

# Educational Perversion and Global Neo-Liberalism: A Marxist Critique

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**Abstract:** *This paper situates the increasing inequality in and between education, economic and social systems within the policy context of neo-liberal capitalism. Neo-liberal capitalism is a global phenomenon--restructuring of schooling and education has taken place internationally under pressure from international capitalist organisations and compliant governments. The effects of neo-liberal policies in increasing inequalities globally and nationally, in diminishing democratic accountability and in stifling critical thought is presented along with a critique of the theory of neo-liberalism in education policy--in particular how the marketisation of education has perverted the goals, motivations, methods, standards of excellence and standards of freedom in education. While the intrusion of capital into education threatens to undermine one of the best sites for its contestation there are various other arenas of resistance for cultural works to engage and these are briefly described.*

**Key words:** Marxism, Socialism, Capitalism, Neo-Liberalism, Globalisation, Resistance, Education, Business, Inequality, Social Class

## The Contexts of Educational Change

The current anti-egalitarian education system needs to be contextualised in two ways: (1) the ideological and policy context, and (2) the global/spatial context. The restructuring of the schooling and education systems across the world is part of the ideological and policy offensive by neo-liberal Capital. The privatisation of public services, the capitalisation and commodification of humanity and the global demands of the agencies of international capital--backed by destabilisation of non-conforming governments and, ultimately, the armed cavalries of the USA and its surrogates--have resulted in the near-global (if not universal) establishment of competitive markets in public services such as education. These education markets are marked by selection, exclusion and are accompanied by and situated within the rampant--indeed, exponential--growth of national and international inequalities.

It is important to look at the big picture. Markets in education, so-called 'parental choice' of a diverse range of schools (or, in parts of the globe, the 'choice' as to whether to send children to school or not), privatisation of schools and other education providers, and the cutting of state subsidies to education and other public services are only a part of the educational and anti-public welfare strategy of the capitalist class.

National and global capitalisms wish to cut public expenditure. They have generally succeeded. They do this because public services are expensive. Cuts in public expenditure serve to reduce taxes on profits, which in turn increases profits from capital accumulation. In addition, the capitalist class in Britain and the USA have: (1) a Business Plan *for* Education: this centres on socially producing labour-power (people's capacity to labour) for capitalist enterprises; (2) a Business Plan *in* Education: this centre on setting business 'free' in education for profit-making; and (3) a Business Plan for Educational Businesses: this is a plan for British and US based Edubusinesses to profit from international privatising activities.

## The Current Neo-liberal Project of Global Capitalism

The fundamental principle of Capitalism is the sanctification of private (or, corporate) profit based on the extraction of surplus labour (unpaid labor-time) as surplus value from the labor-power of workers. It is a creed and practice of (racialized and gendered) class exploitation, exploitation by the Capitalist class of those who provide the profits through their labor, the national and international working class.[1](#)

As Raduntz (forthcoming) argues,

globalisation is not a qualitatively new phenomenon but a tendency which has always been integral to capitalism's growth. . . . Within the Marxist paradigm there is growing recognition of the relevance of Marx's account expressed in the *Communist Manifesto* that globalisation is the predictable outcome of capitalism's expansionary tendencies evident since its emergence as a viable form of society (Raduntz, 2002a).[2](#)

For neo-liberals, 'profit is God', not the public good. Capitalism is not kind. Plutocrats are not, essentially, philanthropic. In Capitalism it is the insatiable demand for profit that is the motor for policy, not public or social or common weal, or good. With great power comes great irresponsibility. Thus privatised utilities, such as the railway system, health and education services, and water supplies, are run to maximise the shareholders' profits,

rather than to provide a public service,<sup>3</sup> and sustainable development of Third World national economic integrity and growth. These are not on the agenda of globalizing neo-liberal Capital.

McMurtry (1999) describes 'the Pathologization of the Market Model'. He suggests that the so-called 'free-market model' is not a free market at all, that to argue for a 'free market' in anything these days is a delusion: the 'market model' that we have today is really the system that benefits the 'global corporate market'. This is a system where the rules are rigged to favour huge multinational and transnational corporations that take-over, destroy or incorporate (hence the 'cancer' stage of capitalism) small businesses, innovators, etc. that are potential competitors.

Indeed, it is a system where the rules are flouted by the USA and the European Union, which continue to subsidise, for example, their own agricultural industries, while demanding that states receiving IMF or World Bank funding throw their markets open (to be devastated by subsidised EU and US imports).<sup>4</sup> Thus, opening education to the market, in the long run, will open it to the corporate giants, in particular Anglo-American based transnational companies--who will run it in their own interests.

Rikowski (e.g. 2001a, 2002a, 2002b) and others (e.g. Coates, 2001; Robertson, Bonal and Dale, 2001, Mojab, 2001, Pilger, 2002a) argue that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other 'global clubs for the mega-capitalists' are setting up this agenda in education across the globe, primarily through the developing operationalizing and widening sectoral remit of the GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

### **What Neo-liberalism Demands**

The difference between classic (laissez-faire) liberalism of the mid-nineteenth century Britain, and the neo-liberalism of today, based on the views of the neo-liberal theorist Hayek, is that the former wanted to roll back the state, to let private enterprise make profits relatively unhindered by legislation (e.g. safety at work, trade union rights, minimum wage), and unhindered by the tax costs of a welfare state.

On the other hand, *neo*-liberalism demands a strong state to promote its interests, hence Andrew Gamble's (1988) depiction of the Thatcherite polity as *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism*. The strong Interventionist State is needed by capital particularly in the field of education and training--in the field of producing an ideologically compliant but technically skilled workforce. The social production of labour-power is crucial for capitalism. It needs to extract as much surplus value as it can from the labour power of workers, as they transform labour capacity into labour in commodity-producing labour processes.

The current globally dominant form of Capitalism, neo-liberalism, requires the following within national states:

1. The control of inflation should be controlled by interest rates, preferably by an independent central bank.
2. The balancing of budgets, which should be used to influence demand--or at any rate not to stimulate it.
3. The privatisation/Private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.
4. The provision of a Market in goods and services--including private

sector involvement in welfare, social, educational and other state services (such as air traffic control, prisons, policing, railways).

5. Within education the creation of 'opportunity' to acquire the means of education (though not necessarily education itself) and additional cultural Capital, through selection.

6. The relatively untrammelled selling and buying of labour power, for a 'flexible', poorly regulated labour market (Costello and Levidow, 2001), deregulation of the labour market-for labour flexibility (with consequences for education).

7. The restructuring of the management of the welfare state on the basis of a corporate managerialist model imported from the world of business. As well as the needs of the economy dictating the principal aims of school education, the world of business is also to supply a model of how it is to be provided and managed.

8. The suppression of oppositional critical thought and much autonomous thought and education.

9. Within a regime of denigration and humbling of publicly provided services.

10. Within a regime of cuts in the post-war Welfare State, the withdrawal of state subsidies and support, and low public expenditure.

Internationally, neo-liberalism requires that:

1. Barriers to international trade and capitalist enterprise should be removed

2. There should be a 'level playing field' for companies of any nationality within all sectors of national economies

3. Trade rules and regulations are necessary to underpin 'free' trade, with a system for penalising 'unfair' trade policies

### **Neo-Liberalism and Its Effects**

Neo-liberal policies both in the UK and globally have resulted in: (1) a loss of equity, economic and social justice; (2) a loss of democracy and democratic accountability, and (3) a loss of critical thought. Each of these effects is discussed below.

### ***The Growth of National and Global Inequalities***

Inequalities both between states and within states have increased dramatically during the era of global neo-liberalism. Global Capital, in its current Neo-liberal form in particular, leads to human degradation and inhumanity and increased social class inequalities within states and globally. These effects are increasing (racialized and gendered) social class inequality within states, increasing (racialized and gendered) social class inequality between states. The degradation and Capitalisation of humanity, including the environmental degradation impact primarily in a social class related manner. Those who can afford to buy clean water don't die of thirst or diarrhea.

Kagarlitsky has pointed out that 'globalisation does not mean the impotence of the state, but the rejection by the state of its social functions, in favour of repressive ones, and the ending of democratic freedoms' (2001, quoted in Pilger, 2002a, p. 5). Many commentators<sup>5</sup> have discussed the change since the mid-1970s in many advanced Capitalist economies from a social democratic/welfare statist/ Keynesian state to a neo-

liberal state, to what Gamble (1988) has termed *The Free Economy and the Strong State*. The strong state, the repressive apparatuses of the state, have, of course, been dramatically upgraded (in terms of surveillance, control, e-privacy, policing in its various forms) in the wake of September 11th 2001.<sup>6</sup>

Increasing inequalities, the impoverishment, and creation of a substantial underclass in Britain has also been well documented (e.g. Hill and Cole, 2001).<sup>7</sup> The ratio of chief executives' pay to average worker's pay stands at 35 to one in Britain. In the USA, it has climbed to 450 to one (from around 35 to one in the mid-1980s) (Hutton, 2001). Brenner has noted how in the Chief Executive Officers in the USA owned 2% of market capitalisation in 1992, yet by 2002 they owned 12%, 'the greatest of the appropriations by the expropriators' (Brenner, 2002a. See also Brenner, 2002b, 2002c).

The gap between the richest and the poorest in the USA, expressed in terms of the income of CEOs in relation to the poorest groups in society was 30:1 in 1970, 60:1 in 1990, and by 1997-98 had grown to 500:1--without perks (Miyoshi, 2002). Susan George (2001) has pointed out that

If workers had been rewarded like their chief executive officers they would be making an average \$110,000 a year, not \$23,000, and the minimum hourly wage in the US would be \$22 not \$5.15 (p.19)

The economic apartheid nature of American capitalism has been widely exposed (e.g. McLaren, 2000). For example, the top 1 percent of the richest people in the USA has financial resources equal to the bottom 95 percent.<sup>8</sup> In Brazil the richest 10% of the population are 78 times better off than the poorest 10%, the 20 biggest landowners own more land than the 3.3 million small farmers (Socialist Worker, 2002). The current form of globalisation is tightening rather than loosening the international poverty trap. Living standards in the least developed countries are now lower than thirty years ago. Three hundred million people live on less than a dollar a day.

Masao Miyoshi points out that the growth in inequalities between the world's richest and poorest countries has been exponential in the past 30 years. In 1900, the gap in per capita wealth between the richest countries and the Third World was around 5:1 and in 1970 it was still only 7:1. By 1990, however, the gap had grown to 260-360:1 and in 2002 wealth gap ratio was 470-500:1 (Miyoshi, 2002).

### ***Markets in Education***

Markets have exacerbated existing inequalities. There is considerable data on how poor schools have, by and large, gotten poorer (in terms of relative education results and in terms of total income) and how rich schools (in the same terms) have got richer. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998) examined the effects of the introduction of quasi-markets into education systems in USA, Sweden, England and Wales, Australia and New Zealand. Their book is a review of the research evidence. Their conclusion is that one of the results of marketizing education is that increasing 'parental choice' of schools, and/or setting up new types of schools, in effect increases school choice of parents and their children and thereby sets up or exacerbates racialized school hierarchies.

In the UK, for example, while in government 1979-1997, the Conservatives established a *competitive market* for consumers (children and their parents) by setting up new types of schools in addition to the local (state. i.e. public) primary school or the local

secondary comprehensive school. Thus introduced new types of school such as City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained schools, schools which removed themselves from the control of Local Authorities. And to confirm this creation of a 'quasi-' market in school choice, they extended the 'Parental Choice' of schools--letting parents, in effect, apply for any school anywhere in the country.

Not only that, but the Conservative governments also stopped redistributive, positive discrimination funding for schools. Decisions about funding were substantially taken out of the hands of the democratically elected local education authorities (LEAs) by the imposition of *per capita* funding for pupils/school students. So students in poor/disadvantaged areas in an LEA would receive *the same per capita funding* as 'rich kids'. Furthermore, this funding rose or fell according to intake numbers of pupils/students, itself affected by henceforth compulsorily publicised 'league table' performance according to pupil/student performance at various ages on SATS (Student Assessment Tasks) and 16+ examination results. (This 'equality of treatment' contrasts dramatically with the attempts, prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act, of many LEAs to secure more 'equality of opportunity' by spending more on those with greatest needs--a power partially restored in one of its social democratic policies by the New Labour government following its election in 1997).

The result of this 'school choice' is that inequalities between schools have increased because in many cases the 'parental choice' of schools has become the 'school's choice' of the most desirable parents and children--and rejection of others. 'Sink schools' have become more 'sink-like' as more favoured schools have picked the children they think are likely to be 'the cream of the crop'. Where selection exists, the sink schools just sink further and the privileged schools just become more privileged. Teachers in 'sink school' are publicly pilloried, and, under 'New Labour' the schools 'named and shamed' as 'Failing Schools', and, in some cases either re-opened with a new 'Superhead' as a 'Fresh Start School' (with dismissals of 'failing' teachers), or shut down.<sup>9</sup>

These Conservative government policies are classic manifestations of neo-liberal, free market ideology, including the transference of a substantial percentage of funding and of powers away from local education authorities to 'consumers' (in this case, schools). 'Ostensibly, at least, these represent a "rolling back" of central and local government's influence on what goes on in schools' (Troyna, 1995:141).

Conservative government/Party policy remained and remains a mixture of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. An aspect of its neo-conservatism is its 'equiphobia'--fear of equality (Myers in Troyna, 1995; c.f. Hill, 1997a), its hostility to agencies or apparatuses thought to be involved in promoting equality and equal opportunities--such as (democratically elected) Local Education Authorities (Gamble, 1988; Hill, 1997a, 1999a, 2001c).

New Labour's education policy modifies and extends Radical Right principles and anti-egalitarianism (Hill, 1999a, 2001c). Its policy for more *Competitiveness* (between schools, between parents, between, pupils/students, and between teachers) and *Selection* (by schools and by Universities) are a continuation, indeed, an extension, of most of the structural aspects of the 1988 Conservative Education Reform Act, in terms of the macro-structure and organisation of schooling. The Radical Right principle of competition between schools (which results in an increasing inequality between schools) and the principle of devolving more and more financial control to schools through local management of schools are all in keeping with preceding Conservative opposition to

comprehensive education and to the powers of LEAs. As are the ever-increasing provision of new types of school and attacks on 'mixed ability teaching' and the increased emphasis on the role/rule of Capital in education (see below). New Labour's neo-conservatism, echoing that of the Conservatives, also perpetuates 'the strong state' within 'the free economy' (i.e. the deregulated, low taxed, competitive, capital ultra-friendly economy) (to refer again to Andrew Gamble's classic text of 1988, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*).

Governments in Britain, USA, Australia, and New Zealand have marketized their school systems. Racialized social class patterns of inequality have increased. And at the level of University entry, the (racialized) class-based hierarchicalization of universities is exacerbated by 'top-up fees' for entry to elite universities, pricing the poor out of the system, or at least into the lower divisions of higher education. And, to control the state apparatuses of education, such marketization is controlled by heavy systems of surveillance and accountability.

Thus, with respect to the USA, Pauline Lipman (2000) notes

George W. Bush's "blueprint" to "reform" education, released in February 2001 (*No Child Left Behind*) (Bush, 2001), crystallizes key neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and business-oriented education policies. The main components of Bush's plan are mandatory, high-stakes testing and vouchers and other supports for privatizing schools'.

Lipman continues,

the major aspects of this Agenda and Policy are . . . 'standards, accountability, and regulation of schools, teachers and students and an explicit linkage of corporate interests with educational practices and goals.'

Mathison and Ross (2002: para 1.1) detail the many recommended interventions, both direct (The Business Agenda *IN* Education) and indirect (The Business Agenda *FOR* Education) by capital in the USA environment of corporate take-over of schools and universities:

In K-12 schools some examples are school choice plans (voucher systems, charter schools), comprehensive school designs based on business principles (such as economies of scale, standardization, cost efficiency, production line strategies), back to basics curricula, teacher merit pay, and strong systems of accountability. In universities some examples are the demand for common general education and core curricula (often not developed or supported by faculty), demands for common tests of student core knowledge, standardized tests of knowledge and skill for professional areas, promotion of "classic" education, and elimination of "new" content areas such as women's studies, post-modernism, and multiculturalism.

On an international level, diktats [?] by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other agencies of international capital have actually resulted in the actual disappearance of formerly free nationally funded schooling and other education (and welfare, public utility) services.

*The Growth of Undemocratic (Un)accountability.* Within education and other public services business values and interests are increasingly substituted for democratic accountability and the collective voice. This applies at the local level, where, in Britain for example, private companies--national or transnational--variously build, own, run and govern state schools and other sections of local government educational services (Hatcher and Hirtt, 1999; Hatcher, 2001, 2002). As Wilson (2002:12) asks,

There is an important democratic question here. Is it right to allow private providers of educational services based outside Britain [and, I would add, inside Britain, too, indeed, wherever they are based]? In the event of abuse or corruption, where and how would those guilty be held to account? . . . Who is the guarantor of 'the last resort'?

This anti-democratisation applies too at national levels. As Barry Coates has pointed out, 'GATS locks countries into a system of rules that means it is effectively impossible for governments to change policy, or for voters to elect a new government that has different policies' (2001, p. 28).

*The Loss of Critical Thought.* The increasing subordination of education, including university education, and its commodification, have been well-documented.<sup>10</sup> One aspect is that, other than at elite institutions, where the student intake is the wealthiest and from the most elite backgrounds, there is little scope for critical thought. In my own work, I have examined how the British government has, in effect, expelled most potentially critical aspects of education--such as sociological and political examination of schooling and education, along with questions of social class, 'race' and gender--from the national curriculum, for what is now termed 'teacher training'. It was formerly called 'teacher education'. The change in nomenclature is important both symbolically and in terms of actual accurate descriptiveness of the new, 'safe', sanitised and detheorised education and training of new teachers.<sup>11</sup>

McMurtry (1991) describes the philosophical incompatibility between the demands of capital and the demands of education, *inter alia*, with respect to critical thought. Governments throughout the world are resolving this incompatibility more and more on terms favourable to capital. One example in England and Wales is the swathe of redundancies/dismissals of teacher educators specialising in the sociology, politics and contexts of education following the conforming of teacher education, the imposition of a skills-based rigidly monitored national curriculum for teacher training in 1992/ 1993. One dismissal was my own. At a stroke, numerous critical teacher educators were removed or displaced. So too were their materials/resources--no longer wanted by the government. Thus, at the College I was dismissed from, the 'Centre for Racial Equality' was closed down--its resources no longer required by the new technicist, de-theorised, anti-critical 'teacher training' curriculum.<sup>12</sup>

## **Education, Class, and Capital**

Glenn Rikowski's work, such as *The Battle in Seattle* (2001a), develops a Marxist analysis based on an analysis of 'labour power'. With respect to education, he suggests that teachers are the most dangerous of workers because they have a special role in shaping, developing and forcing *the single commodity on which the whole capitalist system rests: labour-power*. In the capitalist labour process, labour-power is transformed into value-creating *labour*, and, at a certain point, *surplus value*--value over-and-above that represented in the worker's wage--is created. *Surplus-value* is the first form of the



existence of capital. It is the *lifeblood of capital*. Without it, capital could not be transformed into money, on sale of the commodities that incorporate value, and hence the capitalist could not purchase the necessary raw materials, means of production and labour-power to set the whole cycle in motion once more. But most importantly for the capitalist is that part of the surplus-value that forms his or her *profit*--and it is this that drives the capitalist. It is this that defines the personal *agency of the capitalist!*

Teachers are dangerous because *they are intimately connected with the social production of labour-power*, equipping students with skills, competences, abilities, knowledge and the attitudes and personal qualities that *can be expressed and expended in the capitalist labour process*. Teachers are guardians of the quality of labour-power! This potential, latent power of teachers explains why representatives of the State might have sleepless nights worrying about the role of teacher in ensuring that the labourers of the future are delivered to workplaces throughout the national capital<sup>13</sup> *of the highest possible quality*.

Rikowski suggests that the State needs to control the process for two reasons. First to try to ensure that this occurs. Secondly, to try to ensure that modes of pedagogy that are antithetical to labour-power production *do not and cannot exist*. In particular, it becomes clear, on this analysis, that the capitalist State will seek to destroy any forms of pedagogy *that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament--to create an awareness of themselves as future labour-powers and to underpin this awareness with critical insight that seeks to undermine the smooth running of the social production of labour-power*. This fear entails strict control of teacher education and training, of the curriculum, of educational research.

### **Capitalism's Business Plan for Education**

How, in more detail, do education markets fit into the grand plan for schooling and education? What is capitalism's 'Business Plan for Education'?

In pursuit of these agendas, New Public Managerialism--the importation into the old public services of the language and management style of private Capital--have replaced the ethic and language and style of public service and duty. Education as a social institution has been subordinated to international market goals including the language and self-conceptualisation of educators themselves (see Mulderrig, 2002; Levidow, 2002). Mulderrig shows how

[e]ducation is theoretically positioned in terms of its relationship with the economy and broader state policy (where) an instrumental rationality underlies education policy discourse, manifested in the pervasive rhetoric and values of the market in the representation of educational participants and practices.

She theorizes this

. . . as an indicator of a general shift towards the commodification of education and the concomitant consumerisation of social actors [within which] discourse plays a significant role in constructing and legitimizing post-welfare learning policy as a key aspect of the ongoing project of globalization.<sup>14</sup>

And *The Campaign for the Future of Higher Education* slams the commodification of higher education by pointing out that

Students are neither customers nor clients; academics neither facilitators nor a pizza delivery service. Universities are not businesses; producing consumer goods. Knowledge and thought are not commodities, to be purchased as items of consumption, whether conspicuous or not, or consumed and therefore finished with, whether on the hoof as take-away snacks or in more leisurely fashion. Education is not something which can be "delivered", consumed and crossed off the list. Rather, it is a continuing and reflective process, an essential component of any worthwhile life--the very antithesis of a commodity (CFHE, 2003)

Within Universities and vocational education the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market, where lecturers 'deliver the product', 'operationalize delivery' and 'facilitate clients' learning', within a regime of 'quality management and enhancement', where students have become 'customers' selecting 'modules' on a pick'n'mix basis, where 'skill development' at Universities has surged in importance to the derogation of the development of critical thought.

Richard Hatcher (2001, 2002) shows how capital/business has two major aims for schools. The first aim is to ensure that schooling and education engage in ideological and economic reproduction. National education and training policies in the business agenda *FOR* education are of increasing importance for national capital. In an era of global capital, this is one of the few remaining areas for national state intervention--it is *the* site, suggests Hatcher, where a state can make a difference.

The second aim--the Business Agenda *IN* schools--is for private enterprise, private capitalists, to make money out of it, to make private profit out of it, to control it.

### **The Business Agenda FOR Schools**

Business wants education fit for business--to make schooling and higher education subordinate to the personality, ideological and economic requirements of capital, to make sure schools produce compliant, ideologically indoctrinated, pro-capitalist, effective workers.

This first agenda constitutes a broad transnational consensus about the set of reforms needed for schools to meet employers' needs in terms of the efficiency with which they produce the future workforce. The business agenda *for* schools is increasingly transnational, generated and disseminated through key organizations of the international economic and political elite such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In that global context there is a project for education at the European level, which represents the specific agenda of the dominant European economic and political interests. It is expressed in, for example, the various reports of the European Round Table (ERT) of industrialists, a pressure group of 45 leaders of major European companies from 16 countries, and it has become the motive force of the education policies of the European Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Monbiot quotes the ERT as saying 'the provision of education is a market opportunity and should be treated as such (ERT, 1998, cited in Monbiot, 2001, p. 331. See also Hatcher and Hirtt, 1999).

### **The Business Agenda IN Schools**

Secondly, business wants to make profits from education and other privatised public services such as water supply and healthcare.

The work of Molnar (e.g. 2001), Richard (e.g. 1999, 2001), Monbiot (e.g. 2000, 2001, 2002), Robertson (e.g. Robertson, Bonal and Dale, 2001) in the USA and by Rikowski in Britain (2001a, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, 2003. See also Hill, 1999a) highlight another aspect of what national and multinational Capital wants from schooling and education--it wants profits through owning and controlling them. Thus privatisation of schools and educational services is becoming 'big business' (so, too, are libraries--see Ruth Rikowski, 2002). As the weekly radical newsletter *Schnews* exclaims, in an April 2000 article entitled 'The Coca-Cola Kids',

"Education in the West is fast becoming indistinguishable from any other industry"

-- Chris Brazier, Chair of Governors of an Oxford primary school

Privatisation of education was this week put in the spotlight with the National Union of Teachers threatening strike action not just over performance related pay, but also over big business moving in on the classroom. But what the hell is 'Best Value', 'Out-sourcing', 'Action Zones', and the 'Private Finance Initiative'? Shall we peer into the New Labour Dictionary of Gobbledee Gook to find out just what it all means?

How about "Privatisation, privatisation, privatisation." Yes, New Labour are busy selling off everything--they just dress it up in fancy jargon to try and pull the wool over our eyes. Still, why would private companies want to move into education? McDonalds' 'operations manual' gives us a clue: "Schools offer excellent opportunities. Not only are they a high traffic (sales) generator, but students are some of the best customers you could have." And with £38 billion spent on education a year, there's a lot to play for. (*Schnews*, 2000)

Of course, ultimate responsibility within private company owned schools and colleges and libraries is not to children, students or the community--it is to the owners and the shareholders.

Such privatisation and loss of tax/publicly funded clean water, clinics and schools results directly in death, disease and dumbing down. (Bircham and Charlton, 2001).[15](#)

### **The Business Agenda Internationally**

Rikowski (2002a) examines the gathering pace of GATS and the British government's role in seeking to give British companies the lead in educational privatisation internationally.

He points out that since February 2000, a whole series of GATS negotiations have taken place. These discussions were consolidated in March 2001 through an intensive series of meetings, and there will be a final deadline of December 2004 for an agreement on a strengthened GATS process. This explains the urgency regarding privatisation of public services in the UK today. As Matheson (2000) notes

Backed by the US and UK Governments, the WTO aims to liberalise the service sector further. The immediate impact would be the privatisation of some services that have so far been provided by governments. Governments would be obliged to sell off such services as housing, education and water. (p. 9, cited in Rikowski 2002b p. 14).

The drive to privatise public services is powered by a number of forces, but in terms of the GATS the urgency derives from two main considerations. First, home-grown operators need to be nurtured--and quickly--so that when a more powerful GATS process exists UK operators in education, health, social services and libraries can fend off foreign enterprises. This is not just because the Government believes that more of the profits from these privatised public services are likely to remain in the UK; it is primarily because of the need to 'sell' the idea of private companies running schools, hospitals, libraries and social services to the British public. Whilst French companies might be tolerated in providing electricity or water, the UK Government perceives there may be more of a problem with American or other nations' companies running schools as profit-making ventures.

Secondly, as Monbiot (2002) indicates, drawing on the work of Hatcher (2001), the Government is also mightily concerned that the fledgling UK businesses currently taking over our public services can develop rapidly into export earners. This is already happening. For example, the education business Nord Anglia is already exporting its services to Russia and the Ukraine as well as running schools and local education authority services in the UK. Many UK universities have franchised operations and a whole raft of deals with other colleges and universities in other countries. UK University Schools of Education generate income through consultancies that advise countries like Chile, Poland and Romania on how to restructure school systems. The Government is keen to maximise this export potential across all the public services.

The WTO has identified 160 service sectors, and British and US businesses would benefit particularly if the GATS could liberalise trade in services still further by incorporating currently 'public' services into their export drives.

In 2000, Britain exported £67 billion worth of services. New education, health, library, and social services business would provide 'new opportunities for this export trade to expand massively' (Tibbett, 2001, p. 11). Thus, 'international businesses have now seized on service provision as a money-making opportunity' (Matheson, 2000, p. 9). As the WTO Services Division Director David Hartridge said in a speech in 2000, '[GATS] can and will speed up the process of liberalisation and reform, and make it irreversible' (ibid.).

The pressure from corporations on the US, British and other EU governments to deliver on the GATS is colossal. As Allyson Pollock argues, '[business] sponsors and the Treasury are clear that the future of British business rests on trading in public services on an international scale regardless of the social costs' (Pollock, 2001).

Finally, the leading capitalist powers (the 'Quad'--the US, EU, Japan and Canada), driven on by major corporations and business interests, are

. . . trying to revise GATS so it could be used to overturn almost any legislation governing services from national to local level. . . . Particularly under threat from GATS are public services--health care, education,

energy, water and sanitation. . . . A revised GATS could give the commercial sector further access and could make existing privatizations effectively irreversible. (Sexton, 2001, p. 1)

This is what the end game is for the GATS timetable in late 2004, and this helps explain the British Government's determination to push through privatizations, to provide de-regulatory frameworks for state services (e.g. the recent Education Bill) and to nurture the growth of indigenous businesses that can virus public sector operations.

### **Neo-liberal Theory and Policy Perverting Education**

I now want to look at one theoretical and academic aspect of some neo-liberal arguments and suggest where they fall down. Neo-liberals such as James Tooley (2000, 2001) draw a number of unwarranted implications or conclusions about the role of the state in education and about the role of the market in education. These relate to their assumption that the market/privatisation is compatible with education.

But education is not a commodity, to be bought and sold. One can buy *the means* to an education, but not the hard graft of autonomous learning itself. John McMurtry (1991, pp. 211-214), among others, has noted that education and the capitalist market hold opposing *goals, motivations, methods, and standards of excellence*.

Firstly, the goals of education. McMurtry (1991) notes that private profit is acquired by a structure of appropriation that excludes others from its possession. The greater its accumulation by any private corporation, the more wealth others are excluded from in this kind of possession. This is what makes such ownership 'private'.

Education, in contrast, is acquired by a structure of appropriation that does *not* exclude others from its possession. On the contrary, education is furthered the more it is shared, and the more there is free and open access to its circulation. That is why learning that is not conveyed to others is deemed 'lost', 'wasted' or 'dead'. In direct opposition to market exchanges, educational changes flourish most with the unpaid gifts of others and develop the more they are *not* mediated by private possession or profit.

Secondly, *opposing motivations*. McMurtry notes that 'the determining motivation of the market is to satisfy the wants of whoever has the money to purchase the goods that are provided. The determining motivation of education is to develop sound understanding *whether it is wanted or not*' (my italics). 'The market by definition can only satisfy the motivations of those who have the money to buy the product it sells.

The place of education, on the other hand, remains a place of education insofar as it educates those whose motivation is to learn, independent of the money-demand they exercise in their learning'. In addition, 'development of understanding is necessarily growth of cognitive capacity; wherein satisfaction of consumer wants involves neither, and typically impedes both'.

Thirdly, opposing methods. 'The method of the market is to buy or sell the goods it has to offer to anyone for whatever price one can get. . . . The method of education is never to buy or sell the item it has to offer, but to require of all who would have it that they fulfil its requirements autonomously'. . . . Everything that is to be had on the market is acquired by the money paid for it. Nothing that is learned in education is acquired by the money paid for it'.

Fourthly, *opposing standards of excellence*. 'The measures of excellence in the market are (1) how well the product is made to sell; and (2) how problem-free the product is and remains for its buyers. The measures of excellence in education are (1) how disinterested and impartial its representations are; and (2) how deep and broad the problems it poses are to one who has it'. . . . The first works through 'one sided sales pitches . . . which work precisely because they are *not* understood', the second 'must rule out one-sided presentation, appetitive compulsion and manipulative conditioning'.

The last critical theoretical point I wish to make here in analysing the relationship between neo-liberalism and education is that the market suppresses critical thought and education itself. Clearly some aspects of the market wish to promote learning--the learning of skills considered appropriate to different strata in the labour market. The point here is that capital seeks to repress those aspects of critical thought, such as those embodied in critical pedagogy, in socialist/Marxist analysis, which are inimical to its own continuation.

Thus there is the suppression and compression of critical space in education today (Rikowski, 2003b). On the one hand capital requires educated and flexible workers, but on the other hand it cannot countenance workers thinking *fundamental critique* for themselves--or coming across it in schools, vocational education or universities. So free thinking, and oppositional thinking, has been chopped, curtailed, circumscribed.

Critical space for critical education studies and research is being compressed through curriculum control, through the remaking of human personality and through a gamut of ideological and repressive state apparatuses. This is especially so for fundamental critique: 'how the core processes and phenomena of capitalist society (value, capital, labour, labour-power, value-creation and capital accumulation and so on) generate contradictions and tensions in "everyday life--for individuals, groups, classes, societies and on an international scale' (Rikowski 2003 unpublished m/s).

Part of this repression is *The Naturalisation of Capital and the Denaturalisation of Dissent* (Hill, 20004a). As Peter McLaren notes, one of its greatest achievements is that Capital presents itself as natural, free and democratic,

as if it has now replaced the natural environment. It announces itself through its business leaders and politicians as coterminous with freedom, and indispensable to democracy such that any attack on Capitalism as exploitative or hypocritical becomes an attack on world freedom and democracy itself' (McLaren, 2000, p.32).

McMurtry (2001) considers 'America's New War' as the latest expression of a much deeper and wider terrorist campaign of an emergent totalitarian pattern of instituting world corporate rule with no limit of occupation or accountability beyond itself. He forcefully claims that the United States has effectively created a new form of totalitarianism. The old totalitarianism culture of the 'Big Lie' is marked by 'a pervasive overriding of the distinction between fact and fiction by saturating mass media falsehoods'. This Big Lie is an omnipervasive lie that 'is disseminated by round-the-clock, centrally controlled multi-media which are watched, read or heard by people across the globe day and night without break in the occupation of public consciousness instead of national territories'. McMurtry writes that 'in the old totalitarian culture of the Big Lie, the truth is hidden. In the new totalitarianism, there is no line between truth and falsehood. The truth is what people can be conditioned to believe'.

McMurtry (1991) concludes his analysis of the relationship between education and the market powerfully: 'this fundamental contradiction in standards of excellence leads, in turn, to *opposite standards of freedom*. Freedom in the market is the enjoyment of whatever one is able to buy from others with no questions asked, and profit from whatever one is able to sell to others with no requirement to answer to anyone else. Freedom in the place of education, on the other hand, is precisely the freedom to question, and to seek answers, whether it offends people's self-gratification or not'.

McMurtry succinctly relates his arguments above to the 'systematic reduction of the historically hard-won social institution of education to a commodity for private purchase and sale' (1991, p. 216). 'The commodification of education rules out the very critical freedom and academic rigour which education requires to be more than indoctrination (p. 215).

Much of my own work calls for critical education and for the development of teachers as critical transformative intellectuals. Big business and their government agents now call most of the shots in University research--hence the potential importance of independent radical think tanks and research units. Important, too, are the collective efforts of radical egalitarian and socialist political organisations and their publications and demonstrations--their fight-back against exploitation and oppression.[16](#)

## **Restraining and Resisting Neo-Liberalism**

There are three major restraining forces on the activities of neo-liberalism: infrastructural, consumer-related regulation, and legitimisation.

### **Infrastructural Restraints**

The first is the need for an educational, social, transport, welfare, housing, etc. infrastructure to enable workers to get to work, to be trained for different levels of the work-force, to be relatively fit and healthy. This restraint, though, is *minimal*--it can cope with extreme poverty and the existence of billions of humans at the margins of existence. It is a basic needs provision that says nothing. It has no implications at all for equality in society or in education. Indeed, as Pilger (2002a) points out, it has no implications even for the maintenance of human lives. In effect, the deprivations of neo-liberal globalizing capital condemns millions--in particular those in the Third World displaced by the collapse of national agricultural industries that are of no use as either producers or consumers--to death.

### **Regulating Capital**

The second restraint on capitalism is consumer dissatisfaction and consumer protection in the form of regulations. These, and inspectors of various sorts are criticised as 'red tape' and as bureaucrats. Yet without regulation, and enforcement in Britain, Mad Cow Disease and foot and mouth disease have flourished and been exported to continental Europe, and, following the privatisation of Railtrack in Britain, with its subsequent reduction of maintenance workforce and monitoring of safety, the number of dead in rail accidents has shot up.

State regulation operates against the freedom of capitalism to do totally as it pleases. Hence, in Britain, Conservative Party policy on schools and universities is to de-regulate them, to 'set them free', to allow them to charge what they want and run their own affairs.

Similarly with the 'anti-bureaucracy' policies of the Republican Party in the USA and its demands for privatised 'public sector' education and for education vouchers.

The 'regulatory' model can be weak or strong, though the state is far from neutral with respect to capital, seeking to maximise the profits and profitability of national capital.<sup>17</sup> It can demand only basic standards (perhaps failing to inspect regularly, and frequently open to corruption) or it can demand strong controls, including controls over profits, as, rarely, during some periods of social democratic rule by the Labour Party in Britain.

It is interesting that in a number of states such as Britain, some of the most vigorously enforced current standards are those in education, as noted with respect to the USA by Hursh 2001, and above Lipman (2000) and by Mathison and Ross (2002)--testimony perhaps to the crucial nature of the state apparatus of schooling, as noted above by Rikowski (2001a).

### **Resistance to and Delegitimation of Capital**

The third, and most powerful, restraint is that Capital (and the political parties they fund and influence) needs to persuade the people that neo-liberalism--competition, privatisation, poorer standards of public services, greater inequalities between rich and poor--are legitimate. If not, there is a delegitimation crisis, government and the existing system are seen through as grossly unfair and inhumane. The government and existing system, nationally and globally, may also be seen as in the pocket of the international and/or national ruling classes, impoverishing millions while 'fat cat' bosses and their politicians consume the surplus value produced by sweat shop deregulated workers--indeed the working classes *per se*, throughout the world.

To stop delegitimation and to ensure that the majority of the population consider the government and the economic system of private monopoly ownership is legitimate, the state uses the ideological apparatuses such as schools and universities to 'naturalise' capitalism--to make the existing status quo seem 'only natural', to hegemonize its 'common sense'.<sup>18</sup>

Articles such as this one are written to contest the legitimacy of government policy and its subordination to and participation in the neo-liberal project of global capital. Clearly for the European and North American eco-warriors Rikowski describes as *The Battle of Seattle* (2001a) and for various groups of socialists, trade unionists, social movements, greens, and groups such as the World Development Movement, Attac, and Globalise Resistance, the current system is not legitimate.

Nor is it so for groups of workers and others throughout the world, who see their governments bowing before the might of international capital, who see their national government elites and accompanying military cavalries and riot police seeking to ensure that all spheres of social life are incorporated within the orbit of global capital. Educators are implicated in the process, like everyone else. The school or university and other areas of cultural and ideological reproduction (such as newsrooms and film studios) are no hiding place.

Increasingly, across the globe, educational debate is turning in the economically rich world from debates about 'standards' and 'school effectiveness' to wider questions such as 'what is education for? And in the economically poorer world to questions of free access



to schooling and higher education--and why they do not have it any more where once it existed.

### The Resistant Role of Critical Cultural Workers

The Brazilian educator and political activist, Paulo Freire, argued that while there are exceptional academics and a handful of organizations dedicated to conducting research which serves egalitarian ends, not enough academics are working as critical 'cultural workers' who orient themselves toward concrete struggles in the public and political domains in order to extend the equality, liberty, and justice they defend.<sup>19</sup> He maintained that '[t]he movements outside are where more people who dream of social change are gathering,' but points out that there exists a degree of reserve on the part of academics in particular, to penetrate the media, participate in policy debates, or to permeate policy-making bodies.<sup>20</sup>

Freire went on to argue that if scholars, researchers, or educators want to transform education to serve democratic ends, they cannot simply limit their struggles to institutional spaces. They must also develop a desire to increase their political activity outside of the schools. To engage as critical cultural workers would require academics to politicize their research by becoming social actors who mobilize, develop political clarity, establish strategic alliances, and work closer to the nexus of power, or the 'real levers of transformation'.<sup>21</sup>

Critical transformative intellectuals seek to enable student teachers and teachers (and school students) to critically evaluate a range of salient perspectives and ideologies--including critical reflection itself--while showing a commitment to egalitarianism. For McLaren, 'critical pedagogy must . . . remain critical of its own presumed role as the metatruth of educational criticism' (2000, p. 184). This does not imply forced acceptance or silencing of contrary perspectives. But it *does* involve a privileging of egalitarian and emancipatory perspectives.

It is necessary to be quite clear here. This *does* mean adhering to what Burbules and Berk (1999, p. 54) have defined as 'critical pedagogy', as opposed to 'critical theory'. The difference is this, that the claim of *critical thinking* is the importance of thinking critically. Full stop! For critical thinking/critical thinkers, critical thinking itself is not necessarily about thinking politically. In contrast, for critical pedagogy, and for revolutionary critical pedagogy, this is a false distinction. That is, for critical pedagogues and revolutionary political pedagogues, disinterested critique/deconstruction, or indeed committed ethical moral critique and critical theory, need to be enacted politically. As Giroux and McLaren articulate, a transformative intellectual is someone 'who is capable of articulating emancipatory possibilities and *working towards their realization*' (emphasis added).<sup>22</sup> In more detail, Giroux and McLaren (1986) give their definition of a 'transformative intellectual' as:

one who exercises forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice which attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. We are also referring to one whose intellectual preferences are necessarily grounded in forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a preferential concern for the suffering and the struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed. Here we extend the traditional use of the intellectual as someone who is able to analyse

various interests and contradictions within society to someone capable of articulating emancipatory possibilities and working towards their realization. Teachers who assume the role of transformative intellectuals treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilise dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory (p. 215).

Giroux (1988) emphasizes the interrelationship between the political and the pedagogical:

Central to the category of transformative intellectual is the necessity of making the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogical. . . . Within this perspective, critical reflection and action become part of a fundamental social project to help students develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanise themselves as part of this struggle (pp. 127-128)

McLaren (2000) extends the 'critical education' project into 'revolutionary pedagogy', which is clearly based on a Marxist metanarrative. Revolutionary pedagogy

would place the liberation from race, class and gender oppression as the key goal for education for the new millennium. Education . . . so conceived would be dedicated to creating a citizenry dedicated to social justice and to the reinvention of social life based on democratic socialist ideals. (p. 196).

## **Arenas of Resistance**

What is to be done? In brief, there are at least *three arenas* of activity for critical intellectuals and oppositional educators.

The first arena, as Peter McLaren analyses powerfully (McLaren, 2000, 2002; Aguirre, 2001), is education, and, indeed, within other sites of cultural reproduction. Paula Allman (2001) puts it this way:

education has the potential to fuel the flames of resistance to global capitalism as well as the passion for socialist transformation--indeed, the potential to provide a spark that can ignite the desire for revolutionary democratic social transformation throughout the world.

However, the question of how far this transformative potential can be realised is the subject of considerable debate, for contemporary theory as well as practice. The autonomy and agency available to individual teachers, teacher educators, schools and other educational institutions is particularly challenged when faced with the structures of capital and its current neo-liberal project for education (as I argue in Hill, 2001a). It is necessary to highlight the phrase 'potential to fuel the flames of resistance', in Allman's quote above. Considerable caution is necessary when considering the degree of autonomy of educators (and, indeed, other cultural workers such as journalists and filmmakers) who attempt to fuel the flames of resistance.

I do not underestimate the limitations on the agency and autonomy of teachers, teacher educators, cultural workers and their sites, and indeed, to use concepts derived from Louis Althusser (1971), the very limited autonomy of the education policy/political

region of the state from the economic region of the state. There are, in many states, increasing restrictions on the ability of teachers to use their pedagogical spaces for emancipatory purposes. The repressive cards within the ideological state apparatuses are stacked against the possibilities of transformative change through initial teacher education and through schooling. Within school and universities in the USA and England/Wales and other states, there has been

- Increasing *concentration* of/on pro-capitalist formal curricula (in England and Wales this includes rigorously monitored and assessed formal national curricula in schooling and in 'teacher training'; in the USA it includes what is, in effect, the national curricula of 'high stakes testing' and the tyranny of the approved textbook (Apple)
- increased *marginalization* of resistant/anti-(capitalist) hegemonic alternative/oppositional curricula, texts, programs
- increasing *concentration* of/on pro-capit hidden/informal curricula and pedagogy
- increased *marginalization* of resistant/anti-(capitalist) hegemonic alternative/oppositional of resistant/anti-(capitalist) hegemonic alternative/oppositional education and educators--the compression and suppression of critical space.

Currently, the Capitalist class is ratcheting up the use of ideological state apparatuses in the media and education systems in particular to both 'naturalize' and promote capitalist social and economic relations on the one hand and to marginalize and demonize resistant/anti-(capitalist) hegemonic oppositional ideologies, actions and activists. In the current period of capitalism there is increasing and naked use of repressive economic, legal, military force globally to ensure compliance and subordination to multinational capital and its state agents. This includes repressive state apparatuses such as the police, goal/jail, legal systems, surveillance procedures.[23](#)

And for those who do protest, who do stick their heads above the parapet sometimes heads do get blown off--in dramatic or in undramatic but effective ways. In the period prior to and since the US-led invasion of Iraq, oppositional school students, college students and faculty have suffered something of a witch-hunt in the USA (McLaren et al 2003, p. 4; McLaren, 2003 in press). McLaren *et al* detail what they term 'witch-hunting' by teachers against students who participated in anti-war protests such as organizing teach-ins in both K-12 (Kindergarten to Grade 12 schooling) and higher education, witch hunts against students who express opinions critical of U.S. policy'. They give examples of disciplinary actions taken by school managements and by the police.

At a less dramatic, but more pervasive level, Gabbard describes the drip-drip, repression and sidelining of 'those who have challenged the viability of the market as a mode of social organization'. They receive no (positive) attention. 'Neither does the school afford the vast majority of children the opportunity to study the lives of people like themselves, much less the opportunity to study their *own* lives' (Gabbard, 2003, p. 71).

## Counter-Hegemonic Struggle

There is, however, space for counter-*hegemonic* struggle--sometimes (as now) narrower, sometimes (as in Western Europe and North America, the 1960s and 1970s) broader. There are clearly limitations on counter-hegemonic struggle. Just as clearly,

there is *some* potential for egalitarian transformative change. Whatever space does exist should be exploited. Whatever we can do, we must do, however fertile or unfertile the soil at any given moment in any particular place. But schools, colleges and newsrooms are not the only arenas of resistance.

The success of critical educators and cultural workers will be limited if their work is divorced from other arenas of progressive struggle. Successful resistance to neo-liberalism necessitates the development of pro-active debate both by, and within, the Radical Left. But debate alone is not sufficient. Successful resistance demands direct engagement with ideologies and programmes of both liberal pluralists (modernist or postmodernist) and with Radical Right in all the areas of the state and of civil society, in and through all the ideological and repressive state apparatuses.

The ideological intervention of teachers and other educators and cultural workers is likely to have a different impact than that of sections of the workforce less saliently engaged in ideological production and reproduction. But, by itself activity of transformative intellectual cultural/ideological workers, however skilful and committed, can have only a limited impact on an egalitarian transformation of capitalist society.

Working outside of the classroom on issues relating to education and its role in reproducing inequality and oppression is the second arena of resistance. Unless critical educators' actions within classrooms are linked to a grammar of resistance, such resistant and counter-hegemonic activity is likely to fall on relatively stony ground. Hence, using educational sites as arenas of cultural struggle and education as a vehicle for social transformation needs to conservative/capitalist times is premised upon a clear commitment to work with communities, parents and students, and with the trade unions and workers within those institutions.

When I say working 'with', I do not mean simply 'leading' or 'talking at'. Working with means 'learning from' as well, from the daily, material existence of the exploited classes. Ideally it means fulfilling the role of the organic intellectual, organically linked to and part of those groups. This also means working with communities--and their own hope, despair and anger--in developing the perception that schools, education and the media are sites of social, economic and ideological contestation. They are not 'neutral' or 'fair' or 'inevitable', but sites of economic, cultural and ideological domination, of class domination. It is, of course, important to develop awareness of the role of education in capital reproduction and in the reproduction of class relations--and of whatever counter-hegemonic and resistant potential it has.

While I do not share Rikowski's view that educators are '*the* most dangerous of workers', they/we can certainly be dangerous to capital and have effect in the struggle for economic and social justice.

Globally and nationally societies are developing, to a greater or lesser degree, critical educators, community activists, organic intellectuals, students and teachers whose feelings of outrage at economic and social class and racial and gender oppression fuel activism. Thus, the *third arena* for resistance is action across a broader spectrum, linking issues and experience within different economic and social sectors, linking different struggles.<sup>24</sup>

Educators participating in mass (or mini-) actions as part of a broader movement for economic and social justice is a key arena of resistance that must not be overlooked or

underestimated. Ideological intervention in classrooms and in other cultural sites can have dramatic effect, not least on some individuals and groups who are 'hailed' by resistant ideology. However, actualising that ideology--that opposition to oppressive an law, state or capitalist action; feeling the solidarity, feeling the blood stir, feeling the pride in action and joint learning that comes from that experience--can develop individual as well as collective confidence, understanding, commitment.

For example, the twomillion strong protest over the deregulation of labour laws by workers in Italy in March 2002 and follow up strikes in October 2000--as well as similar actions in Spain, South Korea, and the UK over proposed labour deregulation and over low pay--were massive learning experiences for the participants.

The mass protests against the WTO at Seattle, Genoa, London and Barcelona, together with the various mass events associated with the ESF (European Social Movement, such as the 400,000 strong march against War on Iraq on 8 November, 2002) and WSF (World Social Forum) in Porto Alegre (see Mertes, 2002; Sader, 2002) serve as a key context for linking the work of critical educators to broader movements for economic and social justice. In election after election in Latin America peoples are voting out neo-liberal Parties--in Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela[--]and the economic melt-down of a former beacon of neo-liberalism, Argentina, is helping create an anti-neo-liberal bloc of governments (see Sauniois, 2002). In the UK, the growing militancy of trade unions--not only over low pay but also against privatisation<sup>25</sup>--has led to the re-emergence of the Socialist Campaign Group, the election of a new left-wing breed of trade union leaders in Britain, and levels of strike action in Britain unprecedented since 1979.

These events have been and continue to be a learning experience for that who thought such mass actions--whether internationally or nationally--was a product of a bygone age.<sup>26</sup>

## Critical Action

While critical political dispositions and analyses such as those espoused by Marx and Freire can provide political direction in the struggle for social change, they have been challenged on a number of points. Of course, conservatives permanently challenge such ideas, but they are also challenged from positions that also claim a radical mantle. For example among feminist critiques, critical theory and some of the endeavours it supports have been accused (famously, for example by Liz Ellsworth) of 'repressive myths'.<sup>27</sup> In this critique, a notion such as 'empowerment', for instance, can be imbued with paternalism and perpetuate relations of domination whether it be in the classroom, in academic discourse, or in everyday life.

This type of criticism is frequently made. Thus In their *Reflective Teaching: an Introduction* (1996) Zeichner and Liston determinedly avoid taking a position on critical reflection (see Zeichner and Liston, 1987; Hill, 1997b), offering it as one of a range of types of reflection only. In their book there is absolutely no indication that critical reflection should be privileged or pursued. They claim that teacher education 'needs to be fair and honest' and that 'we have not written these texts to convince you to see schools and society as we do but rather to engage you in a consideration of crucial issues' (1996:x).

They continue,

When students and faculty engage in discussions of the social and political conditions of schooling and the effects of these conditions on students and schools, it is likely that the talk will be lively and that controversies will emerge. In this area there are no absolutely 'right' or 'wrong' answers (1996, p. xi).

Certainly, none is given in their book. For that reason this tradition could be termed liberal-pluralist, albeit potentially of a progressive, egalitarian variety. It certainly debars them (and others) from advancing programmes for transformation!

Aronowitz and Giroux associate some radical educators with critical pedagogy that

at its worst . . . comes perilously close to emulating the liberal democratic tradition in which teaching is reduced to getting students merely to express or access their own experiences. Teaching collapses in this case into a banal, unproblematic notion of facilitation, self-affirmation and self-consciousness. . . . It is not enough for teachers merely to affirm uncritically their student's histories, experiences and stories . . . [this] is to run the risk of idealising and romanticising them. (1991, p. 117; p. 130)

Aronowitz and Giroux also write,

Education workers must take seriously the articulation of a morality that posits a language of public life, of emancipatory community, and individual and social commitment. . . . A discourse on morality is important . . . it points to the need to educate students to fight and struggle in order to advance the discourse and principles of a critical democracy. (1991, p. 108)

In this enterprise,

educators need to take up the task of redefining educational leadership through forms of social criticism, civic courage, and public engagement that allow them to expand oppositional space--both within and outside of school--which increasingly challenges the ideological representation and relations of power that undermine democratic public life. (1991, p. 89)

Zeichner and Liston's 'neutrality' stance within the classroom abdicates the responsibility and potential they otherwise display in various of their analyses as committed radicals. But their neutrality is, of course, a political position. The commitment I am defending here is clearly at odds with the *apparent* disinterest (as noted above). Critical Transformative educators, those engaging in critical pedagogy/revolutionary critical pedagogy display a transparent and apparent interest and commitment. In my own teaching to undergraduates and to postgraduate students I make it quite clear that I am a Marxist with a class perspective. So, clearly, do many educators. But not enough. When, occasionally (around once per annum) a student suggests/asks if I am brainwashing them, I ask the student group just how many Marxist teachers they have ever been taught by, just how many publications--newspapers, books, magazines--they have read, and, on the other hand, just how many teachers and books and newspapers that they have come across that do *not* present Marxist/socialist analysis and arguments. Numerous books, such as such as David Hursh and E. Wayne Ross's *Democratic Social Education: Social Studies for Social Change* (2000) and Peter McLaren's fourth edition of

*Life in Schools* (2003) promote teachers and university educators to use Marxist analyses and to call on teachers at all levels to themselves call upon their/our students to study, consider, and, if in agreement, adopt, and act upon those analyses. Thus, to take one example, Hursh and Ross attempt to guide social studies educators as to what they can do to help build a democratic society in the face of current antidemocratic impulses of greed, individualism and intolerance. And in the writings of the Hillcole Group in England, aimed at school and university teachers, there are explicit delineations of a socialist education policy (Chitty/Hillcole Group, 1991) and an explicit development of socialist principles for education (Hillcole Group, 1997).

The efforts to empower people in certain contexts can simultaneously strengthen the privileged position of those dispensing it. In the same sense, a Freirean approach to permeating policy-making contexts *may* involve a form of imposition by cultural workers, whereby representation, organization, and collective struggle may not necessarily build understanding or political efficacy among groups of people, but merely essentialize or exoticize the other.

Finally, the work of the intellectual Left and those who advance more radical forms of democracy is often criticized for being driven by a 'politics of hope' that has lost its appeal. The desire for researchers and academics to become cultural workers and the struggle toward political mobilization of the Freirean nature is often nothing more than an unrealized ideal for those whose progressive ideas are continuously stifled in a political milieu overwhelmingly ruled by an egocentricity of elite culture and by an ideology of efficiency and control.

*However*, the concepts of critical cultural worker, of critical transformative intellectual and of revolutionary pedagogy extend the possibilities for dealing with policy conflicts--primarily, but not irreducibly, class conflict--and are essential to building a generation of citizens who will struggle *to transform* a society rife with economic and social injustice and oppression. Mike Cole, Glenn Rikowski, Peter McLaren and I, along with Marxist feminist writers such as Helen Colley, Teresa Ebert, Rachel Gorman, Jane Kelly, and Shahrzad Mojab,<sup>28</sup> have challenged the claims of postmodernist and postmodernist feminist writers such as Patti Lather in the USA and Elizabeth Atkinson in the UK that postmodernism and post-structuralism can be forces for macro-social change and social justice. We argue that Marxism--not postmodernism, fundamentalist religion, liberalism or neo-liberalism, conservatism, or indeed, social democracy--remains the most viable option in the pursuit of economic justice and social change.<sup>29</sup>

By engaging in critical transformative practice, we can work in solidarity with others as well as individually to mitigate and replace unjust policies and educational inequalities, and in doing so, build a fuller and richer democracy.

In keeping aloft ideals of plurality of thought, of economic and social justice and of dissent, teachers, teacher educators and the community must resist the ideological hijacking of our past, present and future. Teachers and teacher educators are too strategically valuable in students' education to have slick media panaceas and slanted ministerial programmes attempting to dragoon them into being uncritical functionaries of a conservative state and of the fundamentally and essentially anti-egalitarian and immoral society and education system reproduced by the capitalist state and its apparatuses.

Such radical cultural workers advocate education as an aspect of anti-capitalist social transformation where social justice, respect for difference, is not enough--we can respect

the beggar in the street as a human being. That does rather less for her/his future and the future of humanity in general than an economic system *not* based on the exploitation of labour power by ever-burgeoning capitalist expropriation of surplus value and ever increasing global immiseration and the imperialism of global capital and its governmental and supra-governmental agencies.<sup>30</sup>

Through well organised and focused non-sectarian campaigns organised around class and anti-capitalist issues committed to economic and social equality and justice and environmental sustainability, we can work towards local, national and international campaigns, towards an understanding that we are part of a massive force--the force of the international working class--with a shared understanding that, at the current time, it is the global neo-liberal form of capitalism that shatters the lives, bodies and dreams of billions. And that it can be replaced. As Harman (2002) suggests

what matters now is for this (new) generation (of activists) to connect with the great mass of ordinary workers who as well as suffering under the system have the collective strength to fight it (p. 40)

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a debate on, and rebuttal of, the thesis that 'class is dead', and/or that the working class has diminished to the point of political insignificance, see Callinicos and Harman, 1987; Callinicos, 1995; German, 1996; Hill, 1999b; Cole et al, 2001; Hill and Cole, 2001; Harman, 2002; Hill, Sanders and Hankin, 2002.

Outside the Marxist tradition, it is clear that many critics of class analysis (such as Jan Pakulski, 1995) confound class-consciousness with the fact of class--and tend to deduce the salience (some would argue, non-existence) of the latter from the 'absence' of the former. As noted earlier, the collapse of many traditional signifiers of 'working-classness' has led many to pronounce the demise of class yet, as Beverley Skeggs observes,



To abandon class as a theoretical tool does not mean that it does not exist anymore; only that some theorists do not value it. It does not mean . . . [working-class people] experience inequality any differently; rather, it would make it more difficult for them to identify and challenge the basis of the inequality which they experience. *Class inequality exists beyond its theoretical representation.* (Skeggs, 1991, p. 6; emphasis added).

Helen Raduntz has added,

Further, after Skeggs, I would hold that class inequality under capitalism is not merely a theoretical construct or something that is experienced but has an objective structural basis in the capitalist mode of production which finds expression in and permeates all forms of inequities, e.g. the uneven economic relations between producers and consumers, between developed and underdeveloped countries as well discriminatory practices of all kinds. Inequality in capitalist schooling is but one and an inevitable manifestation since capitalism depends on inequities, divisions and differences (Raduntz, 2002a).

The recognition by Marx that class consciousness is not necessarily or directly produced from the material and objective fact of class position enables neo-Marxists to acknowledge the wide range of contemporary influences that may (or may not) inform the subjective consciousness of identity--but in doing so, to retain the crucial reference to the basic economic determinant of social experience.

[2](#) See also Cole (1998, 2003b). It is not my purpose here to discuss contrasting theories of globalization. See Callinicos, (2001) and Raduntz (2002b, forthcoming) for a discussion. Raduntz's forthcoming paper argues that

The marketisation of education has all the hallmarks of an entrepreneurial takeover executed with blitzkrieg precision backed by the trappings of legality and plausibly justified on the grounds of national economic survival in the face of global competition. Dispossession-based marketisation is a strategy that has served capitalism well in its phenomenal growth and expansion.

For many educators and concerned citizens the dispossession of education and limiting its goals to profit maximization for the enrichment of the few is a travesty which requires resolute rectification.

Raduntz's argument is that

the motive for education's marketisation lies in attempts to revive the capitalist economy in the current period of flagging profits; that the likely consequence is a debased education limited in quality and scope despite the dependence of the globalizing economy on quality education.

She suggests that the contradiction opens the way for transformative action and change.

[3](#) In the wake of a series of fatal rail disasters it has become readily apparent that public safety has been subordinated to private profit. For example, between 1992 and 1997, the number of people employed in Britain's railways fell from 159,000 to 92,000 while the

number of trains increased. 'The numbers of workers permanently employed to maintain and renew the infrastructure fell from 31,000 to between 15,000 and 19,000 (Jack, 2001). So Capital downsizes its labour forces to upsize its profits. One result has been an unprecedented series of major fatal train crashes in Britain since the Thatcher government in Britain privatised the railways.

4 See the film *Life and Debt*, about the effect of the World Trade Organisation in decimating the Dairy Agriculture industry in Jamaica. (<<http://www.lifeanddebt.org.about>>). See also Bircham and Charlton's (2001) *Anti-Capitalism: a Guide to the Movement*. In that book, Coates (2001) gives the example of water privatisation in Bolivia.

In 1998 the water supply of Cochabamba, the third largest city in Bolivia, was privatised at the insistence of the World Bank. A British company, owned by the US Multinational, Bechtel, was given effective monopoly over their water supply. In order to make quick profits they raised prices to the point where some users were paying double the previous price and spending more on water than food. The company's monopoly even meant that it prohibited the collection of rainwater in roof tanks.

Coates continues

Not surprisingly there were protests--repeated mass demonstrations on the streets . . . people were killed, including a 17-year-old boy shot in the face. The Bolivian government was forced to reverse the privatisation. . . . Under GATS that kind of reversal would not be allowed to happen (p. 31)

5 For example. Dale, 1989; Jessop, 1990; Apple, 1993; Ainley, 1999, 2000; Fairclough, 2000; Hill, 2001a; Mulderrig, 2002.

6 See Hill, 2001d for a discussion of various types of government and state policy: neo-conservative, neo-liberal, 'Third Way', social democratic, socialist, Marxist. See Saltman and Gabbard, 2003; Hill, 2004a, for a discussion of the increasing role of the repressive and surveillance state apparatuses in society and in education.

7 See Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Hill, Sanders and Hankin, 2002 for recent data on (racialized and gendered) social class inequalities in income, wealth and educational attainment in England and Wales--and how much inequality has increased since 1979.

8 In the USA, for example, the economic apartheid nature of capitalism was depicted in the speech to the NAACP by Ralph Nader in July 2000.

I just bring to you a little fact from California. For those of you who are skeptical of people who tell you that things are getting better but we got to make them even better, try child poverty in California. In 1980, it was 15.2 percent; today it is 25.1 percent. And if you take near poverty--the children who are near poverty, who I would consider in poverty because I think the official levels of poverty are absurd--how can anyone support a four-member family on \$17,200 a year--before deductions, before the cost of getting to work, et cetera?

If you add the near poverty, 46 percent of all the children in California are in the category. This is not just a badge of shame for our country, the richest country in the world, it's a reflection of our inability to focus on the signal phenomena that is blocking justice, and that is the concentration of power and wealth in too few hands.

. . . And to give you a further illustration, the top 1 percent of the richest people in our country have wealth--financial wealth--equal to the bottom 95 percent. (cited in Hill, 2001b)

The Rouge Forum (Gibson, 2002) in the USA highlights similar inequalities citing data used by Martha Gimenez (2003) (derived, *inter alia*, from Johnston, 1999).

[9](#) See, for example, Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz, 1994; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Hill, 1997a, 2001d; Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998; Lauder *et al*, 1999; Thrupp, 1999, 2000; Ahonen, 2000; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Fecho, 2001.

[10](#) See, e.g. Levidow, 2002, Hill, 2001a, 2002b, 2004a, b, CFHE, 2003.

In capitalist society, 'well-being' is now equated with 'well-having'--we are what we consume. In educational terms our worth is how many years and credits we have accumulated. Indeed, being a student is now a serious game, to build up credits to get a better job. In the USA and England and Wales today, as in other advanced capitalist states, economic goals of education have sidelined social/societal/community goals, the traditional social democratic goals of education, and have also replaced education/learning for its own sake, the traditional liberal and liberal-progressive goals of education.

Among those who write prolifically about the commodification of education and the consumerization of society is Henry Giroux. See, for example, Giroux, 1997, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003; Giroux, H. and Myrssiades, K. (2001).

[11](#) See, for example, Hill, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2001a, 2004a.

[12](#) I have written about this in my 'Brief Autobiography of a Bolshie Dismissed' (Hill, 1997e and elsewhere (Hill, 1997d, f) and, more recently, in my presentation to the Rouge Forum 2003 Summer Institute, 'Analysis, Anger and Activism: Memoirs of a street-mobilising, podium-mounting, book-writing, labor union socialist activist'. (Hill, 2004c).

At a broader level, Mathison and Ross (2002, para 4.7) note that the

university's role as an independent institution is increasingly threatened by the interests of corporations in both subtle and obvious ways.

"Globalization,"--which Bertell Ollman (2001) defines as "another name for capitalism, but it's capitalism with the gloves off and on a world scale. It is capitalism at a time when all the old restrictions and inhibitions have been or are in the process of being put aside, a supremely self-confident capitalism, one without apparent rivals and therefore without a need to compromise or apologize"--has transformed internal and external relations of university from teaching and research to student aid policies and pouring rights for soft drink manufacturers. Decreased funding for higher education has made universities increasingly susceptible to the influence

of big money and threatens the academic freedom and direction of research.

13 Perhaps the easiest way of understanding the concept of 'national capital' is Rikowski's definition in terms of *national labour markets*-- which is 'the labour-power needs of national capitals refer to those labour-power capacities required for labouring in any labour process throughout the national capital . . . [There] is the drive [to increase] the quality (of labour-power) vis-a-vis other national capitals for gaining a competitive edge' (Rikowski, 2001b, p.42). This particular definition points towards the national capital (when being viewed in relation to labour-power) as the national labour market.

14 But see Hill, 2001a and 2003c for a structuralist neo-Marxist critique of the over-emphasis on discourse engaged in by postmodernist theorists and by quasi-postmodernists such as Stephen Ball.

15 This is an important claim, that privatisation and loss of tax/publicly funded clean water, clinics and schools result directly in death, disease and dumbing down. Many of the chapters in Bircham, E. and Charlton, J. (2001) *Anti-Capitalism: a Guide to the Movement* give examples of this. So, too, with respect to global society, do Monbiot, 2000; Klein, 2001, 2002; Mojab, 2001; Hill and Cole 2001; Hill, Sanders and Hankin, 2002; Pilger, 2002a; Cole, 2003b; Hill, 2004b forthcoming.

16 Independent Marxist and left radical think tanks and research and campaigning groups include the Institute for Education Policy Studies (<<http://www.ieps.org.uk>>) and radical groups such as, in Britain, the Hillcole Group of Radical Left Educators (see <<http://www.ieps.org.uk>>), and the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education (<<http://www.cfhe.org.uk>>). This campaign has five central commitments:

- to promote critical intellectual inquiry as widely as possible;
- to promote the idea of university education as a public good;
- to oppose the continuing commodification of the universities;
- to defend the integrity of academics in terms of disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research and a co-operative, not competitive, approach;
- to reclaim the governance of universities. (<<http://www.cfhe.org.uk>>)

In the USA, see the Rethinking Schools collective and publishers/activists (<<http://www.rethinkingschools.org>>), and The Rouge Forum (<<http://www.rougeforum.org>> and at <[http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge\\_forum](http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge_forum)>).

17 The state is not neutral with respect to capital--but some state regulation is, to a greater or lesser extent, in the interests of national capital. In some respects national capital needs to regulate individual firms and enterprises, 'rogue' capitalist operations in the interests of national capital as a whole. Clearly much of this regulation is voluntary (as with the Stock Exchange in Britain and with the Press Complaints Commission in Britain), and clearly this regulation is often not only weak, but also ineffective (as, for example in the Enron scandal, or, indeed, globally, the Chernobyl, Bhopal and other toxic/nuclear escape disasters).

The interests of capital are clearly contradictory--for example, capital requires an efficient and cheap transport system for transporting labour and goods. This interest is in

contradiction to its desire not to pay for it through taxation on profits. How this works out historically and in different national settings relates to the balance of class forces and their political expression. Similarly, while politically usually acting in concert against the forces and interests of the working classes, there are different interests between different fractions of capital, for example finance capital and manufacturing capital, and between national and international/transnational capital.

18 See Mathison and Ross (2002).

19 See Freire (1998). This idea also draws on the work of Henry Giroux (1992). According to Giroux, the concept of cultural worker traditionally referred to artists and writers but extends to those in law, medicine, social work, theology, and education. Furthermore, Giroux extends the concept of cultural worker to include the need for multiple solidarities and political vocabularies in extending democratic principles and effecting social change.

20 Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 131.

21 Idem.

22 They develop this at length, in Popkewitz and Fendler (1999) in particular pp. 45-56.

One of the most recent and powerful adumbrations and explanations of and arguments for critical pedagogy is Peter McLaren's 'Foreword to the Fourth Edition' of his *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. (2003) This is written from the Marxist perspective to which he has returned since the mid-1990s. Suggested programmes for critical pedagogy, from a Marxist perspective, are set out in Hill, 2002b, 2003.

23 Mike Cole, Peter McLaren, Glenn Rikowski and I discuss this in our *Red Chalk: On Schooling, Capitalism and Politics* (2001) (<<http://www.ieps.org.uk>>), as of course, do myriad articles and actions contesting capitalist hegemony.

24 Moody (2001) concurs: 'By itself, and despite its ability to breach police lines, this "movement of movements" lacks the social weight to carry out the very task it has set itself--the dismantling of the mechanisms of capitalist globalisation' (p. 293).

25 See for example Bambery and Morgan 2002 describing how the large GMB general workers union was balloting its members over strike action against private companies running public services, resulting in wage and condition differentials for public and private sector workers in similar jobs. The Labour Party Conference of September 2002 also voted against The Private Finance Initiative (PFI), and the New Labour leader Tony Blair is currently (Autumn 2003) facing majority opposition within both the Trade Union movement (as expressed in decisions at its September 2003 Annual Conference of the Trades Union Congress, or TUC) and the Labour Party itself over privatisation in the National Health Service and in education.

26 Many commentators on the radical left are hugely optimistic both nationally (in the UK) and internationally. John Pilger (2002b) for example, suggests that 'today, under countless banners, from the anti-globalisation movement to the Stop the War campaign, the new movement, drawing millions all over the world, may well be the greatest'. See also German, 2002; Bambery and Morgan, 2002. The pages of the two main Marxist

weekly newspapers in Britain, *The Socialist* and *Socialist Worker* regularly present the stories of new and existing members of their organisations (The Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party respectively) who have been enthused, energised, transformed by their participation in direct action such as demonstrations, pickets, anti-racist marches, anti-War marches). I write about my own reactions in Cole, Hill, McLaren and Rikowski, 2001, and in the articles set out in Note 12 above.

[27](#) Ellsworth, 1992: 91.

[28](#) See, for example, Hill, 1993; Cole and Hill, 1995; Ebert, 1995a, b; Cole, Hill and Rikowski, 1997; Hill, McLaren, Cole and Rikowski, 1999, 2002; Kelly, Cole and Hill, 1999; Bannerji, Mojab and Whitehead, 2001; Cole, Hill, McLaren and Rikowski, 2001; Mojab, 2001; Mojab and Gorman, 2002; Cole, 2003 a, c, 2004), Colley, 2003.

[29](#) Atkinson (e.g. 2000, 2002) addresses herself to some recent work within the British Marxist tradition, specifically Marxist critiques of postmodernism (and, in particular, some of the work of Dave Hill, Jane Kelly, Peter McLaren, Glenn Rikowski and Mike Cole [Cole and Hill, 1995; Cole *et al.*, 1997; Hill *et al.*, 1999; Kelly *et al.*, 1999; Hill *et al.*, 2002]). She concentrates on Marxist claims that the greatest faults of postmodernism are that it lacks an agenda for social change and that it is incompatible with social justice. Cole answers this in Cole (2003a, 2004 ).

Patti Lather's attack on Peter McLaren (1998, see also 1991, 2001) has been answered in McLaren (2003 forthcoming) and in McLaren and Farahmandpur (2003, forthcoming). Here they suggest that

The work of Patti Lather (2001), in particular, represents a move toward a centrist politics that etherealizes class struggle into questions of epistemology and evacuates historicity under the guise of a fashionable anti-Marxism. Her position, popular in the academy, represents what E. San Juan (1999) calls 'the new conformism'.

Sandy Grande also criticises Lather (and Lather's attack on McLaren) as 'whitestream feminism'. She writes,

In the final analysis, feminist pedagogies that merely assert the equality of female power and desire act as accomplices to the projects of colonialism and global capitalism. As an Indigenous woman I understand such discourse as a 'theory of property holders,' of privileged subjects unwilling to examine their own complicity in the project of domination and until there is broad recognition of feminism's ongoing participation in the forces of domination, Indigenous and other colonized women will continue to resist its premises. Ultimately, we all need to understand that we can not continue divide the world into 'local' and 'global' struggles that elicit either 'masculinist' or 'feminist' pedagogies. On the contrary, our mutual survival and emancipation is contingent upon our ability to see the connections and to make the abiding commitment to enact change.

[30](#) Social Justice by itself is not enough. It is the social democratic and liberal democratic acceptance of social rights (e.g. to freedom from racist or sexist or homophobic attack/discrimination) rights within a fundamentally and essentially exploitative class-based capitalist society. It is, of course, better to be treated with dignity than not. It is also

much better not to be raped, 'paki-bashed', 'queer-bashed' or denigrated because of class or other based cultural capital. Hence, while social justice is highly welcome and to be fought for. However, it is not enough. There are two points to be made in respect of its limitations.

Firstly, there can not be social justice in a capitalist society, in situations of gross economic inequality. Human degradation through poverty, the relative poverty/life style that results for the class nature of a capitalist society; the social class-based power relationships that result from capital-- exhibiting themselves, for example in the differential values placed upon different cultural capitals, flowing from current and historical patterns of class domination and different historical and current patterns of economic capital--mean that social justice can only ever be partial. It is contingent on economic justice and injustice. The creation of true social justice within capitalism is not viable. Furthermore, no capitalist class is going to give up its economic and political power willingly. Improvements in the relative position of the working class are brought about by class struggle, not by appeals to social justice, however much such appeals might aid that struggle in particular circumstances.

Secondly, as Mike Cole (2003a) notes:

It needs to be pointed out . . . that whether or not Marx had a theory of justice has been an issue of great controversy . . . as Callinicos has put it, on some occasions Marx eschews ethical judgements, and, on others, apparently makes them (1989, p. 13). . . . His materialist conception of history entailed a relative, rather than a universal account of ethics, since morality was seen as reflective of the prevailing mode of production. He was also unable to contextualise his own morality.

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This paper develops from the following: 'Global capital, neo-liberalism, and privatisation: the growth of educational inequality' in Dave Hill and Mike Cole (eds.) *Schooling and Equality: Fact, Concept and Policy*, London: Kogan Page (2001); *Red Chalk: On Schooling, Capitalism and Politics*, written by Mike Cole, Dave Hill, Peter McLaren and Glenn Rikowski. Brighton, UK: Institute for Education Policy Studies (2001); *Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory*, edited by Dave Hill, Peter McLaren, Mike Cole and Glenn Rikowski. Lanham, Maryland, USA: Lexington Books (2002); 'Global capital, neo-liberalism, and the growth of educational inequality', *The School Field: International Journal of Theory and Research in Education*, 13 (1/2), (pp. 81-107) (2002), and Globalisation, Education and Critical Action, *Educate: a Quarterly on Education and Development* (The Sindh Education Foundation, Pakistan), 2, (1) pp. 42-45 (2002).

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