japan:

Circling the wagons will cut off teachers from those with the power to ultimately save public education: parents, students, and community people....unions must not advance the welfare and rights of teachers at the expense of students, community people, and working people in general....I am skeptical whether teacher unions-- as they presently function--can address the issues outlined above. What befuddles teacher unions is commonplace in many unions, and in fact in most institutions in our society: they are hierarchical structures that are rarely capable of capitalizing on their biggest resource, the rank-and-file classroom teacher.

A professor in Canada told me that “I have tried to organize the part timers here but they won’t budge.” Whether in North America or Japan, the blame of oppression from top-down is not always accurate if those beneath shirk responsibility to organize themselves. Friere notes that systematic education “can only be changed by political power” whereas educational projects “should be carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them.”

A revolutionary leadership must...practice *co-intentional* education. Teachers and students (leaders and people), co-intent on reality,....As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement.

The classic problem of union organizing is creating solidarity among workers because people will reject risk in favor of short term gain or preservation. Organizing in Japan is difficult because; a) foreigners tend to be transient, and; b) there are linguistic and cultural obstacles that separate foreigners from Japanese who should naturally be allies in class struggle. There are also the old bugbears of *class consciousness* (the belief of personal superiority based on

material wealth) and *false consciousness* (learned helplessness or mistaken support for one's oppressors) and *cognitive dissonance* (in this case, the inability to act upon one's convictions) among workers.

For example, imagine a teacher who dismisses the importance of labor union organizing yet constantly complains. This person may be pursuing his own benefit in disregard of what is fair for everyone. He may feel bitter about being personally exploited but unwilling to cooperate to improve the prospects for the majority. This is not surprising given the nature of our present socio-economic circumstances, however, having forgotten that "an injury to one is an injury to all," in the spirit of historically successful worker's rights struggles, progress toward workplace equality is impeded. Although we may complain about our unjust position in life, unless we have a reasonably principled approach, once the opportunity comes along to "sell out" or "improve one's prospects," sentimentalism regarding political ideals is easily discarded.

There are many strategies for creating an alternative society. Conflicting values and strategies tend to weaken a sense of purpose. This is the contradiction of *substantive democracy*, where citizens are actively involved in the day to day affairs of their community, as opposed to *formal democracy*, which is based on political parties and voting. Only a substantive democratic system* based on shared values and principles of egalitarianism can succeed for organizing workers (*see: *Murray Bookchin's Libertarian Municipalism* or *Michael Albert's Participatory Economy*).

It is quite easy to get part time teachers to agree that they are being exploited but much more difficult to get them to agree on a course of action. This is because most people will quickly embrace class consciousness and, or, false consciousness, as promoted by the hegemonic institutions. You can imagine a group of English teachers sitting around a table seriously discussing the issues that face them, while drinking *Starbucks* coffee. Alas, their favorite coffee shop is a notorious union-buster which treats employees like disposable paper cups. This is a small example of how ignorance and lack of solidarity among the rank and file leads to political myopia and failure.

There is an urgent need for a counter hegemonic agenda that is based on

principles, platforms, proposals and policies (the PPPPs) that are historically relevant to current situations. But having principles means nothing unless you can convince people of the practical need to organize! For years I was involved with a group of foreigners who tried to build a *Green Party Abroad* in Japan. We were never able to get more than twenty or thirty members and eventually it fizzled out because we failed to convince people of the relevance of ecological issues to their everyday lives and workplaces. *Susan Rosenthal* writes encouragingly:

* Cooperation counters the downward cycle of alienation and dissociation. Cooperation elicits feelings of strength and hope, so people work harder to find solutions, thereby increasing their chances of success. Cooperation and hope reinforce each other to increase social power.

* Whether we feel hopeless or hopeful, powerless or powerful depends on whether we work alone or together. Alone, we can't protect ourselves from environmental pollution, ruthless bosses, corrupt corporations and war-mongering governments. As an organized force, we have the power to change the world.

Paulo Freire, who helped to educate Brazilian peasants to organize themselves against plutocratic oppression, offers insight that applies to our society as well. Here are some gems to untangle the web of false consciousness:

* The oppressed, having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom....Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.

* The oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life....In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors....This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the "eminent" men and women of the upper class.

* In order for the oppressed to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform.

What is the attitude of those with class privilege? People will take the easy road unless they are confronted with conflicting views because it's in our genes and in our media. People have become convinced of the inevitability of class hierarchies. We are trained to believe in *human nature* despite the fact that there are many *human natures* which are cooperative and egalitarian and the nature

that manifests itself depends on the social environment in which we are raised. Praying upon our basest instincts the mass media trains us to yearn for status, fame, fortune, glamor, youth and beauty. We are taught to respect people with degrees from *Harvard* or *Yale* and dislike people who live in *South Chicago*, *New Orleans* or *North Korea*.

4.7 English language teachers: Beware of racial hypocrisy and corruption of language

English teachers do not often deeply question their cultural role in Japan (too busy scraping out a living), albeit, always sensitive about "cross cultural" issues. It is not polite to raise the issue of US military bases that remain in Japan or of the English language industry's role in cultural imperialism. English is valuable as the *Lingua Franca* and there is nothing inherently wrong with learning any language. But English's role in wiping out other languages--with thousands of indigenous languages in danger of extinction today due to globalization--cannot be denied. As Gibson and Ross proclaim, "[e]nding imperialism is a pedagogical project" and the role of language in this process is highly political, not neutral.

I once spoke to a Tokyo branch officer of *Amnesty International* on the phone and asked him what *AI* was doing about the issue of US military occupation of Japan. He paused for a moment and then replied quite seriously, "[D]o you mean the occupation during World War II?" In his mind the issue of human rights and the continued stain of US bases in Okinawa and throughout Japan was a separate issue.

A well known candidate for this kind of hypocrisy is *The Japan Times* occasional columnist, *Arudou Debito*. Arudou has never made a connection in his writings between racial discrimination against foreigners in Japan (his recurrent theme) and the violence associated with living in a militarily occupied country. Surely, if foreigners are going to complain about discrimination, especially white, middle class foreigners from the US, they should unflinchingly demand the removal of all US military bases which are a profound symbol of racist oppression.

Furthermore, Arudou is a de facto apologist for capitalism in his belief that Japan needs expanded immigration in order to meet the needs of "economic

growth" without acknowledging how corporations are the main beneficiaries of such arrangements. Arudou's articles provide no explanation of immigration as an exploitive historical phenomenon or the ways in which capital determines the flow of migrants.

While I am not arguing against foreigner's rights, his one-sided critique of racial discrimination serves as a ramrod for international capital and Western hegemonists to penetrate Japanese labor markets. Arudou fails to inform his readers about the way in which racial prejudice is fostered by a system which forces workers to compete against each another. It is not racial discrimination that is causing disharmony in Japan, as Arudou would have it, but capitalist exploitation of all workers which inculcates and aggravates racism.

The Japan Times itself is happy to promote foreigner rights issues, but other than *Gregory Clark's* columns, is largely silent about class or imperialist oppression or in investigating Japan's profitable partnership in US imperialism. James Petras' essay, *Notes on a cultural renaissance in a time of barbarism*, is a delicious double espresso power punched wake-up call to all language and other humanities and social science teachers who express timidity or ambivalence about critical pedagogy:

The corruption of language is a prescription for complicity in political crimes. Corruption of language takes the form of euphemisms concocted by propagandists, transmitted through the mass media, echoed in the pompous language of academics, judges, and translated into the gutter language of the sensationalist yellow press....The great crimes against most of humanity are justified by a corrosive debasement of language and thought – a deliberate fabrication of euphemisms, falsehoods and conceptual deceptions. Cultural expressions are a central determinant in class, national, ethnic and gender relations. They reflect and are products of political, economic and social power. But just as power is ultimately a social relation between antagonistic classes, cultural expressions are also mediated through the lenses, experiences and interests of the dominant elites and their rebellious subjects. Even as the writers of the barbarous elites have fabricated a linguistic world of terror, of demons and saviors, of axes of good and evil, of euphemisms which embellish the crimes against humanity, so have new groups of writers, artists and collective participants come forth to clarify reality and elucidate the existential and collective bases for demystifying the lies and creating a new cultural reality....In the face of elite barbarism, a cultural renaissance is born. Revelations of crimes are made through journalistic investigations, plays and songs. Affirmations of integrity, social solidarity and individual rejections of the monetary enticements strengthen moral commitment in the face of ever-present threats, assassinations and official censure....The political delinquents have not, do not and cannot silence, deafen or blind a new generation of critical intellectuals, poets and artists who speak truth to the

people.

5. The ecology of hope: Teaching counter hegemony

Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences.

-- Susan B. Anthony, American civil rights activist

Better to be subversive than submissive. -- Jeffrey Blankfort, journalist

The great Italian communist, *Antonio Gramsci*, developed the concept of *hegemony* in order to explain the metaphysical sway capitalism holds over its minions. His ideas enhanced classical *Marxist* analysis of *dialectical materialism* (class struggle). Worth noting is *Murray Bookchin's* theory of *Dialectical Naturalism* which is based on *Hegel's* ideas of humanism and rationality. Bookchin surpassed Marx by showing how complex historical forces, in addition to class struggle, have led to systems of human domination and destruction of the natural world.

According to *Wikipedia*, "[t]heories of hegemony attempt to explain....the capacity of dominant classes to persuade subordinate ones to accept, adopt and internalize their values and norms." Hegemony is the vector for inculcating false consciousness among wage earners. *Carl Boggs* wrote in his study of Gramscian thought, *The Two Revolutions*, that hegemony was Gramsci's most original idea, and was vital to such a renewal because it encouraged the thematic reintegration of ideology, culture and consciousness into a Marxian framework....it restored emphasis upon political education as a "moral-intellectual" force that would subvert the legitimating principles of bourgeois society....It would be revolutionary pedagogy firmly grounded in the praxis of everyday political struggles.

Gramsci helped us to identify and define our struggles. Within the context of modern social, human rights and environmental grassroots organizations and movements, one can therefore conceive of **counter hegemony** as a normative pedagogy and theoretical foundation for people working to nourish resistance and effect structural transformation. By working within existing bourgeois institutions counter hegemonists can attempt to influence and transform the attitudes, values and behavior of colleagues, peers or co-workers. Activists can work to create alternative (shadow or parallel) institutions in order to fulfill the

goal of an ecologically sustainable and humane society based on rational principles.

Over the years I have had many excellent results with students in Japan by teaching counter hegemony. I know that some students get the message since I read their conscientious comments on an array of important topics. One student graduated to become a teacher in a progressive public school and hoped to expose children to environmental issues. Another worked for an environmental NGO after graduating. In most cases one does not know what will happen to students and it would be better to know the results of one's pedagogy. But it is very gratifying to be a teacher and know that in some small way you can affect human consciousness rather than just sitting back and watching the world go by (on TV).

Recently I was lucky to receive an email from a mysterious and enchanted island paradise known as *Tasmania*. A graduate student from the *University of Tasmania (UTas, Australia)*, *Julia Bowett*, enquired if I might be able to help her administer surveys to my students regarding Japanese youth attitudes toward industrial whaling.

This is as good an example of counter hegemony that I can imagine. A graduate student had found my Ph.D. dissertation posted on the web and was working on a similar type of research, both in terms of content and methodology. I was happy to help and hundreds of surveys were administered by myself and through other instructors that Julia and I had contacted. She will have administered 550 surveys in total.

Julia visited Japan on a fact finding mission to *Tohoku University* and *Taiji*, the main port for the Japanese whaling industry. She also gave power-point lectures at various universities including to many of my students at *Tsuda College* and *Gakushuin University* who were very enlivened by her presentations. She hopes that the results of her study will help lead to a resolution of the controversial Japanese whaling issue.

5.1 Time for a triple espresso postmortem wake up call

Political and spiritual myopia is a disease that affects us all: we live in the modern world, which is by definition toxic and carcinogenic to mind and body.

The environment is literally polluted with thousands of toxic substances produced by industrial processes, and so too our bodies and minds are filled with these by-products and media pollution: buy, consume, die.

Therefore many people, who, while being kind and generous souls, are terribly naive about the real world. This self imposed naiveté is what political writer *Michael Parenti* calls a “goo-goo baby mentality.” Despite the Mt. Everest size volume of evidence of political corruption, people will talk earnestly about the US (or the British or Japanese) political system as if it had more than a nano-shred of credibility. Many people still display blind faith in the political system and vote for supposed alternatives such as the *Democratic Party* in the US or the (*DPJ*) *Democratic Party of Japan* in Japan. Voting for indistinguishable criminal candidates fails to address the underlying causes of our global crisis.

Professor John Bernhart described an experience to me that was revealing. He gave a presentation at a seminar called *Peace as a Global Language (PGL)*. PGL is an offshoot of *JALT, the Japan Association of Language Teachers*. PGL is supposed to be the politically charged branch of JALT but that is a questionable claim. At a recent conference he gave a presentation on how capitalism is a significant cause of war. After all, a conference devoted to “peace as a global language” would be interested in preventing war. Not really. While it is acceptable in mainstream discourse to blame war and poverty on religious and cultural backwardness and ethnic strife (or blame Al Queda, also known as “Al-CIA-duh”), it is a no-no to propound a marxist analysis. Bernhart reported that most audience members, although unable to refute his extensive data or analysis, were very uncomfortable with the message and preferred that he kept his pedagogy “neutral.” It is not surprising that a mainstream academic conference would make such presumptions since one of their (hidden) roles is to reify hegemonic values into mainstream discourse (even at a supposed anti-war conference!).

In previous chapters I assaulted the myth that pedagogy can be neutral: the mainstream education system, the textbooks and the English language industry promote ideologies and practices laden with *bourgeois* assumptions. *David Levine* neatly dispels the myth of value-free education in *Rethinking Schools*:

Schools are highly political institutions. How could they not be...? When teachers pose as "objective" and "neutral" purveyors of a collection of value-free skills they are merely obscuring a large part of what their interaction with students is all about. Politics exist...in the social relations that characterize classrooms and the school as a whole [through the] arrangements of power and authority, teacher expectations of how students will behave and achieve....And then there is the content itself. Here teachers act as political beings through the opinions they express, their framing of discussions and issues, the questions they ask, the topics they address or ignore, and the materials they choose.

Expanding on this idea, *Denis G. Rancourt, Activist Teacher*

(<http://activistteacher.blogspot.com/>), doesn't mince words about politics and universities:

I teach an activism course at the University of Ottawa. Not a course about altruism, volunteerism, charity, international aid or civic duty and building community within the confines of the status quo. But an activism course, about confronting authority and hierarchical structures directly or through defiant or non-subordinate assertion in order to democratize power in the workplace, at school, and in society....the underlying premise of the activism course is that the observed generalized criminal disregard [of capitalism] for local inhabitants and indigenous peoples is no accident; the environment, workers and inhabitants are structurally expendable liabilities in a profit-driven debt-based global financial enterprise that must be characterized as insane, not to mention unsustainable; and the schools and universities supply the obedient workers and managers and professionals that adopt and apply this system's doctrine--knowingly or unknowingly, according to need.

But how to stop the insanity? The anarchist writer *Colin Ward* states that "[s]quatting is the oldest mode of tenure in the world, and we are all descended from squatters. This is as true of the Queen [of the UK] with her 176,000 acres as it is of the 54 per cent of householders in Britain who are owner-occupiers. They are all the ultimate recipients of stolen land, for to regard our planet as a commodity offends every conceivable principle of natural rights." *Squatting* (reclaiming the commons) worked in Brazil where there was a huge landless class of peasants who had been dispossessed by the multinational food companies and the Brazilian land barons. The little people took back much of their land by squatting in solidarity and telling to the land barons: "Enough"!

Rancourt provides the public with a powerful strategy:

Academic squatting works! Academic squatting is needed because universities are dictatorships, devoid of real democracy....[T]he university is an instrument of power as it has always been, period. Only activism – resistance – can change that....For a squat to succeed, the occupants have to be on board, and at the first class the students embraced the project with more enthusiasm than I could have imagined....hundreds of students of all

ages (10 to 70+) and backgrounds interact with intricate and compelling material of direct relevance to their place in the world. [Issues include]: war, terrorism, the armament industry, monetary economics, poverty, professional ethics, environmental issues, societal and institutional structures, human rights, science funding, the non-profit sector, the agri-food industry, the pharmaceutical industry, animal rights, democracy, foreign policy, and others.

The need for change of strategy was foretold by the green economist, *E.F. Schumacher*: "The volume of education...continues to increase, yet so do pollution, exhaustion of resources, and the dangers of ecological catastrophe. If still more education is to save us, it would have to be education of a different kind: an education that takes us into the depth of things."

Another thinker, *Stephen Sterling* writing in *Sustainable Education*, promotes the "ecological approach" as a cure for our "inadequate perception" of the ecological crisis we face. The "dominant mechanistic worldview" which "reifies borders" and "blinds us to the connective and dynamic reality" leads to the false dichotomies of "humans/nature; local/global; present/future, cause/effect....Western education, while founded on a mechanistic paradigm and overlaid by a utilitarian market philosophy, cannot much assist us towards sustainable lifestyles....In responding to sustainability, higher education has been one of the slowest sectors to take up the challenge."

Unless the public in solidarity stands up for educational values, schools are going to end up as computer aided learning centers. There are many opportunities to dialogue and influence ones peers, colleagues and coordinators that teachers need to take to prevent this. As the old saying goes, one must have the courage of one's convictions. Sometimes this means being polite but firm in situations that may be tense. Negotiating with coordinators can help teachers to maintain their autonomy in the face of bad administrative decisions. I politely negotiated with one of my coordinators to teach my own content (which related to the theme of the course) instead of adopting the recommended curriculum. Articulating a vision is important for teachers in order to defend their autonomy. Teachers should not give up when students are averse to serious topics but press their case for a radical and counter hegemonic agenda in the classroom (granted, this does not apply to students who think that *Hello Kitty* is

a serious intellectual endeavour!). We need to help students lose their enchantment with capitalism as it is an immoral and ecologically unsustainable system that endangers our future. Illich pointed this out thirty years ago, and it is just as true today:

The school system, and especially the university, provides ample opportunity for criticism of the myth and for rebellion against its institutional perversions. But the ritual which demands tolerance of the fundamental contradictions between myth and institution still goes largely unchallenged, for neither ideological criticism nor social action can bring about a new society. Only disenchantment wit and detachment from the central social ritual and reform of that ritual can bring about radical change.

Professor Bernhart warned me that “[u]niversity teachers have a moral imperative to teach radical topics to students when there are so many pressing problems in the world. In addition, if teachers do not take more militant action regarding their own jobs, they are going to see their conditions erode year by year, if not disappear altogether.” John mentioned to me the “living wage campaign” that took place at *Harvard University* a few years ago when students protested the working conditions of some employees. Janitors and others were reportedly homeless people working for below subsistence wages and student activism helped draw attention to the situation. More recently, students on 40 campuses throughout the US have forced colleges to end their contracts with *Coca Cola* due to Coke’s complicity in human rights violations and environmental degradation in Third World countries. These are examples of the solidarity that is needed in Japan where students and teachers can come together to improve the quality of universities.

5.2 A model for counter hegemonic courses in English

It should be clear by now that I am urging teachers to get political about their pedagogy. What follows is a brief model for content based teaching. Of course, one could teach any kind of content with this procedure but I find it works well with radical topics.

This teaching method gives students the opportunity to improve English reading, writing, listening, discussion, presentation and critical thinking skills. Depending on the ability and motivation of students, teachers can adjust this procedure to suite different student levels but it does not work well with false

beginner English students or students who are unwilling to do any homework.

I include topics that are critiques of capitalism, media, militarism, environmental destruction, poverty, homelessness, police state, etc. I only use alternative media sources as this course is promoting counter-hegemony and alternative interpretations of social reality. For example, I am presently teaching a course called *Understanding the Middle East* in reaction to the crisis of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, which uses the method below.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher supplies article or video transcript as homework assignment. Students write half page (or more if higher level ability) comments in English that include both analysis of the article and student's personal reflections on the topic.
2. The next week in class the video is shown (if there is one).
3. This is followed by group discussions of four or five students per group. Students can read their comments aloud in English.
4. Students then create short group comments and questions. They may use Japanese during this time in order to formulate these items if necessary.
5. Each group has one or more speaker who reads the comments aloud to the entire class and asks the questions to the instructor about the topics.
6. The instructor then has an opportunity to add background information to the topic by answering the questions to the class.

Teachers can modify this approach as it suites. English purists will be unhappy with any Japanese speaking during class, but this is sometimes necessary in order to fulfill the objectives of the class and stay on schedule. I argue that spoon feeding and over reliance on English learning tasks detracts from the students ability to build their own critical thinking skills. I urge students to use English as much as possible.

5.3 Critical pedagogical resources for English language teachers in Japan

* *Richard Wilcox's Alternative Media Index:*
http://wisehat.com/endwar/index_altmed.php

* *Darrell G. Moen, Ph.D. Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Shibaura Institute of Technology:* <http://www.dgmoen.net/index.html>

This webpage is an excellent source for short documentary videos and their transcripts and are available to other teachers. Course topics include human rights, Third World development, postwar U.S. foreign policy, militarization, and the environmental impact of globalization.

* *Professor Antony Boys, Environmental Crises Teaching Issues:*
<http://www9.ocn.ne.jp/~aslan/index.htm>
English Activities Page:
<http://www9.ocn.ne.jp/~aslan/english/activi/activi.htm>

* *Wisehat's Website: Deschooling Ideas and Activities:*
<http://wisehat.com/>

* *Martin Ryder's Critical Pedagogy Reading List:*
http://users.monash.edu.au/~dzyngier/critical_pedagogy_reading_list.htm

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