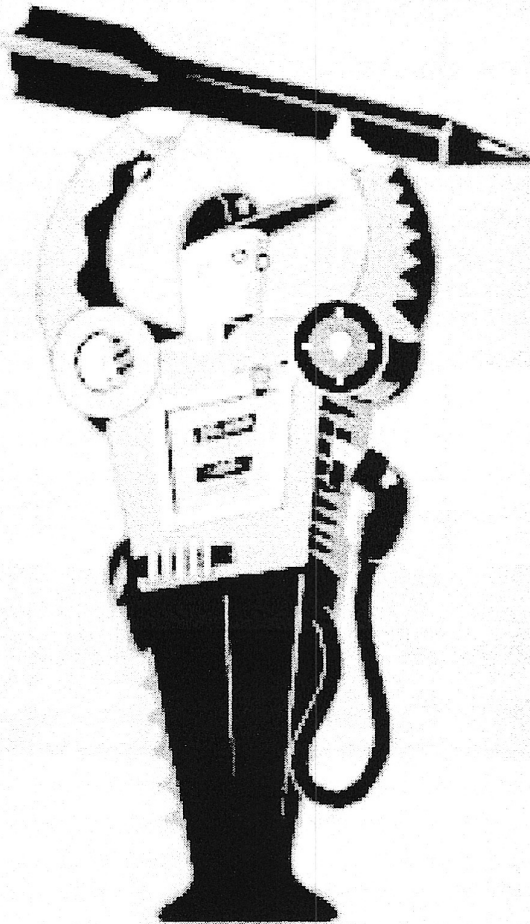




The Rouge Forum

W O R L D



F O R O I L
BRING THE TROOPS HOME

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THE GOOD NEWS: THE US RULERS' MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SKY IS FALLING THE BAD NEWS: THE UNIVERSE OF CAPITAL IS NOT

“Capital investment is an act of deep faith...” G. W. Bush (7-7-02)

The Lingering Lure of Irrationalism : The War of Ideas

George Bush was shocked, simply shocked. Arthur Anderson lied. Worldcom lied. Enron lied. Corporate scandals pile up, the stock market rushes down. At the same time, the Catholic Church stands exposed as a haven for rapists and thieves, robbing the poor box to pay hush money to victims while it, so reluctantly, supports the endless Oil War.

In each instance, the media treats the dual crises as flukes, aberrations within otherwise decent well-meaning systems still deserving of popular support—which will result in popular comfort. No.

The US economy, which is not *our* economy but the property of a ruling class that is ever more naked and ruthless, and the techno-based military force that allowed the rich to enjoy an era of unprecedented greed and debauchery, are both in deep crises. The executive committee of the rich, the government, has provoked what they say is a perpetual war on the world, not for justice but for oil, while their economy collapses from the weight of its own pillars: greed, fear, and opportunism.

The world capitalist economy is a shambles, and failing fast. The Nasdaq virtually disappeared. The Dow is down 3000, to about 8,000, and plunges. Predictions about the Dow reaching 35,000 in the land of bottomless profiteering are drowned in speculation about the date of the beginning of the depression. The collapsing value of the dollar is discouraging foreign investors who helped fuel the myth of the endless party. Big fish, as always, are eating little fish, but all the fishes are dying—and so is the sea.

In a world divided by social class inequality, what makes the notion of *our* economy, *our* nation, *our* religion, etc., possible is irrationalism, the decision to stop thinking, to choose to believe that some questions, unresolved problems, can only be answered by mysticism, usually embodied by someone who seeks pay or privilege for the revelation. Mysticism, breaking the chain of evidence, dispensing with tests for truth in favor of a leap of faith, becomes profitable—and virtuous.

The impact of irrationalism, which is commonly set up with promises of greater personal freedom, here

or in heaven, and more autonomy, greater insight, is in fact to tie people even more to the ruling class and to make them more subservient to it—even though most working people and the elites have only opposition in common. Virtue then becomes the fear of knowledge, and a fetter, chaining people of opposing interests, classes, in the same cells, with only the Masters holding the keys.

Racism is irrational. Sexism is irrational. Nationalism is irrational. The fear of sexuality is irrational, as is the fear of freedom and friendly connections between people. Capitalism, serving a few at the expense of many, that is, structural inequality, is irrational. People create gods; gods do not create people. Wealth does not create labor. Labor creates wealth. Religion is irrational—a dangerous turn to faith that has a long history of consequences: death, parallel to capitals' infinite wars. In each instance, the defense of nonsense requires violence: religious war and imperialist war.

There is nothing consistent with the ideas that defend irrationalism, but there are consistent practical tenden-

cies. Irrationalism in defense of capitalism consistently seeks to divide people, yet at the same time to claim to false forms of unity, as in the cases of racism and nationalism. Both are vital life-lines of profits. Irrationalism in defense of religion proclaims one-world, after death, but a sectarian world in life—convert or die. War, for oil, water, or the cheap labor of humans—is quite legal.

Capitalist and religious irrationalism offer no logic but the logic of opportunism. For example, in the midst of recent revelations involving the entire Catholic hierarchy in promoting, then covering-up, a centuries' old practice, child rape by priests, church officials went to court demanding protection from grand juries under the constitution, the separation of church and state. At the same time, the priesthood was in court demanding state funds for school vouchers.

Capitalism in its higher stages reaches a point where the sole purpose of capital is to produce more capital, finance capital, rather than to produce things that are useful to people. For example, the chief of what was once US Steel Corporation won wage concessions from his workers, "in order to save the company and our nation's steel industry." The United Steel Workers Union made concessions, 25 % pay-cuts (without telling the workers). With the concession money in hand, the chief of US Steel then bought Hublein Corporation, a Canadian liquor company. Confronted with the deception by reporters, the boss said, "Look, I am not in business to make steel. I am in business to make money."

This distancing of profiteering from production is what caused the pretense of a boom in the 1990's. The NASDAQ, the technology stock exchange, boomed with nearly nothing of

value behind it at all. Mergers substituted for production. Only Microsoft and a few other techno-agencies actually produced profits. The remainder of the NASDAQ was simply a ponzi scheme, borrowing heaped on borrowing, that eventually collapsed. Each company had its priests, its auditors and toadies in the press, lying about its true state.

At the same time, basic industry in the US nearly vanished. The steel industry, key to war production, sank against foreign competition. Only huge agri-businesses actually continued to produce a product successfully inside the US, achieved by driving people off their land, a worldwide stratagem that supplies capital with jobless workers in huge cities, driving down the wages of the employed.

The media is focused, on the one hand, on what they seem to think are aberrations in the process of capital, and in the church. But rapist priests, cheating accountants, lying bosses, and capital's wars are not flukes. They are the logical working out of irrational systems that necessarily lead to where they are today, deep social and spiritual crises. What has happened to the economy is not just the auditors' lies, which are themselves built into capital's greed, but the fact that capital necessarily drives down wages to the point where people cannot buy what they produce, a crisis of unemployment and over-production that is now international. The big picture is that capital cannot work. So, capital is divorced from production, indeed turns back on production and destroys it in war, while the mystics place themselves between the people and god, really the people and a better world on earth. But capital thrives on crises, just as priests thrive on people who do not believe they can comprehend and change the world.

This refusal to connect capitalism with financial collapse and war, which is written on every page of capital's history, and the church with child abuse, then leads to a variety of transubstantiations: one day Ghodoffy and Libya are the Devil and the Evil Empire, the next day it's Saddam and Iraq. Rapist priests come and go, but the Pope and the Church persist. Flags wave over all.

Just as there is no way to resolve religious differences, so is there no way to restrain the incessant demands of the capitalist system: high-profits, cheaper labor and raw materials, markets to sell (always at an advantage). War and fascism are the necessary outcomes of capital's requirements. Every significant human advance, in knowledge or technology or reproduction, has come despite religious beliefs. Civilization progresses by rejecting irrationalism of all forms, but especially religious irrationalism. The test of any society is how it treats its majority: the workers. Capital can never pass this test. In addressing any reform, we must connect that reform to the social whole, capital, and discover ways to go beyond it. As long as we are ensnared by the irrationalism of capital and religion, which do offer us both the organization (an interconnected world with sufficient technology so all could live fairly well) and values (do unto others) which can assist us in creating a more just world.

Capitalism will not be overcome by ideas alone. But every effort to go beyond capital so far has been poisoned from within, by nationalism, elitism, racism, sexism, and more. If we are to find ways to a better world, and we must, we will need to understand, and surpass, capital's big lie: Irrationalism. ■

THE DEEPENING CRISES OF CAPITAL: ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

“They have gotten a little vulgar, haven’t they?” (Lady Astor, October, 2001)

Tyranny Through the Terror of the Market

“Everyone became obsessed with money and went higgledy-piggledy scampering after their fortunes,” she said. “People with money used to often care about the people who had no money. Not always, but often. Now, it is rare to find people with money who care at all about people with no money.” (Lady Astor)

Lady Astor, through inheritance and serial marriages, accumulated more than \$100 million. Before her 100 birthday she complained about the outlook of the younger members of her class. They cared nothing about others, and nothing about production, nothing about the plants and the people working in them. The corporate leaders looted the place, then fled. She foresaw the bubble bursting, at least in terms of reaping the result of bad manners. She did not see the equal inevitability of war.

In four months, by July 2002, the stock market dropped 30%, plunging down to 8,000. The Nasdaq virtually evaporated. The US dollar began to collapse against foreign currency, chilling key foreign investors. Unemployment boomed. Terror in September 2001 threw a steady decline into hyper-speed. The patriotic presidential call to shop, travel, and buy stocks as forms of resistance met a nation raised on sheer selfishness, and fell flat. At the same time, the US military began to in-

vade the world.

In 1999, a *Rouge Forum Broadside* said, “If you are teaching ninth grade, you are looking at the troops in the next oil war.” It was easy to see this coming, but it was not easy to see *this* coming. The dual crisis of war and economic collapse was foreshadowed by booming inequality forged in six ways: through sharpened exploitation at the work place, massive international unemployment, overproduction caused by the impoverishment of the work force, bitter international competition for even cheaper labor, raw materials, and markets, deepening segregation—all elements of a capitalist system that manufactures war—and international misery. The UN predicts that 15 million people will starve in Africa in 2002.

Inequality in the US is popular knowledge. In 1900, the richest 1% of the people controlled 60% of the wealth. Following two World Wars came two revolutions (USSR and China), a series of worker uprisings including the communist-inspired labor movement in the US. The tax system in the US shifted some burden onto wealth, causing the ratio to be the top 17% controlling about 25% of the wealth in the late 1960s. While government had never stopped being an executive committee for the rich, the Warbucks class decided to tighten the

reins. By 1999, the top 1% controlled 45% of the US wealth.

The 1990s bubble was *their* bubble. Sheer greed dominated management ranks. CEO’s inflated their salaries from 1960, when they averaged pay 11 times that of their workforce, to 1999, when their pay rocketed to 592 times the average worker. While bosses of all industries demanded concessions from the workforce, in order to “save our industry in the national interest,” rather than reinvest in US productive capacity the owners shifted work to cheap labor sites, ran shell games of mergers for a pretense of profitability, and gave themselves golden parachutes to protect against the crisis ahead.

Labor creates all wealth. Despite plunging capital reinvestment, slight increases in US industrial productivity were won by speed up campaigns and technology used not to make work more creative or interesting, but to lay people off. In 2002 Ford announced a multi-billion profit, and 21,000 layoffs, the closure of 5 North American plants, promising more profits still. Daimler-Chrysler, born of a government bailout, then sold to Germans, reported profitability, achieved by laying off 26,000 people. Evidence of the downward spiral: 250,000 were laid off in Mexico’s maquiladoras from 2000-2002.

With the government in the hands of the rich, simulation of profits

subordinating any link to real productive activity, corporations inflated profit figures for stockholders and deflated those figures for the IRS. They succeeded. In 1960 corporations paid about 25% of all US taxes. By 2000, the corporate share was less than 8%.

And they lied. To set up a spectacle of results, CEO's borrowed money from cooperative banks, counting the loans as corporate profits. They built multiple tiers into their own corporations, divisions, which borrowed from one another, staying one move ahead of the few interested investigators. Some companies, like Enron, which never produced anything of value but merely moved energy sources (often fictitious) from one state to the next, had more than 2000 divisions, most of them off-shore; this in comparison to 7 divisions at General Motors. Accountants and the press served as cheerleaders.

Non-financial companies borrowed \$1.22 trillion between 1994 and 1999. Of that, the owners reinvested just 15.3 per cent for capital expenditures. They used 57 per cent of it, \$697.4 billion, to buy back stock and thus enrich themselves. (Robert Brenner, "The Boom and Bubble," 2002).

With national production decaying, but international over-production rising, good manners lost in the desperate fight to get one more dollar, Warbucks looked to profiting from the public domain; energy consortiums, water, social services, education, prisons, pensions, and social security. Entrepreneurialism became a fetish—masqueraded as the common good. "De-regulation," flourished. Deregulation is really the more powerful market regulation: Big fish eat little fish.

Enron and other energy com-

panies smashed and grabbed the California budget, the world's sixth largest economy which held, in 2000, at \$25 billion surplus. By June 2002, budget analysts predicted a shortfall of, at minimum, \$35 billion, foreshadowing a profound crisis of higher taxes and slashed services.

For-profit companies took over the prisons, which filled with 2 million people, inordinately black. Marketeers flooded the schools. Children became commodities.

None of this could have been made possible without the liberals, mostly Democrats, in high office. Jimmy Carter made possible the profitability of mental institutions. Bill Clinton shattered

The evidence is that the govern- ment is a weapon of the Warbucks.

the welfare system, throwing recipients into forced-work projects. Liberal California legislator Steve Peace fashioned the deregulation that Democrat Gray Davis gave to Enron, for campaign contributions.

Inequality Talibanized the world. Superstition born of ignorance and poverty became a petri-dish for fascist movements, each nurtured by the processes of finance capital mothered in the US. As Lady Astor understood, Talibanization boomerangs. Al Gore and George Bush are the best and brightest the ruling class can produce to help organize social decay.

Left alone as a superpower, the US has found that to rule the world, its

military must invade and occupy it; a strategy that has overwhelmed everyone who ever tried it. The perpetual war offered to US citizens, not a war about terror, but a continuation of the international war of the rich on the poor, is a bipartisan war, as is the economic debacle ahead. Republicans and Democrats united against the people who are offered, every few years, the chance to choose who will oppress them least.

Capital is a revolutionary system, out of human control, giving not a whit about who is riding it from moment to moment. Capital is not defeated by international crises, as this is. Capital thrives on war, destruction. Its pillars, fear, greed and opportunism, cause it to collapse of its own weight, only to be reborn more ruthless, somewhere else. Not inert oil, but cheap human labor is the fuel of capital's fire.

Even so, capital has united the world through systems of production, exchange, communication, transportation, and technology. We have abundance, where all could live fairly well, if we shared. At the same time, the Warbucks profit from the divisions they have created among people, by nation, race, sex, disability, etc., while they fervently deny the primary division that was obvious to Lady Astor: Class.

The time is gone where it was reasonable to suggest the reform of capital. The evidence is that the government is a weapon of the Warbucks. In the face of crisis, working people need to consider going beyond all of the forms of capital, overcoming it, to create a society where love, work, and knowledge can combine to offer people reasonably free and creative lives connected in friendly ways, the source of all human advances. At issue is a popular change of mind, and action. ■

PERPETUAL WAR AND TYRANNY OR SOCIAL JUSTICE?

“If there’s another attack by Arabs on U.S. soil, not too many people will be crying in their beer if there are more detentions, more stops, more profiling, There will be a groundswell of public opinion to banish civil rights. There will be internment camps.” (Peter Kirsanow, Bush appointee, US Civil Rights Commission speaking to Arab-Americans, July 19 2002).

“US troops must ready for pre-emptive military action against Iraq, a massive assault against President Saddam Hussein could be likely at short notice.” (George Bush, July 21 2002).

“Every time they say that they will coordinate more,” Mr. Muhammad said, referring to American commanders. “They killed my people in Oruzgan, and they said they would not make a mistake again and that they would contact us first. Then they did it again.” (New York Times, July 21 2002)

There will come a time when an international community of people, connected in friendly ways, will lead reasonably free, creative, humane, lives where they do not have to split life from work, where a society based on a war of all on all seems a distant memory, and where love, labor, and rational knowledge are seen as centerpieces of the key idea of a new way of governing, all for all, equally, inclusively, and democratically.

That time will be born from social conditions that exist today, and the choices we make. US rulers promise citizens a perpetual pre-emptive world war, wrapped in tricky language that equates battles for cheap labor, raw materials, and markets with freedom and democracy. Our true social condition must be named: capitalism.

Capitalism expands or dies: imperialism. Greed, racism, and hubris kept things going. In WWII, the Soviet Red Army and Chinese Communists stopped the fascist advance from Germany and Japan. 20 million Russians died, and untold millions of Chinese, compared to 500,000 US casualties. After WWII, the US allied with known fascists worldwide, restoring them to power, as in Germany, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Latin America, and South Africa, and many more—playing the ‘great game’ against the Soviet

Union, a nation which quickly restored capitalist relations (exploited, alienated labor, imperialism) following their anti-Czarist revolution.

Both world wars bore revolutions. In China, in 1949, a mostly egalitarian and democratic Red Army drove the fascist Kuomintang into the sea. But the ‘socialist’ Chinese government quickly restored inequality and tyranny, on the job and in daily life. By 1955 it was clear that socialism, which merely nationalized the work force and promised better times ahead under a benevolent party dictatorship, had failed to meet its promises—a lesson that cost the lives of millions of people who fought for freedom.

The US overseers invade the world, and try to make fascism popular at home.

Since 1945, the imperial US battled the world, and usually failed. In Korea, US troops (backed by jets and naval bombardment) fled in panic for 120 miles, from an enemy of about equal size, only lightly armed. Despite a policy of “Kill All, Burn All,” the US government lost the war in Vietnam, abandoning its allies, costing about 2 million Vietnamese lives and 55,000 US casualties. People’s victory in Vietnam, caused in part by US troops’ refusal to fight, transformed the world. The US stood exposed as a paper tiger at home and abroad. Citizens everywhere knew the US government, an executive committee of the rich, could not be trusted. The US economy nearly collapsed.

The US challenged the Soviets to a war of military spending. The Soviet economy fell apart. With capital in full bloom in the once-USSR, doctors dig roots for food. US military spending grew to 50.5 % of the budget (2002). Now, US rulers seek to resolve the contradiction of the unyielding international demands of capitalist relations and the necessity of a national armed military base for specific capitalists in power. The US overseers invade the world, and try to make fascism popular at home. September 11, which evidence says was predictable, surely served their purposes.

“Exterminate All the Brutes”

or

Organize to Comprehend and Change the World?

This is a partial list of places where US troops (and CIA) are now active: Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Georgia (USSR), Turkey, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Palestine, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Brazil, Argentina, Iraq, Iran, Paraguay, Mexico. At issue is the survival of US capitalism, mainly in the form of cheap labor, but also in the battle for key raw materials like oil, as well as the battle of ideas—the key weapon being the idea that there is no other way to live. US leaders no longer bother to tell troops they are fighting for democracy. The only motivator: fight or you and your buddy will get killed. Only despair, rooted in no clear alternatives, makes that believable.

Still, the US military, as in Vietnam, cannot surmount US strategic and political weakness. US rulers cannot be friends to the majority of people. The oil war in Afghanistan, initiated long before September 11, is already a failed war. The enemy slipped away, the US re-installed dope-dealer warlords as the government. They are killing each other. US military leaders, knowing its troops are quickly unreliable, are left with a techno-war, blindly bombing civilians with drones. The US is a very fragile power.

With the institution of the Patriot Act, which negates most key constitutional freedoms (longtime myths for many poor, especially black, citizens), and the Homeland Security Act, the structures of fascism are in place inside the US. Untold thousands of people are held, now, without rights to attorneys, without trials, in US gulags. But fascism is only the institutionalization of capital’s war of all on all. Fascism implodes, cannot prevail—often at great cost to those citizens who were its more fervent supporters.

Capitalism diminishes everyone it touches. It creates horrors: a modern holocaust, the likely starvation of 15 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2002 (UN estimate) The Taliban was a logical outcome of capital’s processes: ignorance and irrationalism coupled with violence and death.

Capitalism’s injustice also spawns resistance. People are fighting back. In Venezuela a CIA coup was defeated, temporarily, by popular uprisings. In Argentina, millions of people are taking to the streets in opposition to

government-imposed cut-backs. South Africans are beginning to mobilize to demand the equality and democracy the ANC promised them. 200 million homeless people in China, peasants driven from their land to create a massive urban workforce, repeatedly battle the “Red” Army, as do those left in the hinterlands. General strikes hit Greece, Italy, and Spain in 2002. A similar fight is afoot in London.

Inside the US, fascism is popular. With the economy in crisis, the possibility of large numbers of troops returning in body bags from Iraq, the memory of Vietnam may cause popular discontent. But a culture steeped in selfishness for years is not likely to produce significant mass organized resistance quickly.

Even so, there is no way out in the long run but to get beyond capitalism. 350 years of capitalist history demonstrates that it leads to war and impoverishment. Reforms, without overcoming capital as a strategic goal, just urge people into blind canyons. Everything connects in the real world. Any reform effort should combine an important social change, like free health care or sane schooling, with new methods of organizing, tactics that meet the strategy, going outside the exclusive hierarchies of most reform movements, to the goal that each person fully grasp methods of understanding and changing the world.

Reform organizations in the US, however, are not even seeking reforms, and are incapable of the kind of organizing that even a reform movement requires. All of the trade unions *support* capital’s war.

The industrial working class, which civilized the US, winning reforms like rights to free speech, to organize, to strike, social security and the 40 hour week, is largely gone, deindustrialized outside the US. Those who remain are trapped in unions which will never be democratic, will never oppose capitalism, because they were organized to support capital, not transcend it. But things will change. A fair world is possible.

The people who are most oppressed, who are most likely to lead resistance, are excluded from most unions. Immigrants, black people, poor peoples’ lives are now organized around schools, not industrial work sites. Because schools are now the central organizing point of US life, because a key product of schools is new ideas, because action in schools can spark action elsewhere, it is reasonable to suggest that the focal point of organizing for people who are serious about change should be in US schools. Such is the path to a fair world. ■

HOW CAN WE BUILD A BETTER NEW WORLD FROM THE ASHES OF THE OLD?

OVERCOMING CAPITALIST SCHOOLING: REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM

"When we try to educate our children we confront a billion dollar industry that is more important than the lives of children. The Civil Rights Movement was a slave rebellion. But we cannot use guns because they have guns and they are waiting for us. Still, before each slave rebellion, there was non-cooperation. We could begin with the schools, and take our children out of the schools. How can you expect racist people who cannot educate their own children to educate anyone else? Our trump is action, non-cooperation, and patience." (James Baldwin, 1979)

"We got freedom schools. You form your own schools. Because when you come right down to it, what is it that you learn in their schools? Many Negroes can learn it, but what can they do with it? What they really need to learn is how to be organized to work on the society in order to change it. They can't learn that in schools." (Robert Moses, leader of the Mississippi Freedom Schools, 1963)

Why Have School?

US schools serve at least these purposes: (1) technical training which reproduces social relations mostly as they are, (2) skill training, like reading and math, (3) ideological training suggesting that the rule of US capital is democratic rule, the best of all possible worlds, (4) centers of hope where people send children believing they will be better off because they will learn to struggle for what is true. Schools are contradictory

places. Competing interests always come into conflict, teachers vs textbooks, real estate agents and local employers versus critical thinking. As on any job, employers seek to diminish the work force, to strip them of their minds, to divide them, shatter their dignity, in order to pay them less and to control the work place. School workers invariably resist. Schools, different from places that make widgets, deal with children. Teachers care about kids, often at odds with the boss.

The Central Role of Schools in the US Today

The industrial working class civilized the US in the 1930s. Their illegal battles led to laws that won the 40 hour week, rights of assembly, organization, and speech, the social security act, and child labor laws. Today, however, the US industrial working class has nearly disappeared, their jobs easily out-sourced for cheap labor. For now, industrial workers will not take the lead in struggle for justice.

Those workers whose jobs remain in the US are fairly well-off compared to workers in other nations. US industrial unions are organized to divide people along lines of race and occupation. They mimic the undemocratic privileged hierarchies and habits of their employers. US unions, led by the AFL-CIO, have always believed that they will do better if workers in the rest of the world do worse, so they support the cornerstone notion of the fascist corporate

state: the unity of business, government, and labor bosses in the national interest. Every major US union, including the school unions, is now supporting Capital's war for oil and cheap labor, masqueraded as a war against terror.

Factories and craft unions were once the centerpieces of the lives of the most progressive people in the US. Now the central organizing point for the lives of most people, and surely those people who are most oppressed and therefore most likely to lead resistance (immigrants, black people, etc.) is school. There are more than 3.5 million educators in US public schools, three times the size of any large industry. While industrial production is easily out-sourced, schooling is not.

Other than the military, where youth will learn that to die for Exxon is no honor, that their officers are not their allies, nor allies of the people; the site of impending struggle in the US is school.

Rulers in an inequitable nation who want to invade the world desperately need to control the schools, whose key product is ideas. Ideas about the source of inequality, or the deadly myth of nationalism, must be contained. Domination, social control, is won through fabricated consent, nationalism, racism, sexism, irrationalism, opportunism, and every razor-sharp division that the elite's sham science can manufacture. Teachers, collectively, create terrific value, the minds of the next generation of workers. Educators are the most free of all working

people, able to exercise considerable control over their labor. At issue is: Can school workers exert control over the value they create in order to overcome capitalist education, to educate for freedom for the majority—the workers? Is it enough to try to teach well, inside segregated schools, promoting lies?

What is the Social Context of Schooling Today?

There never has been a single public school system, but five or six, each representing the parental income and race of the kids in the school, each reproducing their birth-classes. As the economy rots, schools tamp down the hopes of most kids, who never will do as well as their parents. Most schools now teach lies to children, using methods that make life seem incoherent. Kids learn indifference to learning, despair. Many honest educators swim upstream, seek to struggle for the truth, using methods that demonstrate how that process works. Still, these are the primary tendencies in schools:

**Booming inequality tied to escalating segregation, racism, sexism, exclusion.*

**Irrationalism rising—religious fundamentalism (vouchers) and witless nationalism.*

**Regimentation via spectacles, surveillance, and the suspension of common civil liberties.*

**Regulation of knowledge via partisan standards and Big Tests.*

**Rising authoritarianism as some schools became mirrors of prison life.*

**Militarization—an invasion of ROTC and lying military recruiters.*

**Technology, mainly used to mesmerize, not liberate or unite.*

**A cultural attack, designed to re-*

heorize the military and to eradicate memories of Vietnam.

**Marketization: children, educators, and schools are commodified, sold to Pepsi.*

**Takeovers of entire school systems (Detroit, Chicago), overthrowing local control.*

**Talibanization: organized decay of learning at every level of schooling: phonics first.*

After September 11, this became fascist tyranny. Schools teach children in a society promising them perpetual war. Teaching always mattered, but what teachers do now counts more than ever before.

Who Will Resist? Resist What? How? For What?

No reform organization has linked the standards, Big Tests, segregation, economic collapse, war, and capitalism—except the Rouge Forum. School unions support the war, wrote the standards and tests. The unions structurally exclude students, parents and others. Their quisling leaders earn CEO salaries, forming a class that serves elites in controlling school labor. They re-route on-the-job or community action into hopeless electoral campaigns, dead-end legal actions, to divert people from taking effective collective action to control their working lives. Many teachers, middle-class and vacillating for now, support that leadership. But many do not. They fight to defend their own dignity, and their kids'. They matter. They need new organizations.

The main attack on education is the Big Test. Attached to dishonest standards, the tests perform a dual purpose: to destroy wisdom and divide people. Honest educators must not be capital's missionaries. Resist.

Teachers, students, and community people now fight back: the Detroit teach-

ers' wildcat of 1999, the Ontario educators strike in 1998, the Oakland student strike in 2000, test resisters everywhere, community battles in Philadelphia against privatization. There is a long history of struggle for academic freedom, a fair tax system, caps on class size, books and supplies. No one in the US, however, has attempted pedagogy for freedom—to go beyond the system of capital which ensnares everything. Real life is connected, as are the tests and war. To disconnect reform struggles from overcoming capital ensures that reforms will fail—and buttress capital in new ways. Without strategic vision, opportunism and fear will defeat any movement for justice.

Inclusive, anti-racist school workers organized *with* community people and students, can control their working lives by controlling their work places. The way to do that is to prepare for united direct action: boycotts, walkouts, strikes, sit-ins and sit-downs, prepared by one-to-one education, friendship, with the goal of each person fully understanding what is being done, why, and each having a chance to openly reflect on what is being learned. This is reason connected to power, for power only retreats in the face of more power. The test of any worker's power: Who, other than the boss, can open and close the workplace, or nearby streets?

School strikes and boycotts are not new. Freedom Schools of the civil rights movement offered alternative, critical schooling in the midst of civil strife. The interplay of reason and power, which on-the-job action and Freedom Schools represents, serves as a beacon of hope.

Hope for what? For a world where people can be reasonably free and creative, at work and play, connected with others in friendly ways by sharing, all for all, from each according to commitment, to each according to need. How much will be lost before we make the decision to get there? ■

THE U.S. & CALIFORNIA: LEADERS OF THE UN-FREE WORLD

By Mary Coomes
and Paul Gilroy

The U.S. Leads the World in its per Capita Incarceration Rate.

Out of every 100,000 American men, 1,100 are in jail. Because of a passion for arrests and a dedication to longer and longer sentences, our jails now bulge with more than 2 million souls.

It's time to ask ourselves some questions. Who created this situation and why? What is us costing us, not just monetarily, but morally, to put so many of our fellow citizens behind bars? And if we don't want to be regarded as a 20th century Dickensian nightmare, what can we do to create a better legacy for our time?

First, some background. Until the 1970s, our rate of incarceration held steady at around 110 prison inmates for every 100,000 people. But in the 1980s and 90s, the rate quadrupled. And in 1998, it stood at 445 per 100,000. During those two decades, the nation added about 1,000 new prisons and jails. We began to develop, as some have called it, a "prison industrial complex."

California: A case study

In 1977, California prisons held 19,600 inmates. According to recent statistics from the California Department of Corrections, the number of prison-

ers in California's (now 33) state prisons has reached 160,655— that's an incarceration rate of 467 per 100,000 people (not including prisoners in county jails). Today, after the construction of 21 new prisons between 1978 to 1998 at a cost of 5.2 billion dollars, California now has the largest prison system in the western industrialized world. It holds more people in its prisons than any other state system. And California has more people in its jails and prisons than do France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore and the Netherlands *combined*. Even with all the new construction, the California system is the most overcrowded prison system in the country.

These figures reveal a tremendous expansion of the prison system in the U.S. and in California. More importantly though, the numbers force us to face the fact that such growth is unsustainable without a major shift in state government funding priorities. And no matter how much we might value fighting crime, it seems clear that a society that loudly recites a mantra of "freedom" while locking up more people than any other country in the world has a serious problem.

How did we get into this mess? It has to do with a shift in the political climate over the last thirty some years. Beginning in the late 60s, elected leaders began moving toward a "Law and Order" politics, which was in large part a backlash against the perceived lawlessness of the 1960s — uprisings in the cities, civil disobedience in support of civil rights and against the Vietnam war.

Conservatives who feared the growing unwillingness of many in society to stay in their place called for a crackdown on this "disorder." The emphasis on Law and Order, pushed by political figures like George Wallace, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan, meant a more punitive attitude toward criminal justice issues.

Today, we are accustomed to a political climate in which our elected leaders compete with one another to be seen as "tough on crime." Imagine a governor in the early 1990s signing a bill that contained an inmate bill of rights and included a limited program of conjugal visits. It would have been political suicide. The fact that none other than Governor Ronald Reagan signed such a bill into law in 1968 illustrates how drastically attitudes about punishment and reform have shifted over the past few decades.

Until the 1970s, the California prison system pursued—at least in theory—a policy of rehabilitating prisoners. The rehabilitative ideal meant that prisons served to prepare criminals to reenter society and become productive citizens. Sentencing under this system was indeterminate; the legislature set the maximum sentence for particular crimes—not minimums. Judges and the parole board, known as the Adult Authority, tried to fit the punishment to the individual and would release the prisoner when they considered him or her fit to re-enter society.

But there was no place for rehabilitation within the new politics of Law and

Order in the 1970s. Thus, even supposedly liberal Democratic Governor Jerry Brown— to appear tough on crime— signed the bill that replaced indeterminate sentencing with fixed sentences. Significantly, that law also removed from the penal code language declaring that rehabilitation was the ultimate goal of the system and replaced that language with “punishment.”

Under Governors Deukmejian in the 1980s, and Pete Wilson and Gray Davis too in the 1990s, the tough-on-crime policies have continued. In the 1990s the California legislature pushed through over 400 bills increasing prison sentences and others that required mandatory sentences for certain crimes.

In 1994, California under Pete Wilson passed one of the first and harshest “Three Strikes, You’re Out” laws in the nation. And it wasn’t just lawmakers who supported this. California voters passed the same law again in the form of an initiative. Under the law, prosecutors could call for special penalties for those convicted of second or third felonies if the first was a serious or violent felony. Under three-strikes, most sentences double after the second offense and increase to 25 to life after the third.

This element of California’s elevation of strict punishment to a moral crusade has been the most controversial. Not so much out of sympathy for those to be imprisoned, but because it would cause the prison population to skyrocket. I’ll return to this point later.

Related to the political culture that promotes incarceration for punishment is a second factor—the institutional power and self-interest that has been created by years of the punitive, law and order ethos. The colossal prison system now has a large number of camp

followers; people who have a vested interest in its continuation and expansion. Here the notion of the “prison-industrial complex” is useful—that is, a group of bureaucratic, political, and economic interests that demand increased spending on prisons regardless of need. This new complex functions just like the prison industrial complex of which President Dwight Eisenhower warned. Ike was concerned that in the 1960 election between Nixon and JFK, fears of a non-existent “missile gap” with the Soviet Union were stirred up by military contractors, the press, and candidates looking for more military spending. He worried that these self-interested groups would goad Americans into expensive and unnecessary over-responses to the military threat of the Soviet Union. Similarly, some people now argue that the “tough on crime” political hype that supports longer sentences and more prisons leads us to misdirect our funds and attention.

Prisons no longer serve simply to house criminals, they also serve as an economic development tool. A kind of “Prison Keynesianism” to funnel money into economically depressed areas. In the past twenty years, California has built most of its new prisons in depressed rural areas, and this has created a kind of built-in demand for the economic support of policies of punishment. Prisons are the number one employer in Imperial County in the South. Prisons like Avenal, Blythe, Corcoran, and Delano are sometimes the only source of a decent-paying blue collar jobs in their areas.

Towns like Crescent City, in the Northwestern corner of the state, where Pelican Bay State Prison is located, were on the verge of total collapse when the construction of a major prison promised the community economic salvation. Unemployment there stood at

20% when Pelican Bay was built in 1989.

Certain communities have come to see prisons as advantageous — and their political representatives pay attention to this constituency and avoid threatening this new incarnation of political pork. Playing a leading role in this constituency is the California Correctional Peace Officer Association, the prison guards union. This organization has become a real force in state politics. The union gave \$1 million to Republican Pete Wilson’s gubernatorial campaign in 1990, and \$2 million to Democrat Gray Davis in 1998. Prison growth has been good to the towns in which they’re built and to the prison guards, and they fight politically to keep the benefits.

Politicians have tied their political fortunes to the crime issue. The story of Proposition 21 from a few years ago reveals a great deal about the implications of using the crime issue as pawn in a political game. Back in 1998, Governor Pete Wilson was considering a run for the Presidency and wanted to secure his credentials as a tough-on-crime candidate, and so he pushed the Gang Violence and Youth Crime Prevention Act. This hard-line measure included a provision that would give prosecutors rather than judges the right to decide when a juvenile should be tried as an adult. Numerous corporate donors (including Unocal, Transamerica, PG&E and Chevron) who wanted to win the favor of a potential U.S. president gave a total of \$750,000 to the Proposition campaign. As PG&E spokesman Scott Blakely put it, his company had supported the drive with \$50,000 but had “no position pro or con.” After Wilson lost re-election and the corporate donors lost interest, the initiative still had a war chest seven times the size of its opponents’. Gray Davis, the Demo-

crat, perhaps wishing to avoid appearing weak endorsed the proposition. (Picking on children has always been part of the cult of punishment). It passed overwhelmingly.

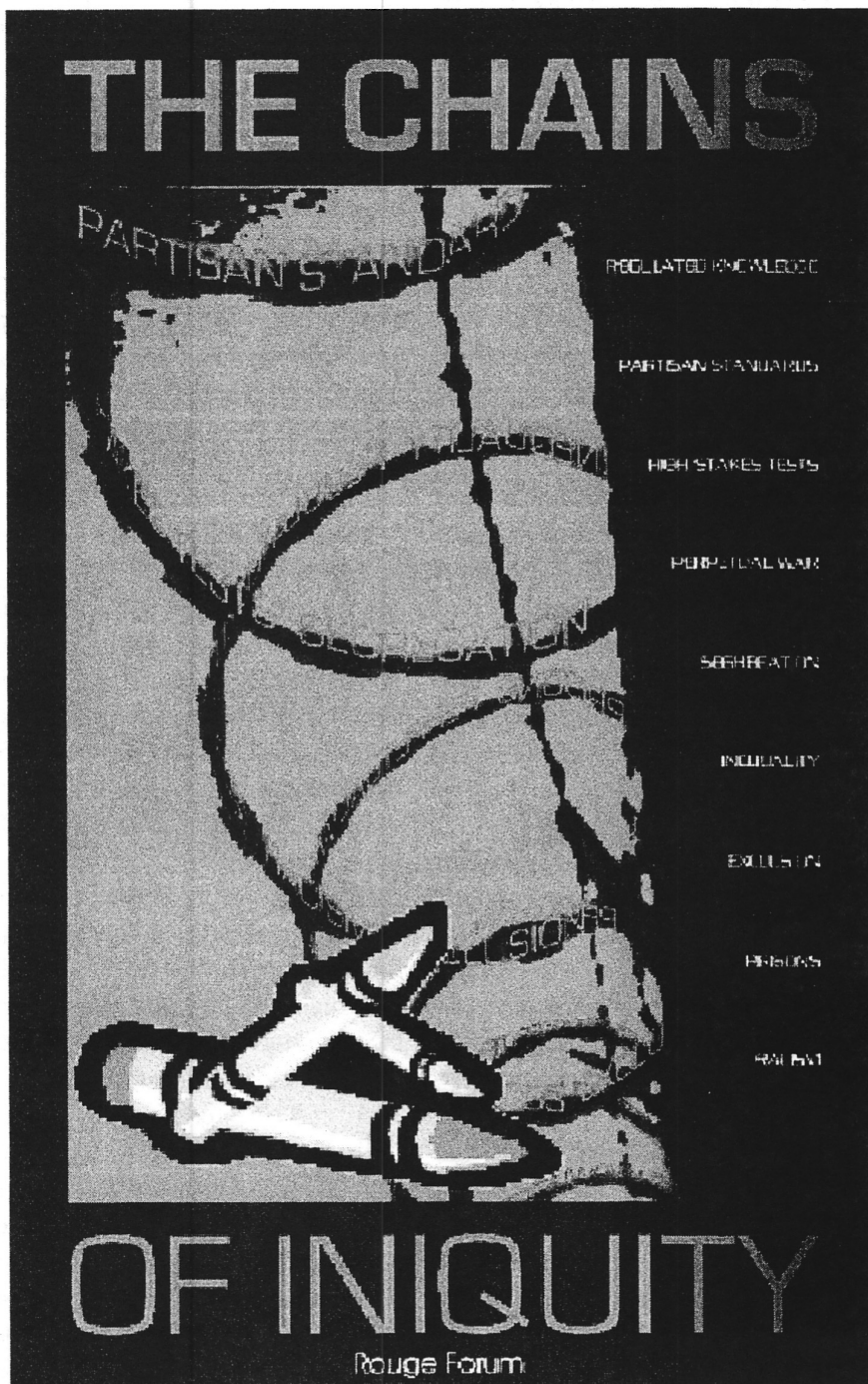
There's another, potentially more powerful, player in the prison-industrial complex and that is private, profit-driven prison corporations. California has not followed this trend in large part because the prison guards union is so strong and private prisons are notoriously anti-union. Better wages for jailors, after all, eat into the profits.

As capitalist enterprises, private prisons need to maintain and even expand the prison population. What looks like waste to taxpayers equals profit to them. Companies like the Correctional Corporation of America bank on benefiting from state prison overflow. The CCA recently spent \$100 million to build a prison in the Mojave Desert outside of California city. They assumed that in the rural area where layoffs at Edwards Air Force Base created high unemployment and with California state prisons bulging at the seams, they could force their way into the California "market" in prisons. As one CCA executive told the Wall Street Journal, "If you build it . . . the prisoners will come." Hardly a recipe for good criminal justice policy.

Still, for-profit prisons have yet to see their day in California. The state continues to avoid private prisons. Another factor that we must consider in a discussion of the prison boom is crime itself. For all it's the problems the rise in prisons has created, have they not helped solve the problem of crime at the same time? For many criminals, prison is no doubt the solution. Politicians did not make up the problem of crime in the 1970s (although I would argue they capitalized on it). The rate of violent crime more than doubled in

the 1960s and continued upwards in the 1970s. Another spike in the rate in California hit in the mid-1980s, concurrent with the hysteria over crack and gang-related crimes. Violent crime was and is a real problem. Many politicians no doubt thought that this method - an exclusive focus on prison and punishment—helped solve the problem.

More importantly, during this time, many politicians, like other Americans, were changing their attitudes toward drug crimes. In the early 70s, another liberal, this time the Republican governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller, proposed an anti-drug law under which all drug dealers would get life in prison—with no plea-bargaining. The actual law included a slightly less dra-



conian mandatory 15 year to life term for possession of four ounces or selling two ounces.

But the law demonstrated a rising intolerance to drugs. Ever since, we have been fighting the so-called War on Drugs. Our weapon of choice — not public health measures, but prison. As Franklin Zimring at the Earl Warren Legal Institute put it, “No matter what the question has been in American criminal justice over the last generation, prison has been the answer.” (Until the 2000 election, that is, when a drug treatment-not-prison measure passed).

Still, a rising crime rate does not account for the growth of California’s prisons. For one thing, the crime rate has been declining since the early-1990s, as the number of young males has declined; yet, the number of prisoners in California has doubled. While America continues to have a high rate of violent crime compared to Europe, people convicted of violent crimes constitute a smaller and smaller proportion of our prison inmates. It is the ranks of non-violent offenders that contribute to the explosion in prison populations. And although the Three Strikes law has not quite resulted in the predicted mushrooming of prison populations, it is causing significant growth. Barring some policy change, these numbers will continue to grow.

We continue to stick with an approach that favors punishment over reform without ever asking what effect this has on those who commit crimes or on crime rates. And, unlike most government spending, taxpayers have dolled out millions for prisons without complaint. Putting so many people in jail may serve as one way to handle crime, it certainly makes a good campaign speech, and it sometimes provides a decent living for folks in poor rural

areas, but still, it costs a lot of money.

Regardless of whether we think prisons are an effective response to crime, the solution is becoming a problem in itself.

Show Me the Money:

The prison boom in California, of course, has meant a lot of money going to the Department of Corrections. According to James Gomez, head of the California Department of Corrections (CDC) until 1997, each “third strike” conviction represents “a \$500,000 investment.” The average yearly cost to the CDC per inmate is \$25,607. The Department estimates that it will need to spend some \$6.1 billion over the next ten years just to maintain the prisons in their current overcrowded condition.

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The focus on prison building has meant a shift of resources within the criminal justice system. Money goes toward building expensive prisons, not toward drug treatment programs that might address the root of the problem or to other less expensive alternatives to prison. For example, California parole officers face huge case loads — in the 1970s they handled on average about 45 cases, now that number is 90.

Drug treatment has not been a priority. About 85% of California’s inmates are substance abusers. Yet few, only about 3,000, receive any drug abuse treatment. And only about 8,000 participate in pre-release programs to help them adjust to life on the outside. It is no wonder that nearly 70% of those paroled return to prison. The vast majority of parolees returning to prison (60,000 of 80,000) are sent back for technical violation, like failing a drug test.

Another unanticipated cost of the punitive approach to crime — and the 3 strikes law in particular — has been a huge increase in people requesting jury trials. Defendants with two prior convictions may face life in prison. In this situation, they are not going to plea bargain. So not only are the jails overcrowded, so is the court system. And more prisoners awaiting trial clog the county jail systems, which are even more overcrowded and strapped for cash.

This trend toward imprisonment requires not only a shift in budget priorities within the Department of Corrections, but also a tremendous shift in resources in the state budget. The state will be forced to spend a larger proportion of tax dollars on prisons at the expense of other programs - or else to raise taxes. The former has been the trend in the last two decades. Between 1980 and 1995, the corrections budget increased 847%, while spending for higher education rose 116%.

The tremendous financial costs and the bureaucratic problems are important, but something more significant is also at stake here. Lest we forget, what about justice? Despite former President Ronald Reagan’s announcement that we live in a color blind society, racism seems alive and well in the political

economy of punishment. The punitive culture of law and order politics has hit people of color in such disproportionately high numbers that we cannot ignore the fact that it is - at least in effect - racist.

And this is especially true of the drug war. Although research shows that white men use drugs at about the same rate as do black men, the latter are five times as likely to be arrested for a drug offense. The disparities in sentencing for certain drugs is but one example of a very thinly veiled tilting of the playing field. Sentences for crack cocaine, used disproportionately by people of color, are ten times longer than convictions for powder cocaine, most often used by whites.

Fighting crime is one thing, but these approaches to crime and to sentencing reveal far more than a society of rule breakers. There is nothing wrong with wanting to reduce crime. But we must examine not only crime, but our solutions to this problem. We cannot ignore how they affect various groups differently, and we cannot ignore their historical roots.

As mentioned earlier, the law and order rhetoric emerged in the late sixties and the seventies as a political tool. It was conscious attempt on the part of politicians like Democrat George Wallace and Republican Richard Nixon to get white voters in the South and in the Northern cities to shift their allegiances by whipping up fears of black and Hispanic criminals.

For thirty years now politicians have tried to woo white voters by appealing to fears of crime, and they have won doing it. And to the extent that the more liberal political figures have won back some of those voters, they have often made the same appeals.

While the overt racial rhetoric of some Southern politicians in the 1960s, has been shelved, the message is still there. In the hysteria, we have demonized black and Latino men. When we use terms like predators, or "superpredators" to describe youth in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, we feed this hysteria. (And after all, these are the kids labeled in this way. The difference between a "troubled teen" and a "superpredator" can be expressed in a calculus of skin tone and parental income). By adopting this way of viewing kids, we give license to the police who commit acts of brutality in poor and minority neighborhoods.

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In the past twenty
years we have built
21 more.**

This sort of demonization encourages us to tolerate incredible levels of official violence, especially against convicted criminals, and sadly, the state of California in the 1990s leads the nation in this regard. Between 1985 and 1995, guards killed 36 inmates — triple the number killed in the Federal system and the next six biggest incarceration states combined. News stories in the past several years testify to the levels of official violence too — the acquittals of guards for staging "gladiator battles" in the prison yards at Corcoran, and for arranging the rape of inmates, and the psychologically destructive policy of isolation in the Security Housing Units at Pelican Bay.

These stories are not only a measure

of the extent to which the punitive culture has taken hold, but also give us an indication that we are willing to be frankly and expensively counter-productive in order to prove our viciousness toward criminals. Imagine being a prisoner in Pelican Bay for a ten year sentence, kept in isolation for 23 hours each day and often forced to fight for your life during your exercise in the yard. At the end of this sentence you are released with \$200 and a bus ticket. What are your chances of getting a home, a job, and of coping with the world? It takes a willful blindness to argue that such a person will be able to adjust if only they work hard and stay straight. Yet this is what California has done through the 1990s.

This is the world we have built. It has cost us a lot, measured in dollars, lives, and principles. We might think of our shining new creation, this huge system of prisons, as the latest in a long line of public works. California has a great history of public works projects, from the water and power projects of the Owens valley, the Colorado, and the Hetch-Hetchy, to the Freeway system, to the UC and Cal State University systems. They have served as models for the nation. Each of these projects has had its problems and its share of corruption, but they have also reflected in some sense the spirit of the era in which they were created.

In the first 130 years in the state of California, we built twelve state prisons. In the past twenty years we have built 21 more. As a reflection of the spirit of the era, such public works will leave a legacy of misplaced priorities, of a costly and counter-productive response to a very real problem. Yet if we have the ability to build a world of gates and barbed wire, we also have the power to tear it down. ■

WHICH CAME FIRST: THE TESTER OR THE TYRANT?

By Jonathan Lee

My school just took a test. And I do mean my *school* – not just the students. For an entire week, classes were halted. Preparation periods lost. Days turned upside-down. Academics shirked. Administrators de-throned. Teachers mechanized. Parents confused. Students frenzied. School out. Tyranny in.

Being my first experience on the ‘proctor’ side of things, I found myself torn and bewildered – but not at all shocked. Despite my dire need to tear up the exams on a daily basis and spend the week watching ‘Harry Potter’ with my kids (an experience far more educational than taking the Stanford-9), I decided that I needed to experience this first hand as participant-observer; taking it all in and in-stride. Everything that I had read about, everything that I had

heard, everything that I had believed was true – and worse. All the usual suspects were there (stress, anxiety, nausea, yada, yada). But what I found out afterwards truly floored me.

On the last day of testing, I talked with my students – all 140 of them. I asked them two simple questions. First, *why* do you take these tests? And second, *who* makes you? The responses were almost unbelievable. Let me share some with you (actual words and language)...

Question 1: ‘Why do you take these tests?’

- For the school to see where you are in your brain I.Q.
- So they can know how we are doing in class.

- So the high schools can see where we are.
- To check how much we know from last year.
- To test our ability.
- To help us for the MCAS.
- To waste time.
- To test my brain to see if I have enough ability to answer really hard questions.
- To make us work harder.
- Because I have to.
- To see how smart we are.
- To see what our grade is.
- To see if your teacher from last year was smart, and did the right thing by passing or failing you.
- To torture us.
- Because they make us take them.
- We do not choose to take them – they make us.



I wonder where
Dubya gets it?

- To show what we know to a bunch of school officials.
- The Stanford testing is technically another form of an I.Q. test.
- Because the school forces us to, and it shortens our learning periods.
- To see what we learned and, if we fail, we stay back and we won't graduate.
- So the government knows where we are in our learning skill.
- To make us frustrated.
- I don't know...maybe it is to see how smart you are.
- To see if we are smart or stupid.
- Don't know.
- I don't know the reason, but there is a good one.

These words speak for themselves. The students are in the dark. And that is frightening. If these kids are seeing results of tests in the newsdailies – tests that they think can tell their *ability*, if they are *smart or stupid*, if they should *graduate*, and so forth – think about the possible damage done to a generation already lacking in self-worth and self-esteem.

My next question is even more difficult to conceive. And, in its Orwellian undertones, points to a dangerous element of corporate schooling.

Question 2: 'Who makes you take these tests?'

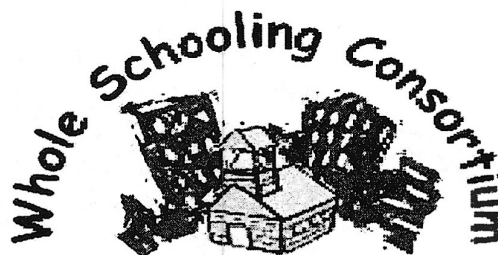
- The state senate.
- The C.I.A.
- Big school committee or government.
- The President and the Board of Trustees.
- I think the President says we need to take these tests, but I honestly don't know.
- The law.
- The government.

- I think that the state enforces that we take the test.
- The mayor.
- The school.
- The stupid state.
- My school, principal, teachers, parents, and the United States.
- The governor.
- The government, or someone like that.
- Satan's dogs.
- School officials.
- The person who corrects the MCAS tests.
- The state tells the school and the principal tells the teacher and the teachers tell us.
- The student council.
- The superintendent.
- The state enforces the idea on the educators in this school, and the educators enforce the idea on us – the students.
- The United States government.
- The Stanford Corporation.
- I don't know.

The vagueness of some of these answers point to clear and direct inadequacies in the spread of information regarding these exams. And, more so, sheds light on a few extremely harmful factors of standardized testing. First, the idea that all standardized tests must be connected. Although the results of these exams may point administrators in one direction or another with regards to other tests, the fact that the students see a strong link here

(down to 'the person correcting the tests') demonstrates an acceptance of unilateral domination, rather than that of critical democracy. Second, these tests strike a deep chasm between the students and the institutions that they are a part of. Distrust in and dislike of their school, their government, and their socio-political leaders, is infused by the lack of knowledge about the sources and rationales of the exams; truly, hatred is bred by ignorance. Third, the fact that they don't know or don't care why and for whom these tests are administered shows a passive quality of thought that must not be allowed to spread further, lest we give up all our natural, rational, and social rights. Finally, and most personal, that we, as teachers, are fully implicated in this mess. The role of teacher, in the child's mind, has become the equivalent of that of 'tester'. And that is a real shame.

In this time of wars and tyrants and 'well-oiled commerce' (pardon the global pun), let us not forget our daily battles at home. If the most successful tyrant is one who is able to manufacture a haze of deceit so thick and powerful that it shades the mind to the point of passive acceptance, then the standardized tester is no more than a tyrant in educator's clothing. Certainly, the earliest of tyrants used the same techniques as the most recent of testers. So which came first: tester or tyrant? This point is moot – we simply cannot let either laugh last. ■



<http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WSC.html>

WHO WON THE ELECTION? THE RICH. BUT WHAT IS WINNING?

The rich won another round on November 5. But it was a hollow victory. As the many faces of capital prepared to invade the world with what may be the most massive oil grab in history, they could look out from their victorious podiums and see, immediately in front of them, a cheering throng of office-seekers, bribers, and fellow opportunists. Beyond that small delirious crowd, though, is a sullen mass of people who did not vote, or who only voted recognizing that what they may once have considered to be their own government is now the government of the bosses, where voters choose who will oppress them least. Those people are giving hints that sullenness, over time, may turn into action.

The winning candidates had done all they could to blur the differences between themselves and their loyal me-too opponents. They sought to discourage some voters, activate others. But, at bottom, neither Tweedle nor Dumb had an honest project of finding a path from authoritarianism, perpetual war, and inequality to a society propelled by forces that would allow people to genuinely care about one another—or even to notice tyranny today.

This was spectacle. “Me! Me! Me! He is no damn good and here is the proof! “What kind of consciousness is loosed on the land from this? Surely it is a long stretch from the Jeffersonian idea of the tree of liberty needing the regular fertilizer of the blood of tyrants, much more in tune with Engels’ notion that a high level of vot-

ing participation is a measure of the infamy of a heartfelt working class movement that could serve the majority of the people—or a test of how thoroughly people are fooled. Most adults in the U.S. do not vote, perhaps acknowledging that if voting mattered, they would not be allowed to do it—as they cannot at the most decisive site in their lives: work. Voters and abstainers, however, are not organizing action on the job that could lead to social change, change that could not be easily eradicated by the movement of a governor’s pen—distinct from any ballot box reform.

Bill Simon and Gray Davis, the two Enron racketeers who ran for governor of California, spent \$98 million dollars (\$68 for Davis, \$30 for Simon), or about \$3.25 per citizen, to produce an election in which about 40% of the registered voters actually participated (about 65% of Californians register, ignoring what is projected to be a population of 3 million workers who cannot register). Better they should have doled out the \$3.25 to each, and not wasted the television space. Notably, a lot of Davis money came from clear quid-pro-quos: give me \$1 million, Mr. Prison Guard, and I will guarantee that the booming prison industry remains in public hands, and viable. Give me \$1 million, Ms. Teacher, and I will be sure your union has the right to force you to pay dues.

There is a class of these electoral parasites now. Mitt Romney, inheritor of the Mormon wealth of his fa-

ther, once president of the failed AMC motor company and governor of Michigan. Jeb, of Bush. Elizabeth of Dole. Rockefeller. Mark Pryor, son of a former senator. Some, like Rockefeller, were born to the ruling class, but most a now form a decidedly inferior underclass, small-time mullahs for wealth, inheriting connections and the willingness to lie about everything. Some, though, may be quite sincere. Jeb Bush’s first words, in acknowledging his victory, were, “I thank Almighty God for bringing this win to me,” which he managed to say without ling, nor calling for some snakes to handle.

This group has their promoters, media commentators like the smooth voices of NPR, shocked, simply shocked, that so few people join in the balloting fun. Many of them, too, were born to their positions. Cokie Roberts dad was a U.S. senator, slightly besmirched when he was found dancing drunk and naked with a stripper in a Capital Hill fountain one evening.

Dancing on the heads of the politicians is the ruling class, not necessarily conspiring but surely marrying one another, attending the same private schools; sometimes at odds, but always aware of their interests as a class, always despising the majority, the workers. Above these apparently powerful rulers is the system that is as fickle to them as it is to anyone who seeks to marry it, capital, relentlessly on the hunt for more ruthless and profitable forms of exploitation and social control. This system requires ever cheaper labor,

more exploitable raw materials, free markets (and unfree people), and war. The evidence of its deadly movement is now overwhelming. Now it has nothing to offer its personifications but racism, war, and death—and some cute trinkets: My SUV is bigger than yours.

The night the results were announced (after a long wait caused by the mysterious disappearance of key exit polling firms), Harvey Pitt, the gangster head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, overseer of that rigged gamble, the Stock Exchange, resigned. He was caught covering up the fact that his pal and appointee, William Webster, former boss of the FBI, was involved in an Enron-type scheme.

The grinding of the economy was well at work as the electoral spectacle developed. GM and Ford bond ratings were dropped to B levels, indicative of the crisis of overproduction in auto. Massive layoffs sent unemployment to official levels near 6%. The airlines demanded, and won, big concessions from their unions who seem to be unfamiliar with the history of concessions: they are like giving blood to sharks, they only want more. The airlines, and other industries like insurance companies, then demanded federal bailouts, to the tune of nearly \$1 billion, while they continued to lay off employees. Microsoft's monopoly was let stand by the courts, which earlier had a habit of breaking big monopolies like Standard Oil and ATT. Alan Greenspan, panicked, lowered interest rates .5%.

War industries boomed. The US admitted that its secret armies, often led by private corporations, not even the CIA, were engaged on every continent, to the tune of \$100 million, or more than twice the federal education budget. Hellbound drones, assassins, set out to wreak murder on those sus-

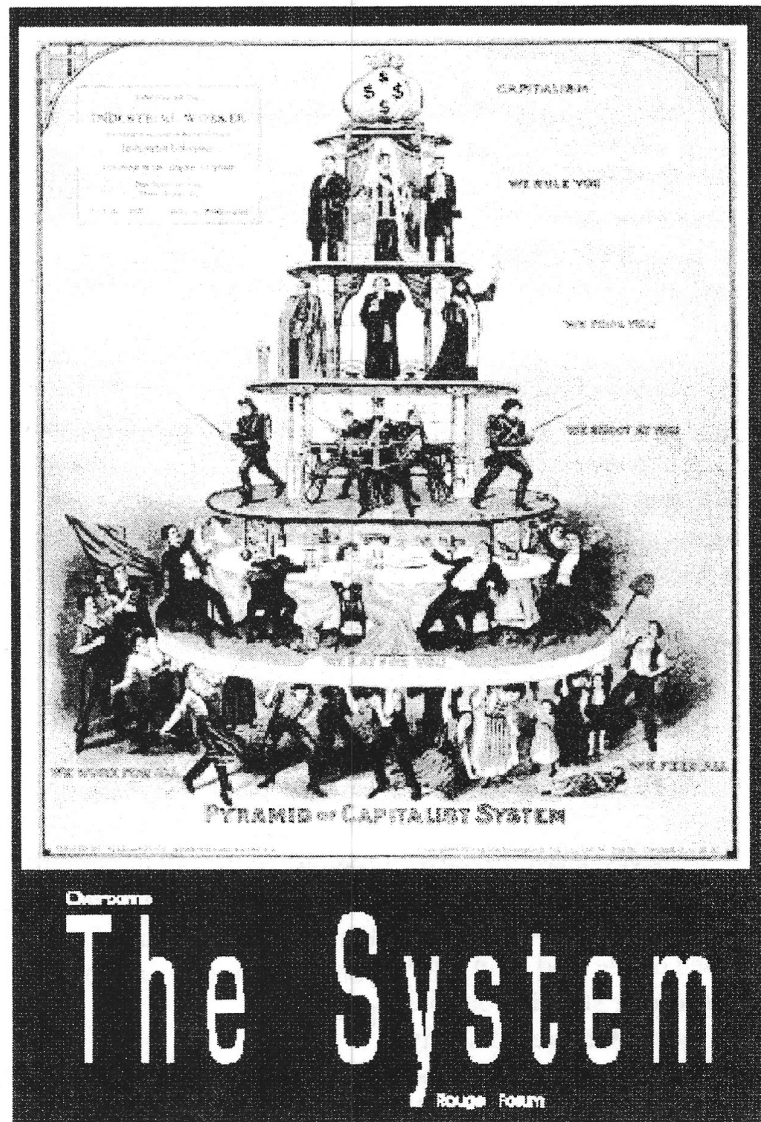
pected of crossing the imperial line. In Yemen where six men were killed to achieve the certain death of one, suspected of involvement with the US Cole bombing. Israeli leaders, assassins extra ordinaire, cheered.

The day following the election, California Governor Gray Davis, supported by the teachers' unions, announced that it may be necessary to close entire state universities.

Resistance grew as well. The dockworkers struck in the face of a federal injunction. Teachers and students

resisted the Big Tests, and in some instances, as in Mira Mesa, California, shut down their schools in opposition to a system of learning that only creates indifference to learning.

Some teachers taught their kids how to cheat the Big Tests, in response to a system that the New York Times produces a 60% rate of cheating among college students. The teachers pointed at ETS and said, "You are the cheats." Professors at San Diego State and other California universities rejected the governors demands and said they would not implement curricula designed



by ETS, rigged to promote ignorance and segregation. A fledgling antiwar movement drew at least 200,000 people to demonstrations in DC and San Francisco.

School workers and students, whose jobs cannot be outsourced as the economy crushes down, are in a pivotal place in North American society. Elites will need schools to produce unthinking human drones ready to fight and die in Exxon/Haliburton's Oil War. The market will need to pay school workers less and less, and force them to work more and more, as the war eats up available surpluses. The task of any educator is to connect reason with power. For some, the project is to make that connection in order to leave things a little better, to help fashion the mass change of consciousness and the huge struggle that is going to be needed in order to create a world where people can actually care about each other. This will not be achieved by voting, but by building on the job struggles, rooted in profound friendships.

Resistance is inevitable, as people must struggle on every job to be more free, more creative, less oppressed, and their bosses are impelled to make them work faster, in more meaningless ways, under more surveillance to be sure that the work force is never in control. Resistance is not transformation.

Winning is overcoming a social system that now openly announces that it has only war and death to offer those who serve it. Winning is finding ways to use those elements of this system that can unite us and feed us, systems of production, technology, global interaction, communication, and abundance, to share, each according to their commitment to each according to their need. ■

YOU'RE NOT BEING AMERICAN ENOUGH

By Greg Queen

I teach US History to ninth graders, World History to tenth graders and Psychology and Sociology to eleventh and twelfth graders. I teach in a school district that is a first ring suburban community. We are sandwiched between Detroit and "white middle class suburbia." The average income is about \$42,000. Typical jobs are industrial to semi-skilled trades. Housing ranges from the trailer park featured in Eminem's *8 Mile* to apartment living to three bedroom brick ranches. Houses max out \$150,000. Most kids are 'white' but there is a sizable body of African-American, Arab-American (primarily Chaldean Iraqis), and Asian-Americans (from southeast-east Asia). Fifty percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. At the same time, cell phones, beepers and expensive clothing are common.

On September 11, 2001 I was explaining to my third hour US History class how their grades would be determined. Ten minutes before the end of class, the teacher across the hall informed me that something had smashed into the World Trade Center. I decided not to turn on the classroom TV right away. My preparation period was the next hour and I wanted to have time to figure out what was going on. During my preparation period, the second tower collapsed and the Pentagon was hit. I watched in disbelief. By the end of the my preparation period, the strikes ap-

peared to be over. I feared leaving the TV on because the commentary was mostly pure conjecture. At that point, I tended to agree that this was masterminded by some sophisticated organization and not an individual. However, I kept in mind the accusations following the Oklahoma Federal Building bombing that proved to be false. At this point, I decided not to comment upon the attacks. However, the kids continued pressuring me for some explanation. The way in which I first approached the events of September 11th are summarized in an email I sent to a friend later that day.

I nearly cried. My throat gulped as I watched. Then I got angry. I was angry at the US Government and the corporate class, ruling for their desire to rape a lot of the world. Of course I was angry at the hijackers but I was also angry at the US Government and its complicity in this lie.

Because you live on the west-coast and had more time to deal with the situation, here in Michigan I had no idea what to do as the events were unfolding on TV. I quite frankly did not know what to say so I just listened. However, by the end of the day, kids in my classroom were able to have a very rational, reasonable, intellectual conversation around the topics you listed below (referring to an email discuss-

ing US involvement in Chile, Vietnam, Guatemala, etc.), particularly the fact that it is terrorism when enemies of the state/ruling class conduct it, yet freedom and democracy when the US does. Many teachers felt very disillusioned at the distance kids set up between themselves and the events. I got the impression that some kids saw it as an opportunity to deviate from the normality of their classrooms. It was a spectacle that teachers had become fixated upon and became an opportunity for kids to hang out.

We (my sociology class, seventh hour) are reading *Animal Farm* and we were in the part of the book where Napoleon forces Snowball off the farm. In teaching *Animal Farm*, I am pointing out how squealer, the spokespig, explains events to the other animals who fail to historicize the events that happen around them. Anyway, the point is to help the kids sort through the doublespeak and necessary illusions that will be raining down during the next few days.... The United States elite needed a boogymen and this may work for them.

We discussed the idea of a bully walking down the hall with his bully wannabes and stomping left and right upon the rights of many. A little guy runs out and gets a good jab at the Bully and manages to run away. Cheers fill the hallway. The bully loses a little face but is still the bully. Stopping the bully takes a wall of people to eventually surround him.

In terms of psychology, Dubya, who has an inferiority complex to begin with, will feel the need to prove to the nation that he is tough and macho. The superego can not be challenged.

In today's events, I saw parallels between the school shootings of Columbine and Santee and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was an act of the powerless lashing out in an irrational manner but have clear targets. However, in the end, it does not go to the root of the problem. In addition, as Tom Wise has pointed out regarding the way in which suburban white America was/is blinded by its own illusion that it's always somebody else's problem. That kids shooting each other happened in the Urban Ghetto where "they" live. Suburbanites ask themselves "How could this happen to us?" Not unlike the inability of US citizens to see the US as a greedy, rapacious empire. Well, thanks for your thoughts and affirmations.

Two days later, I sent the following email to the same friends.

Hi, I shared with you what I did in my class on the day of the bombing. The same theme was carried through Wednesday and Thursday. I have raised the question regarding the use of the term "terrorism." I pointed to many of the incidents listed below (Again, referring to an email that has articles from the Free Press regarding Bin Laden's CIA connection that I shared with students who seemed quite stunned that the past relation-

ship existed.) At any rate, I have had two parents call the principal and superintendent complaining that I am not being American enough. The first parent complained of a picture of Dubya that I had hanging on the wall which has been hanging there all year. They wanted me to take it down. Quite frankly, I forgot it was even there. I turned it around and put up a sign next to it saying that we must be able to criticize the things we love (I do not love Bush by any means). The other was more concerned with the content of the discussion and accused me of being a communist. It is possible that I may be meeting with the second parent on Monday to clarify misunderstandings. Although I have had some of this in the past, I feel the context of this week is going to create a different dynamic. My principal who I have worked with my whole teaching career is fairly rational and usually supportive of me. Anyway, I thought I would share this since the TRSE (Theory and Research in Social Education) and you are suggesting this form of analysis and I think you would be interested in hearing the consequences.

Here is the third of three emails that I sent to these friends regarding the teaching of the current events.

I have not yet met a colleague who has publicly said they are against the actions and war fever of the Bush gang. I have discussed these issues with my classes. I have had calls from three parents regarding my comments in class. The reason that they have called is because 1)

from the beginning of the year, I had a picture of Dubya (from The Nation magazine) which poked fun at him and a parent thought it was wrong and unpatriotic at this time. I turned it around, 2) students know my view on many things because they ask and I tell them. One quite inquisitive kid asked what I thought regarding whether I supported the current actions and I said no. A parent called regarding this. 3) My starting points for history are class and how that moves history. Because kids are talking to parents about the current events, and because I am one of the few teachers who take the time to explain some of the complexities involved in them, my teaching method and content has become an issue. I have stepped back for a few so that I can gain a little more perspective. At this point, I have been collecting materials and I think we are going to continue following this current event in greater detail in my world history class particularly. I know that I am going to get more calls though. At this point, my principal has been supportive. When the calls come in she lets me know and I call the parents. So far, after significant discussion, they feel more comfortable. Knowing that I need to watch every move I make is stressful.

While I am struggling with the delicacy of teaching a controversial current event, a teacher is sending around emails that say things like, "kick his ass" showing bin Laden riding a camel heading in one direction saying "holy war" and then retreating saying "holy shit" as a United States jet pursues him (which obviously reinforces potentially danger-

ous stereotyping). Also, the union president who teaches across the hall from me informed me that a teacher was so angry with me that he wanted to kick my ass.

My building principal has been respectful of my academic freedom. After the first parent call complaining about the picture of Bush, my principal asked if I was going to remove it. I protested saying that one parent should not have the power to force teachers to do what they want them to do, but I decided that this was not worth the battle. As stated above, I turned the picture around. Since I have done this a student inquired why I turned the picture around. I answered him honestly despite the fact that the child of the parent who complained was sitting next to the student who asked. When the other parents called the principal she explained to the parents that I have the right to express my opinion in class. She has listened to their concerns and requested that they talk to me. I have not been told to stop talking about the issues. I have not been monitored. There has been a level of trust that I will be responsible in my position. I think this has been appropriate.

I think students have been very interested. Although I have students who are pro-war there is a significant number who are very unsure. I conducted an informal survey asking the kids where they thought their parents stood regarding Bush's decision to attack. A noticeable difference existed between the opinion of the students and their parents. There were far more kids who said 'no' to attacking Afghanistan. According to the kids, their parents were far more indecisive regarding the question of retaliation than the media portrayed.

A few weeks after September 11th,

our school had parent-teacher conferences. Many parents were interested in whether I was teaching the current events. I found myself in an anticipated yet unpredictable conversation. From my previous experiences described above, I was fearful of having my thoughts regarding the whole issue become public. Going into the conferences, I told myself to listen, listen and listen. When parents brought up the issue, I asked them to explain what they thought and what they expected. I have concluded that they want their kids to be taught the complexities of the events but they want that balanced. Of course, the last part is the difficult part.

What does it mean to be balanced? Does that mean I should teach the pro-war argument and the anti-war arguments? Does teaching from a class, anti-war, anti-imperialist analysis balance the dominant jingoist media? In addition to the issue of balance, I have other questions. Here are just a few. Why does the general population not know US foreign policy? What do people need to know to understand the September 11th events? Is the media providing this information? If this expands into a larger war, who has historically served the military? Will the kids from my community where I teach be over represented? Will the class biases of the Vietnam era occur? Who gains from that military service? What can we learn from the US role in Vietnam? What has the Government learned from the Vietnam war that they are strategically using to be able to commit US troops to achieve policy goals established by the US Government without the resistance that occurred during that Vietnam era? What role does control over energy resources play in the choice to use military force? These are just a few questions.

One of the three parents who origi-

nally called, called again but this time requesting a meeting with the building principal. She wanted me to either change the content of my class or she wanted to pull her child from my class. We discussed the issue for at least an hour. She thought that I needed to provide more "balance." When pressured to identify concrete things that would make the class more balanced she could not. I told her that I thought that the level of discussion in class created an environment where her son could hear multiple opinions. I said that I think her son would benefit more from being in a class that took a position than a class that claimed to be neutral. As Howard Zinn says, "You can't be neutral on a moving train." In the end, the parent admitted that she had learned from the material I was providing in class and from her discussions with her son. She decided to keep her child in the classroom despite deep reservations. The final comment that sticks in my head was her concern that she may have to accept the fact that her son may have ideas different from her own. How would I have responded if my child was in a class where the teacher was using material in class that I thought was an incorrect analysis?

Michigan as well as most other states has a standardized test. It is called the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). The MEAP is typically administered in the spring but retakes of the MEAP are offered in the fall. The Social Studies MEAP retake test happened to land right after the September 11th attacks. The State had instructed all schools administering the Social Studies MEAP retake tests to staple together several pages. The information hidden on these stapled pages dealt with the issue of airline security, despite the fact that this was a front page news at the time. It was one of the most relevant things I have ever seen on the

tests. I guess its relevance came too close to dealing with real issues. Standardized curriculum and standardized tests obviously should not address significant issues that affect lives. (In fact, I performed a search of the state curriculum for the concepts of exploitation, oppression and capitalism but none of them were used in the state curriculum.)

This was an incredibly difficult time to teach. However, I made it through another year and here I am again with this year's current events thrusting themselves into the classroom.

Today is October 21, 2002. The President has just announced that regime change no longer means the regime change he originally claimed. If the dictator of Iraq changes his military weaponry to the expectations of the UN, then that would constitute a change in the regime, or regime change. However, Bush

does not think the prison-liberating Saddam Hussein is capable of such change. In this shifting context, I have tried to create a unit providing general and particular information regarding the Bush administration's drive for war against Iraq.

Despite the fact that I am teaching very similar material, the kids and community have not been as defensive of the United States. I have not received any phone calls from angry parents who think that I am trying to subvert this 'great nation' or brainwash their children into communists. Will this change if (when?) the United States attacks Iraq?

The walls continuously close in on our freedom to teach and the freedom to learn. Now more than ever, I feel it to be incredibly important that teachers teach against the elite and towards a more democratic and equal society. ■



The Rouge Forum has been chronicling the Perpetual Oil War with news articles and analysis from around the world. It is a valuable source of information for students, teachers, parents and community members. Check it out at <http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/noblood.html>

THE NEW CRUSADE: AMERICA'S WAR ON TERRORISM

The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism, Monthly Review Press, 2002, \$17.95, 160 pages. By: Rahul Mahajan

Reviewed by E. Wayne Ross

Civic-minded political culture is an endangered species in the United States. The apathetic, cynical, and disconnected electorate is often pointed to as the best evidence of the decline of participatory democracy. But the state of the electorate is really more a symptom than a cause. The heart of the problem is the incredible shrinking spectrum of political debate.

In a 1994 interview, Noam Chomsky, an MIT linguistics professor and political activist, illustrated the shriveled state of political perspective in the US with his comment that, "When you read John Dewey today, or Thomas Jefferson [the two leading philosophers of democracy in US history], their work sounds like that of some crazed Marxist lunatic."

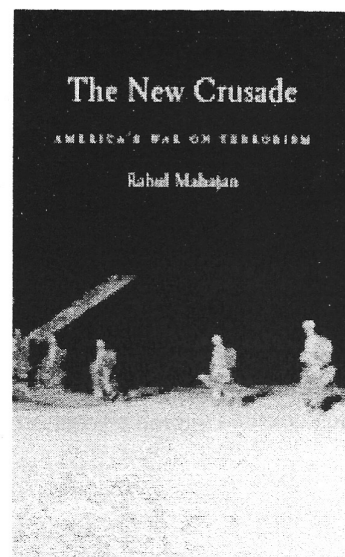
There is no doubt that the heinous attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 transformed US and global politics in many ways. But genuine participatory democracy—long a victim of domestic policies aimed at creating consumers rather than communities, shopping malls rather than libraries—is now further constrained by policies that value "security" over freedoms and a news media so narrowly focused on elite interests that it reduces the capacity for

the rest of us to rule our lives in democratic fashion. And globally, US foreign policy continues to undermine democracy, quash human rights and serve the interested of the wealthy few.

Digging beneath the superficial media representations of the war on terror and the recent history of US foreign policy, *The New Crusade* examines the myths that surround the war on terrorism and the ways they are used to benefit a small elite (at home and abroad). In the tradition of Chomsky's *Necessary Illusions* and *Manufacturing Consent*, Mahajan demonstrates how accepted accounts of the causes of the US military intervention in Afghanistan, the conduct of the war, and its consequences have been systematically distorted and explores the future directions of the war on terrorism.

Three basic questions are at the heart of this well-research and carefully argued polemic: (1) What measure of truth is there in the version of the events, causes, and consequences of the war on terror as conveyed by the US government and the mainstream media? (2) What is the larger historical context in which the war on terrorism can be understood and assessed? and (3) What can we expect to happen next, now that the military conquest of Afghanistan has been completed? Each section of this slim book takes on one of these broad questions in a series short, jargon-free chapters.

The core of the book examines 19 "myths and realities" of the war on



terrorism in assessing the "truth value" of the government and mainstream accounts. Here is a sampling of the myths that Mahajan critiques:

• *The 9-11 attacks constitute another Pearl Harbor.* Mahajan argues that in some ways this analogy doesn't go far enough (Pearl Harbor, a military base, was part of a colony annexed by the US; New York and Washington, DC are the economic and political centers of the US). In other ways, the analogy is overwrought (Japan was a state with a powerful economy and military with the means to dominate and exploit Southeast Asia; the perpetrators of the 9-11 attack were 19 men in a relatively small network with access to modest resources). It's not difficult to surmise, however, that the invocation of Pearl Harbor was a way to galvanize the nation for perpetual

war.

• *They “hate us for our freedom”.* No, they hate us because we don't know why they hate us, and because even now we don't want to learn.

• *The attack on Afghanistan is an act of self-defense.* Mahajan lays various elements of international law to demonstrate that the criteria for self-defense are more stringent than generally represented. For military action to be self-defense, for example, there must be an imminent threat of attack, no timely alternatives, and targeted specifically at those who pose the threat. Excepting self-defense, the UN Charter does not authorize the use of force by any state against any other, nor has any Security Council resolution.

• *The US is engaged in multilateralism, diplomacy, and restraint.* There is no broad international support for the entire US agenda. Instead, on any particular issue, countries that can be brow-beaten into assisting are. Bush's pe-remptory assured that Osama bin Laden would not be turned over through diplomatic channels. Mahajan argues that the Bush administration deliberately sought war, not peaceful resolution, a violation of the UN Charter and replication of the Clinton administration's strategy in the Balkans that lead to the bombing of Serbia.

• *The war in Afghanistan is a humanitarian war.* The truth is, according to Mahajan, that while the Taliban were in power the US greatly aggravated the existing humanitarian crisis, only allowing significant amounts of aid after the Taliban left. The main obstacle to getting aid into the country in the fall of 2001 was the US government—which pursued

tactics suggestive of an attempt to impose starvation and suffering as a means of political coercion. Humanitarian successes since then are largely due to international relief agencies, not the US.

• *There is no such thing as a surgical strike with regard to a US bombing campaign.* Mahajan cites estimates that the number of civilians killed per bomb in Afghanistan is about four times that killed in Serbia, even though the proportion of “precision” weapons used in Afghanistan is twice as high.

This is not a war on terrorism, rather it is a war fought against certain terrorists.

• *The US is fighting for our security.* Rather, Mahajan argues, there is a pattern of opportunistic invocation of security to sell policies that have nothing to do with security and sometimes clearly increase risks to security. For example, bombing Afghanistan (which was notable for an almost complete lack of anti-American sentiment) is widely understood as increasing the threat of terrorist attacks in the future. The Taliban and Osama bin Laden are “side effects” of previous CIA operations, which helped create, train, and arm the groups of militants that were involved in the September 11 attacks.

For Mahajan the realities of the war on terrorism include:

• *The war is about power, not revenge.* While the professed motivation of the war in Afghanistan is to get bin Laden, the most important reason for the war is imperial credibility. In order to maintain its status as the one, unilateralist, interventionist superpower the US government had to attack something. Secondly, a US-controlled client state in Afghanistan would give the US corporations great leverage over the oil and gas resources of the Caspian Basin. Mahajan convincingly argues that this war is about the extension and maintenance of US government/corporate power, at home and abroad, every other motive is strictly secondary.

• *This is not a war on terrorism, rather it is a war fought against certain terrorists.* The Northern Alliance, US allies in the war in Afghanistan, are as much terrorists as the Taliban and calls on the US by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan not to put the Northern Alliance in power went unheeded. Since the Northern Alliance starting taking over allegations of crimes against humanity have been rampant. Mahajan situates the US action in Afghanistan as part of a larger strategy of abetting state terrorism in Russia (against Chechen separatists); China (against Islamic fundamentalist and Uigur separatists); Pakistan (support for terrorists who are responsible for forcing the majority of the Hindu population to flee Kashmir); as well as the work of the School of the Americas in Latin America, Lebanese Phalangists, Haitian death squads, and Israeli state terrorism.

• *Restricting freedom in the defense of freedom.* The real attack on freedom came from the Bush admin-

istration, particularly Attorney General John Ashcroft, who opportunistically rammed through an agenda based more on control and power than security. The USA PATRIOT Act abrogates fundamental civil liberties, allowing “roving wiretap”, “no-tell” searches and created a new category of crime— “domestic terrorism”—which is so broadly defined it could include acts such as throwing a rock through a window. As Mahajan notes, the USA PATRIOT Act extends the deprivation of basic rights of immigrants, which began in the Clinton administration, including the use of secret evidence in deportation hearing and extending to 7 days the length of time non-citizens can be held in custody without being charged with a crime. In combination with Bush’s executive order on the use of military tribunals the outlines of potential police state are evident.

• *The free press has reported for duty.* Virtually all of the media’s coverage has reinforced the existing prejudices of the American public about antiwar views as well as antiwar protesters; paid little attention to the oil connection; and consistently attempted to minimize the human impact of the war on Afghanistan. Tony Burman, executive director of the CBC in Canada compared US and British television coverage this way: “It’s like watching two different wars. The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) has focused very much on the humanitarian issues in the region,” while the US networks have “almost exclusively” stuck to Pentagon briefings. Mahajan contends that because of the media’s reliance on “official sources” as the standard of newsworthiness, alternative points of view are routinely excluded. While government and corporate interests rarely attempt to overt control of

journalists, they exert strong pressure toward self-censorship and encourage the acceptance of fundamental assumptions and parameters of those systems of power. As a result, despite the significant press freedoms in the US we have virtually no independent journalism. Despite the fact that the US is one of the freest societies in the world, our spectrum of political discourse is far more narrow than most of the world.

Mahajan makes a convincing case that as with other wars, the first casualty in the war on terrorism is the truth, or at least the whole truth. Perhaps more importantly Mahajan details the distinction between a “just cause” and a “just war.” The key issue, according to Mahajan, is recognition that the problem of terrorist networks is neither a military matter nor solely a criminal one. It is, rather, a combined political and criminal matter that requires a solution that addresses both elements. Mahajan argues that this is precisely the time to address the underlying issues of global suffering and injustice, that it is time for “a grand bargain”—lifting the sanctions on Iraq, ending military support for Israel unless it withdraws to its pre-1967 borders; and demilitarizing the Persian Gulf in exchange for the genuine support of the people in ending the threat of al-Qaeda brand terrorism. Instead of winning over the people that share the same concerns but not the same worldview, Mahajan concludes that, “the United States has chosen the most counterproductive thing possible, continuing as the arrogant, interventionist superpower and further victimizing some of the most wretched people on earth... In one of the most shameful spectacles in modern history, the richest and most powerful nation on earth pounded one of the poorest, most desolate nations on earth for months while proclaiming its virtue to the

world.”

In his account of the historical contexts of the war on terrorism, Mahajan deconstructs the elements of what he labels the “new white man’s burden,” that is justifying interventions on the grounds of protecting human rights or protecting “Third World” peoples from themselves. The war on terrorism, he argues has helped entrench US imperial ideology and taken the white man’s burden to a level that even Rudyard Kipling could not have imagined. Mahajan describes a massive economic assault lead by the US, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which has extracted the wealth from countries at the margins to increase the wealth, privilege, and control of First World elites.

Mahajan assess the “humanitarian intent” of US interventions in Iraq, where the US created conditions for disease (by destroying the country’s water supply) and then withheld treatment as tantamount to biological warfare. He goes on to examine how the US is “making Africa safe for the AIDS virus” as it protects the profits of pharmaceutical companies; details the tragic results of “humanitarian” interventions in Somalia, Kosovo, and Rwanda. The sad irony is that for most of us our “natural conclusion is that any talk of the United States as a brutal empire concerned with exploiting as much of the world as it can is sheer nonsense, and if we are to be blamed for anything it is for our naïve decency in a brutal world.” Mahajan makes a compelling case that the more appropriate conclusion is that the US and the West must start showing humanitarian intent in situations it does not try to control if it wants to have any credibility.

The New Crusade concludes with a look at “new directions” in war

CALIFORNIA PROFS FIGHT THE BIG TESTS

on terrorism. Mahajan guides the reader through scenarios for the various candidates for military intervention in the perpetual war Bush has promised: the establishment of a US beachhead in Central Asia (from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgystan) to Somalia, the Philippines, Israel and Palestine, and, of course, Iraq. Mahajan describes a future that involves more frequent military interventions, fewer attempts to placate international sensibilities, and the ever-present excuse of protecting American security. Of course, there will be more appeals to Western cultural supremacy, arms proliferation, and increases in military spending combined with a diminishment of democracy in the US—both in terms of the ability of individuals to affect decisions and in terms of the freedom of individuals to dissent from dominant institutions.

Mahajan leaves little doubt that the biggest threat to the world comes from “rouge states” that demonstrate no regard for international law or the international community by waging numerous wars of aggression and targeting civilian infrastructure and they must be contained. Clearly, the most dangerous of these “rouge states” is the United States. The war on terrorism has placed the nation and its character on a proving ground, but Mahajan is surprisingly optimistic about the future possibilities. American values (e.g., individual rights, the rule of law, the right to self-determination, due process, etc.) are seen by some as a mere cloak for self-interest. But Mahajan notes that these are values that have given hope to oppressed peoples around the world and, as history has proven, these are values that require an endless struggle to realize a better America. ■

By Rich Gibson,
San Diego State University

On September 10 2002 the San Diego State University Teacher Education Social Justice Cluster, representing more than one-third of the faculty of the School of Teacher Education, following considerable deliberation, passed this motion regarding California Senate Bill 2042:

“We reject the California Teacher Credential TPA/TPE process for which we initially volunteered, in good faith. Our experience with the process leads us to conclude, furthermore, that we must reject the standards that give the process motion, and the law which gives it force. We believe this is not a process to improve teacher education, but to regulate and standardize knowledge, not only in colleges of education, but throughout the university system, in a manner which is not in the best interest of our students nor ourselves. We believe the standards are partisan standards, the tests that will follow will be partisan tests, with profound problems of class, race, linguistic, culture, and disability bias.

Therefore, we call upon all college of education faculty in the California university and college system to follow our lead, to say no to this intrusion. Moreover, we will inform our students and the

community of our action in hopes that we will be able to spark additional resistance to the one-size-fits-all high-stakes testing movement which we believe will not improve assessment, but deepen segregation and promote the irrational worship of exam scores---scores which measure, above all, inherited capital.

We believe that while we are indeed working within a state teacher credential program, we have rights of academic freedom which not only make it possible for individuals to reject this proposed regulation, but which exist as a treasure to the community, reflecting the vital role of a university where people can gain and test knowledge in a reasonably free atmosphere, and to offer that society criticism which may not be possible elsewhere.”

This sharp statement of resistance came from a cluster of committed lifelong educators. Their declaration represented, for a great majority, their experience with a process which they came to believe, from their own participation within it, was designed in the manner of the old folk saying: “Come cooperate on my web whispers the spider to the fly.”

California Senate Bill 2042 is a design to net teacher preparation programs in the state. The law designates particular curricula and teaching meth-

ods, attached to a high-stakes exam directed by the Educational Testing Service, funded with nearly \$4 million in Title II money. Policy makers consider academic freedom to be irrelevant within teacher credentialing programs. No resources are allocated to make the massive educational transition, expected to be complete by the beginning of the academic year, 2004. Prime movers behind the bill were California liberals, like state senator Didi Alpert, strongly backed by the education unions.

The worst-case scenario, should SB 2042 be completely implemented, would be to regulate not only the liberal studies BA programs (geography, history, literature, etc.) in the California State University system (the “work horse of the university systems, compared to the race horse University of California schools,” according to the state chancellor), but also to tie up the graduate programs. Many CSU liberal studies programs are framed to feed the teacher credential programs. The MA programs are projected to be privatized, located in training centers tasked to slightly elevate the BA credential programs.

SDSU’s resistance to external standards, the regulations on university knowledge and the high-stakes tests that are their twins, is a recognition of deepening historical experience. Over the last decade, external school standards and tests were used in every instance to intensify segregation and to stifle creativity and freedom in schools. The regulations are designed to rob educators of their most precious commodity; time with unique students. Those who choose not to see this issue of resegregation cannot be dismissed as uninformed anymore, but must be considered incredibly naive or as partisans—on the side of segregation. At

issue now is: How can reason connect with power in order to forge a conscious movement that relates social change to education?

Shortly after the motion was passed, the SDSU College of Education withdrew from the California Teacher Credentialing pilot project for which they had initially volunteered.

Shortly after, parents and students at a nearby San Diego elementary school went on strike for a day against the regimentation of their classrooms via the county school “CEO’s” *Blueprint for Success*, a regimented project that stresses phonics-driven reading programs, and scripted mathematics, and excludes all else. This sharp action followed the efforts of parents, students and school workers in LaJolla, a wealthy area inside San Diego. These people threatened to withdraw their schools from the local system, to turn the schools into charter schools, if the CEO did not remove them from the *Blueprint* strictures of curricula regulations and high-stakes tests. Fearing that LaJolla’s birthright-based high test scores would be erased from the district averages, the CEO agreed that those with capital do not have to submit to the *Blueprint*. According to the CEO’s own statements, LaJolla was exempted from stupefying external standards because the area’s kids are born with the resources to get high scores.

So far, parents, students and teachers in poorer areas have not picked up the cry that the *Blueprint* is too dumb for their kids, and taken action. Experience elsewhere, like in Michigan where boycotts in wealthy suburbs in part laid the groundwork for a massive Detroit wildcat strike in 1999, indicates that there is more to come. Resistance among school workers is on the rise, a logical and requisite working out of

struggles at most work places where people not only must seek fair pay and benefits, but they also struggle for freedom and creativity. Soon, a dozen Chicago teachers will refuse to administer their “CASE” test, which like the rest of the Big Tests measures class and race, declares that to be science, then sharpens the lines of segregation. However, if education is going to be a place where people can construct real hope by using reason in a relatively free atmosphere in order to gain and test knowledge in a struggle for the truth, then this resistance is going to have to be elevated by deeper theory of how to transform what is to what ought to be.

Jean Anyon says in her penetrating book, *Ghetto Schooling*, that attempting school reform without performing social and economic reform in the communities that surround the school is like washing the air on one side of a screen door. It will not work. Dr. Anyon’s comment is an axiom, true on the face of it, and tested by history (Anyon, 1997, p. xv).

Unfortunately, Anyon concludes her book suggesting that the way to overcome the external regulation of education, and inequality, is for the rich to give up their money, to pay higher taxes, motivated by civic commitment. This will not happen. The on-the-job struggles initiated by school workers over the last decade, from the Detroit teachers’ wildcat strike of 1999 (“Books! Supplies! Lower Class Size!”), to the Ontario teachers strike, to the Oakland student strike (“Schools, Not Jails!”), the battle for control of the work place, particularly in schools, will be decisive in determining the limits of freedom, equality, and democracy, in the period ahead. ■

I Participate. You Participate. He, She, or They Participate. We All Participate.

They Profit. But Things Change! Join Us.

The Rouge Forum



**The Rouge Forum
is interested in teaching
and learning for a
democratic society. You
are invited to join us.**

The *Rouge Forum* is a group of educators, students, and parents seeking a democratic society. We are concerned about questions like these: How can we teach against racism, national chauvinism and sexism in an increasingly authoritarian and undemocratic society? How can we gain enough real power to keep our ideals and still teach—or learn? Whose interests shall school serve in a society that is ever more unequal? We are both research and action oriented. We want to learn about equality, democracy and social justice as we simultaneously struggle to bring into practice our present understanding of what that is. We seek to build a caring inclusive community which understands that an injury to one is an injury to all. At the same time, our caring community is going to need to deal decisively with an opposition that is sometimes ruthless.

We hope to demonstrate that the power necessary to win greater democracy will likely rise out of an organization that unites people in new ways—across union boundaries, across community lines, across the fences of race and sex/gender. We believe that good humor and friendships are a vital part of building this kind of organization, as important as theoretical clarity. Friendships allow us to understand that action always reveals errors—the key way we learn. We chose Brer Rabbit as a symbol to underline the good cheer that rightfully guides the struggle for justice. Every part of the world is our briar patch.

We are actively pushing back against and have had some successes in defeating the standardized test, the MEAP, in Michigan. We work in faculty organizations and unions to deal with the racism and sexism in academia. We try to press forward questions of class size, curricular freedom, anti-racist pedagogy, real inclusion, and a just tax system. As part of the *Whole Schooling Consortium*, we have sponsored forums in the U.S., uniting hundreds of people for democracy and equality.

There are no dues to join the Rouge Forum. Just email rougeforum@pipeline.com
Visit the Rouge Forum website at http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge_forum