The Michigan Social Studies Standards: Beware The Dream Censors

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In September, 1997, I was in a college science room, surrounded by spigots and mobiles of unfamiliar signs, meeting with the leaders of the teacher education division of my urban university. There were about ten of us in the classroom, trying to find our way through the labyrinth of preparations necessary to be ready for duel accreditation visits from the Michigan Department of Education and the non-governmental national endorsement agency. We reviewed early comments from the state's visitor. We quickly realized we were being told to align our work with the many standardized exams now required in the Michigan K-12 schools. The route to the tests was not always direct. In some academic areas, it went: content standards to pedagogical standards to test. In the area I coordinate, social studies, I was being asked to ensure that not only the work of my department, but the related liberal arts in other departments--history, economics, political science, and geography--would be in tandem with the tests. In other words, I needed to talk to department heads and ask them to demonstrate that taking their classes would prepare my students to equip children for the legislated examinations--and as a lowly assistant professor of education, I had the clout to do it. Most of their students came first from the college of education.

I found I didn't need organizational clout at all. The colleagues I asked were more than willing to adjust, to adopt the state standards for the social studies that apply in their subject area in ways that would go directly to the tests. Decent sorts, they wanted to be helpful.

So I saw the hand of the state government, in none too subtle ways, reaching into my urban university's college of education, which recently adopted a mission statement promising to create educators who are "agents of change". I also saw the ease with which power offers small and gentle rewards, how kindness and collegiality can be subsumed in a project that will likely damage all involved--except those with gloves so velvet that they go unnoticed.

This article reflects the tensions in the science room and between our good department heads--honest people trying sincerely to bring a decent system of education to Michigan's children. All of us seriously considered the implications of the path the consensus felt we

had to take: get through the review, learn and improve what we can, and get on with our work.

This paper reflects that ambiguity, while a position is surely set out. My position is that the regulation of knowledge, standardization of curricula, is not in the interest of the vast majority of citizens, that the Michigan standards are in fact partisan regulations which will help create a "subjugation…that maintains the appearance of freedom (and that will) capture volition itself". The regulation of knowledge ruptures what I believe is a triangle of particularities that make up a starting point of good education: a special teacher meets a unique child in a singular loving community. Regulated knowledge cannot comprehend the emotional sides of a learner, the doorway to scholarship. A classroom motivated not only by critique, but by love, is shattered by the imposition of regulations which have nothing to do with the passions of the learners involved. The standards will damage honesty in the classroom, rewarding not the risks of exploration, but the blandness of test-taking political correctness. Honest struggles for what is true will be ever more replaced by bet-hedging attempts at being judged "right". As testing the results of regulation elevates, as it surely will, the possibility for studying deep into a particular area will diminish, promoting a superficial and eclectic vision of how knowledge is constructed. The standardization of what is to be known, and how it will be known, widens the gulf between the disciplines, that is, mathematics is split from literacy, history from science, etc., promoting a narrow horizon that cannot comprehend the understanding of the relationship of parts to the whole in the construction of ideas. Regulating knowledge foments an employee mentality, a passive acceptance of the directions of others, betters, who decide what is important and how it can be decoded. Within the process of regulation is a false, magical, belief that increasing technological abilities are tantamount to increased critical abilities, something the socialist experiments prove false.1

However, good and evil was not easily set apart in a binary in my college's science room. Still, I believe the mild contradiction of ideas becomes a sharp contradiction of practice: a binary is finally there. Although many fine people want to equalize and democratize schools, there is ultimately profound disagreement around tactics. But a handful of relatively powerful others whose sole motive is profitability are in this debate as well. They carry considerable weight, and strategize with care. It is my hope to sharpen the debate about regulated knowledge, what has become improperly known as standards in education, to suggest that a careful investigation of what appears to be may offer a better way to understand what is to come--and what to do about it.2

Use of the word "standardization" in education circles these days is disingenuous. A "standard" is a rallying flag on a battlefield, a unifying watch-point, a symbol of excellence, or a "recognized exemplar of correctness". This is not what curricula standardization is. It is more appropriate, I believe, to pinpoint what is now up in education as the regulation of knowledge. This regulation is propelled by a state buffeted by certain social and economic pressures which can be broadly located in developing conditions in our society. The regulations will operate as a dream censor, constructing narrow cognitive horizons, fracturing crucial affective ties between students and

educators, and, as consciousness depressants, denying people both the content knowledge and investigatory methods requisite to discovering their own interests. Using a small example, viewed through history, theory, and practice, I will try to detail how this regulation works in one area--and the implications for educators, parents, and children whose lives now revolve around schools.3

The question of curricula standardization in education is no newer than sunlight on print. Plato, Aristotle, Mao, Dewey, and W. E. B. Dubois all entered the debate at one time or another. Joel Spring, Patrick Shannon, Michael Apple, and many other contemporaries have demonstrated that school is contested terrain, a ground where competing interests clash, where the pretense of reason is often subverted by matters of power, that is, who supplies the apple juice in the cafeteria at lower cost may interest a superintendent more than class size. School may be where educators and youth fashion hope, struggle for the truth in a reasonably free atmosphere, but school is also a huge market (consider the architects, bus makers, computers, multi-million dollar testing companies, textbooks), a free corporate baby-sitter in an era where single parent families are predominant, and the battlefield where the contest between skill training (be a loyal and cooperative worker) and critical thinking (why do some folks see the emperor as naked?) plays out every day.4

Today, Michigan leads the U.S. in promoting state-regulated educational standards. The bellwether position is related to Michigan's past role as a harbinger, for example, in serving as the beginning point for the assembly line, the Great Depression, organizing the CIO, the death of rust industry and the birth of out-sourcing. What happens in the U.S. economy often happens first in Michigan. Given Michigan's piloting role, it is important to examine this specific terrain: what pushes the Michigan regulation of curricula, through content, pedagogical, and examination standards, to the fore, and under what justification?5

Liberal proponents of standards, like Bill Clinton, say the Michigan standards will equalize schooling by allowing administrators to identify and correct, or discipline, inadequate teachers while at the same time the standards aim high for student achievement. Conservative voices, like Michigan's Governor Engler, focus on the measurement of achievement through assessment standards. Let us examine the environment that nourishes this convergence of traditionally opposing views.

Since 1975, Michigan transformed a proud superstructure of roads, libraries, medical care, social services, and schools into a privatized skeleton, in the midst of a relative economic boom. While the last twenty years saw a massive drop in industrial jobs (the United Auto Workers lost more than 700,000 members), the auto industry has enjoyed a resurgence and state unemployment levels are officially low. Still, like the rest of the nation, it now takes two workers in a family to support what one provided in the past. Sometimes living in Michigan seems surreal. In September, as the Governor moved to close some of the last mental hospitals in the state, state workers picketed at what was once one of the largest sites in Detroit. Inside, the lone administrator was a volunteer

retiree who had continued to come to work for nearly a year to supervise 140 employees. There was one patient.

Children in Wayne County, encompassing Detroit, suffer a thirty percent poverty rate: about 169,000 kids arrive at school hungry. State-wide, about 600,000 kids live in poverty--reflecting the rapid increase in income inequality in Michigan. Once a generous state where every child could receive free dental care, Michigan now has the largest number of kids without immunizations in the U.S. School drop-out rates, frequently veiled by administrators, have increased exponentially for the last 8 years. Drop-outs doubled from 1992 to 1994. For Detroit's mostly black youths, the chances of reaching the twelfth grade are one in three. Thirty percent of the people in Wayne County never finished high school; only thirteen percent finished college. Immediately to the north, across a virtual moat called Eight Mile Road, in overwhelmingly white Oakland County, the figures are simply reversed: thirty percent finished college, fifteen percent never graduated from high school. The median family income in Detroit is about $18,000 as compared to a $31,000 national median. Recently, the state legislature shifted the bulk of the Michigan tax burden to a regressive income tax, and boosted the sales tax, capping a move away from taxing non-productive income like inheritance, profits, and property. Michigan class size rates now rank 47th in the nation.6

For workers in schools, poverty has a very practical effect. The superintendent of schools of Saginaw, a mid-Michigan city just north of Flint, an area still feeling the reverberations of the shift in auto production to more exploited sections of the world, says more than half of the students in his elementary schools move at least twice during the school year, and change schools. One student changed schools 13 times in one semester. The administrator's solution: urge parents not to move.7

In Detroit, one of the most segregated cities in the nation, the 1996 school year began with student walk-outs at three high schools which planned to eliminate basic classes like English, required for graduation. Other walk-outs followed, around questions like the absence of toilet paper, textbooks, and the erasure of once-free transportation to school. On opening day, a young girl was shot to death in front of one of the largest high schools. Early in the school year, the city Board of Education, claiming near-bankruptcy, found funds to seek an injunction to prevent a long time board critic and lawyer-activist from attending public board meetings. The injunction was overturned. Another board critic was maced and arrested for speaking during a "public comment" session. The board's accountant, having been brought to task for being unable to account for several million dollars in bond money earmarked for school renovations, resigned after admitting she had been less than candid about her background; she had no accounting experience. Shortly thereafter, she bought one of the most expensive restaurants in the city. But the superintendent, unable to explain the misuse of millions in unspent bond money, retained his job. White suburbanites were appalled, citing this as evidence that the city leadership was incapable of governance. They had forgotten that early in the century, Detroit's populist mayor, Hazen Pingree, had ordered the arrest of the entire (white) school board on the grounds that "You are so corrupt you won't stay bribed".

Early in 1996, a suburban school district, Romulus, established a charter school within the Detroit city limits. The superintendent promised the new school would only serve those already dropped out of Detroit public schools. It would be a re-education center where drop-outs could recapture their hopes. But the superintendent's good offices ignored a century of history. Although 2,000 youths tried to register at a school designed for about 100, Detroit residents were outraged by what they saw as a clear economic and cultural invasion. After all, for each youth, Romulus would receive nearly $6,000. The city administration unleashed a horde of fire marshals and building inspectors. The new school closed at the end of the 1996 academic year. Sixteen kids graduated.

In 1997, the Detroit school year began with city teachers sullenly voting to send a contract offering them no improvements in benefits or protection like class size caps, and a potential 2% wage increase, to arbitration, rather than call a strike. Even in the heady days following the Teamster strike at UPS, the educators in the once-militant American Federation of Teachers felt powerless in the face of a new Michigan law (and an utterly unprepared local), designed to destroy any striking education union, and requiring deep fines for individual strikers. Dozens of the city's top teachers quit. Suburban districts recruited many of the most talented educators of color. Others burned the contract in front of the city's top academic high school. Students, teachers, and parents continued to complain that many children had not books, and those that did were not allowed to take them home. At the same time, a coalition of business leaders called New Detroit, perhaps motivated by a desire reinvigorate the downtown image for the arrival of casino gambling in 1999, and guided by incisive planning done by a local automotive advertising agency, quietly took over the school system and began to "decentralize". The decentralization plan is underpinned by a clear directive that the city curricula will be determined by state and national exams. On opening day, a teacher was interviewed by National Public Radio from her classroom, a converted closet. A popular 1997 sociology text, in contrast to the Chamber of Commerce claims about a rebirth, listed Detroit as a dying city--deep segregation in the education system having made the city's socio-economic base brittle.8

This is not to say that the economic structure in Michigan has collapsed, that the state has returned to depression levels, or even the devastation of the seventies and early eighties. It hasn't. Even UAW researchers put unemployment at 4%. Some areas like Oakland County are booming. What is at work here, as a microcosm in a nation still celebrating the Cold-War win, is rising relative inequality--and absolute misery for some. Wage gaps between rich and poor, black and white, young and middle-aged, widen regularly. Those with good jobs work hard: the average week in an auto plant is about 50 hours. A new up-scale mall in Oakland County draws overflow crowds. Ten miles south, much of Detroit looks like Beirut. The city elites are betting on casinos to recapture Detroit's downtown core. They have no design for the surrounding neighborhoods where gunshots still set the beat to what are only memories of Motown--long ago moved to Los Angeles. Nor are they quite sure what to do with the estimated 50,000 homeless people who now go unnoticed because few people with powerful gazes ever visit central Detroit.9

In 1995, Michigan Governor Engler eradicated eligibility for assistance for nearly 96,000 unemployed adults, most of them in Detroit. In 1997, he refused to apply for a federal waiver which would have offered food stamps for 46,000 unemployed people, arguing that food stamps might encourage them to not work. Prisons now dot the "Winter-water wonderland". The state pays, on the average, $34,000 for a prisoner; $6,000 for a student. Prisoners, though, may now be forced to work for the minimum wage for private companies, and to reimburse the state for their keep.

When Governor Engler and President Bill Clinton shook hands inside the state capitol in Lansing early on a crisp March day in 1997, many reporters saw the clasp of a conservative and liberal as exceptional. It was not. The unity of liberalism and conservatism, bound by notions of common national interests on one hand, and common guild protection on the other, threatens school democracy. Clinton and Engler merged their voices to call for standard national student achievement examinations. "You've got the best schools, you win," said Engler. Just what a best school is, who wins, and what is won, sums up the issue at hand. The paradoxical unity simply reflects a temporary settling of accounts in the struggle around education, a complex weave of tensions that each reflects a standpoint of material interests.10

To say that school is contested terrain and leave it at that is certainly not enough. The task is to investigate the contest itself, and the contestants, in specific detail, an extraordinarily complex task perhaps best presented in a novel. But the task is also to identify tendencies, trends, points of origin where possible, and relationships. There is at least a preponderance of evidence to show that the key tendency in school now is to divide children and educators along lines of class, race, and sex, generally in that order. This is true in class- and race-coded geography, in the curriculum, within school tracking, and more and more in teacher pay. This reflects, and reflects back upon, the major trends in the U.S. and the world: rising inequality and authoritarianism. Shannon, following Lukacs, demonstrates most clearly that while on the one hand systems of production and exchange are pushing more and more people together in international homogeneity, on the other hand, political and economic systems are driving people more and more apart, as a shrinking population of elites gather more relative power and wealth. In other words, the rich are getting richer, the poor poorer, and more numerous. Claims of greater world democracy are in tension with intensified world-wide inequality.11

In 1997, *Education Week* ranked the once proud Michigan public school system 24th in the nation. This serves as background to a discussion that suggests that there is a relationship between inequality and authoritarianism, tyranny, and that the relationship takes distinctive form in schools.

This paper will specifically address the Michigan social studies standards in the context of the national education standardization movement, and seek to demonstrate how standardization represents a unity of liberal and conservative elites which, by unintended consequences or design, will hurt most children, parents, and teachers.

On Background

Early in the U.S. experiment, many people felt that the curriculum should be solely designed to defeat the Old Deluder Satan.

This is from an early *Mcguffey's Eclectic First Reader*. Beneath a picture of a threadbare old man tipping his hat to two children appears this dialogue:

> Jane, there is a poor old man at the door.
>
> He asks for something to eat.
>
> We will give him some bread and cheese.
>
> He is cold. Will you give him some clothes too?
>
> I will give him a suit of old clothes, which will be new to him.
>
> Poor man! I wish he had a warm house to live in, and kind friends to live with him; then he would not have to beg from door to door.
>
> We should be kind to the poor. We may be as poor as this old man, and need as much as he.
>
> Shall I give him some cents to buy a pair of shoes?
>
> No, you may give him a pair of shoes.
>
> It is hard for the poor to beg from house to house.
>
> Poor boys and girls sometimes have to sleep out of doors all night.
>
> When it snows they are ver-y cold, and when it rains they get quite wet.
>
> Who is it that gives us food to eat and clothes to make us warm?
>
> It is God my child, he makes the sun to shine and sends rain up on the earth, that we may have food...

Later, in another lesson, "It is God who makes some poor and others rich...The rich have troubles we know nothing of...and the poor, if they are good, may be very happy."[12]

Over time, standardization drew support from a variety of disparate quarters: efficiency experts who feared both powerful and ignorant teachers, school administrators more concerned with order than learning, teachers unsure of their craft and teachers too limp to risk or innovate, corporations looking for trained workers, academics on the

payroll of textbook publishers, politicians from the right, center, and, at least, parts of the left: Diane Ravitch to William Clinton to Stalin and Paulo Freire.13

Finally at issue here is: who shall know what--and how shall it be known? How shall truth be presented and how shall people be told they can discover or verify what is true, or is simply true for them?

Elites, intellectuals, and the masses of people all have quite a stake in this. On the one hand, the powerful in any society crave a trained and relatively obedient work force, for factories, for armies, for banking, and exchange. So, there are cries for standardized school-to-work education. On the other hand, technical knowledge, the substructure of technological innovation (the Yahoo net-searcher for example) often requires thinking that is experimental, less bounded. In addition, the gentry in modern society need a reasonably well-trained middle class, or group that considers itself to be middle class, in order to supervise the functions of state and civil society: teachers, social workers, insurance agents, city planners, etc. These people require an education both technical and experimental. These mid-level employees need to be able to make some decisions, within certain bounds. Most people need to be convinced, early on, that another way of life is unthinkable, the easiest route to consent. And everyone must learn to consume, from french fries to acne cream to letter jackets.

On the improbable third hand are people who want to become elites--or who want elitism limited--a remarkable coincidence. They seek forms of education that are more democratic, where each one has an opportunity to move up, or to equalize the social system. A few see education as an instrument for what became known in the thirties as social reconstruction. They argue that the only boundary elites do not typically want crossed--technical to experimental curricula--is the one that questions the existence, permanence, or inevitability of elite rule.

Today's modest opposition to standardization in education is the predictable rabble, often depending on whose ox is to be gored: anarcho-rightists insisting on individual rights embodied in the home school, segments of the whole-language movement pressing a child-centered agenda fundamentally violated by external regulations, and remarkably few inheritors of the Dewey legacy in education who seek to reconstruct society on more equitable and democratic grounds.

There was little apparent public righteous indignation to the 1997 joint call from Lansing, Michigan, for national standards and achievement tests in all of the educational disciplines. Here a right-wing governor, Bob Engler, joined Democrat Bill Clinton in the demand for national standards and more tests tied to school funding. In fact, the massive support for standardization really represents one important score on a test about the notion of freedom in the U.S.14

Schools are the canary in the mine. Education measures the freedom available in a society. The less the freedom in the school, the less the canary chirps, the more authoritarian the society. School curricula are always at the center of a struggle that links

the driving goals of a national economic system, available surplus for expenditure on knowledge exploration and training, the hopes of parents, and the passions of children and teachers. When the canary stops singing, when freedom in school is smothered, something is up. Calls for standardization of curricula necessarily restrict educational freedom--in every society. This was true in early Mussolini's Italy. Freedom of curricula disappeared in the twenties in the U.S.S.R. Even the most revolutionary of today's left in Western education has always, when victorious, established their own standards, written their own textbooks, hoisted their own standard tests, created their own official knowledge.

There is a growing body of historical data about the most recent drives for standardized curricula in the U.S. We know that the Soviet's success with Sputnik spurred educational calls for greater oversight of schools. The failed adventure in Vietnam devastated the U.S. economy. The world's biggest creditor nation became the biggest debtor. In the years that followed, schools were targeted as responsible for a growing economic crisis. In 1975, elites organized in the Trilateral Commission suggested that there was a link between education, the economic decline, and an "excess of democracy". In 1983, mid-way in Reagan's first term, *A Nation at Risk* outlined the purported relationship between the schools and the souring economy and called for more standardization, linking state and national standards and funding for schools.15

In the midst of this, only a few humble voices piped up to say that there already is a national curriculum and there are plenty of national exams. Patrick Shannon, Michael Apple, and Philip Altbach did point out that textbooks, owned and published by a handful of communications corporations, form the national curriculum. The textbook exams, coupled with the ACT and the SAT, and an array of graduate exams, comprise national testing. Fewer educators still suggested that the textbooks themselves be abolished. For that we have to look to the inheritors of John Dewey.16

In 1937, deep into another period of economic crisis, Professors Hilda Taba and Laura Zirbes co-authored a chapter in the *First Yearbook of the John Dewey Society*. There they say, because the standardized textbook cannot by definition meet the unique intersection of a particular teacher with a specific student in a singular community, a triangle of education which underpins good instruction, "... the textbook as such is the utter enemy of intelligent teaching."17

For a curriculum in social studies, Taba and Zirbes suggest teachers step outside and look around. There is plenty of society to study. It is not disjointed, not easily broken into segments of politics and economics and history. It is a complete whole requiring literacy and every academic discipline working in unity to comprehend and transform it. Neither Dewey nor his adherents ever held power in many schools. Textbook publishers did, and do.

Power goes to two poles, those who have the money and those who have the people. In school, money brings people to textbook companies. The companies hold bountiful economic resources. Some teachers, many in fact, are inveigled--or convinced--to use

them. Participation on textbook adoption committees gets one away from the school building, often to a school development center, where one can get lunch in peace. It has never taken much to purchase the thoughtfulness of many American educators.

Textbook companies joined the chorus of demands for standardized curricula. A standardized curriculum requires textbooks, standard computerized tests, and millions of dollars of potential back-up from the eager private sector. It follows that textbook companies are already selling guides for the Michigan standardized curricula.18

One year into his Presidency, in 1991, former CIA Director George Bush presented America 2000, a document which hammered home the need to link a national curricula with national testing and funding. America 2000 specified content areas in which standards were to be created. Early in his own presidency, Bill Clinton, one of the authors of America 2000 as Governor of Arkansas (a state rated as having one of the worst education systems in the nation), brought forth Goals 2000, a fine-tuned reiteration of his earlier work. Clinton spliced national standards and curricula with tests--and exam success with funding.

None of this happened under the watchful eyes of a vigilant public being offered opportunities to participate in democratic processes. Major stakeholders, crowned by the right as the education elite, guided the agenda at each turn. The Carnegie Foundation, long a proponent of exams (to the point it helped fund the beginnings of the Educational Testing Service) was quickly in the lead of Clinton's agenda. Not too many years earlier, the Carnegie Foundation also supported researchers whose goals was to prove that social superiority was rooted in genetics, breeding, and that nothing much could be done through education that could influence ignorant blood.19

Leaders like Keith Geiger from the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers both played a role in the process that became Goals 2000. The AFT and its leader, Albert Shanker (now Sandra Feldman), became especially strident in calls for national standards. Top leaders of the NEA, typically reluctant to limit a teacher's ability to close the door and teach, sold the membership on the idea that it was necessary to be "part of the conversation". Later on, in 1997, under new president Bob Chase, the NEA declared that "sleeping with the enemy", joining hands with business, school administrators and politicians, is "new unionism". Actually, the NEA's top leaders had slept with for some time. But the mutuality on standards is a useful vehicle to promote the merger of the two unions from within. In September, 1997, NEA, AFT and ten other self-proclaimed education groups joined together in a coalition to promote standards, a move so widely publicized it was the banner headline in *USA Today*.20

As is commonplace in American education, select individuals from private organizations like NEA, AFT, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and so on, portrayed themselves as being the representatives of the public good, yet few if any of the central leadership had as much in common with the public as, say, earning less than 100,000 dollars a year.21

Since America 2000, professional teacher groups organized around academic content areas, like the National Council for Teachers of English, and the American Historical Association, have written and adopted their own standards. Their tortuous routes are described elsewhere by Harvey Kaye, Gary Nash, Craig Lockard, and Kim McCullom-Clark. The history standards were so threatening that they were written twice; two different documents now exist that compete as the best in historical pedagogy. Congress rejected the first document, apparently a radical horror, voting 99-1. The English standards are still, after years of formulation, in dispute: those favoring a tested national canon in English against those who see English as too vexed to easily capture in a national dogma. One area was left without direction: the social studies standards, America's step-child. Social studies (traditionally an inter-disciplinary mix of at minimum sociology, anthropology, religion, political science, history, geography, and economics) were forgotten by America 2000, unmentioned. This gave the social studies teachers something to worry about: their jobs.

In school, if there is no test, there is no work. Consider art. No test: layoffs. Music. No test: layoffs. Social work. No test: layoffs. But mix Sputnik, mathematics, and a standardized test: mass hiring. These experiences were not lost on social studies educators.22

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), a private dues-generated organization of social studies teachers and professors based in Washington, D.C., set about to remedy what could be a crisis. The NCSS leadership, with no membership vote, decided to write some standards. NCSS created a body of six classroom teachers, four professors from well-known colleges of education, and a state education administrator. In less than two years, they produced a document promising that the "standards specify what students should know and when they should know it."

A task force of eleven people chosen by the NCSS leader, moving rapidly with little membership mandate, wrote the NCSS standards. Three of the eleven task-force members are K-12 teachers. The remainder are professors or school administrators. The NCSS leader leading the effort is also the director of the Center for Democratic Capitalism and Active Citizenship.

There was little debate about what kind of students the standards should be designed to create. The task force did no formal surveys of students, teachers, or the working public. They did survey the business community and discovered that, for their purposes, the virtues of good citizenship are nearly identical to those of a good employee. One member of the task force stated the concept very clearly, "Businesses want their employees to think of themselves as citizens of the company". Another task-force member said the group used Total Quality Management programs such as those at Saturn, Harley-Davidson, 3M, and Motorola as guides to what a worker-citizen should think and do. Hartoonian said the task force was concerned about creating "worker-artisans", much in line with the designs of the Saturn project. In sum, the task force sought to create a student committed to over-arching commonality of interest with her/his employer. In a

society animated by inequality measured along lines of class, race, and sex, this concept of all-for-one and one-for-all national citizenship can be problematical.23

In April, 1994, the NCSS Board of Directors approved the "Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, Expectations for Excellence". The ambitious document, relying heavily on the history standards, claims to sweep across the disciplines that NCSS believes social studies coordinates: anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, political science, psychology, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology. Some heady stuff given that no single one of the professional organizations overseeing these singular disciplines managed to reach such a remarkable consensus so quickly. The achievement is even more weighty when one considers that funding for the NCSS project was about 1/10 of that spent on the development of other standards (over $2 Million earmarked for the history project, more than $1 million for geography).24

The NCSS national standards served as the basis for the writing of the Michigan Social Studies Standards which were adopted into law by the legislature in 1996. At this writing, pedagogical and assessment standards are nearly finalized. While the Governor and the state department of education deny that the assessments will be tied to funding and accreditation, it remains that the governor has threatened to lift the accreditation of schools whose students do not cooperate, or do well, with the exams. Parental rejection of the high school exams, rising from wealthy communities like Birmingham where top students failed the test (the only student ever to gain a perfect score on the ACT, a student with a full scholarship to MIT, failed the high-school writing exam), caused the tests to be postponed for a year as the faulty exams are re-written. Nevertheless, the standardization train is on the track. Despite passionate arguments from state Department of Education officials who initially claimed the state tests would never drive the curriculum but would actually promote a new sense of freedom in the classroom, the headline of the *Southfield Eccentric* of 28 September 1997 reads, "Southfield Public Schools expects each school to improve its score on this year's Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests. The key is in making curriculum coincide with the state tests." Should the goal be met, Southfield will never reach a point where every child is above normal.25

As noted earlier, it is simply not possible to examine every contest on the terrain of school. At odds are not simply competing economic interests, but ideological maneuvers which are hard to locate in anything but nearly unattached culture. For example, the fear of sexuality reaches into every classroom. Now, with abstinence education written into certain programs for federal funding, fear of sex has an official stamp. Moreover, the destruction of reason, perhaps better put as the institutionalization of incoherence through a teaching force so distanced from the philosophical debates that few have any notion of the practical implications of contradictions between irrationalism and rationality, is simply unnoticed in most North American school systems. Still, it is possible to identify some of the key tendencies that drive the curricula, and teacher time, in one way or another. Here is a statement from one key Michigan contender:

> On 15 May 1997, Michigan Future Incorporated held a two day seminar for nearly 250 university and k-12 educators and other guests in a lovely hotel thirty miles west of Detroit. Most of the school systems in the lower half of the state were represented at the conference, most participants with their costs paid by their institutions. Michigan Future knows what they want from the schools.[26]

Their board of directors includes the CEO of the Michigan Catholic Conference, a Supreme Court Justice, heads of several high-tech computer companies, a few partners in influential law firms, a chief of police from a tiny Michigan city, a vice president of a furniture corporation that supplies office equipment to the world, some of it produced by prison labor. Their "Education Network Board" is composed of school leaders from k-12 systems, a consultant from the Michigan Education Association, presidents and directors of community colleges and the boss of an "education Work Consortium". A "Competitiveness Network Board" includes leaders of the UAW, bankers, a professor in the College of Engineering at Wayne State, the director of employee development at General Motors, and the CEO of the school of management at Michigan State.

This is a synopsis of the document, "A Citizen's Vision for a Prosperous Michigan", a chronicle looking ten years into the future of the state. It was distributed at the conference and used as a centerpiece for discussion.[27]

Michigan Future foresees new companies, smaller and more efficient, that need a highly-motivated group of workers, many of whom become stock-holders, and who are paid in part through profit sharing. These are highly-motivated people, in need of little supervision, able to perform many tasks, able to identify and correct and eliminate problems by adjusting their machines. These people think more, lift less. They need a four-year diploma, but many don't need college. These workers reject the notion that they will work for one company for many years, understanding that most of them will shift jobs frequently. They will thrive on the competitive instability.

The schools that create this work force will foster active learning, kids clustered "around work tables, computer work stations, VDTs, noisily working together. Teachers move between the groups, consulting, meeting with individual students with some project or problem...there is a striking resemblance between the new learning centers and the new work settings..these students work in self-directed teams to manage the new learning responsibilities they have been given." Michigan Future projects deeper ties between schools and chambers of commerce, some schools offering direct business apprenticeships by the eleventh grade.

Michigan students will be taught basic values which "underpin our strategy":

> responsibility for ourselves,
>
> work as a source of satisfaction as well as a paycheck,

> family as a place to be loved, nurtured and taught,
>
> *commitment to the next generation to move ahead*
>
> *the common good that insists that our identity as Americans overrides our narrow ethnic, racial religious and economic interests*,
>
> inclusiveness that involves all in the Michigan economy,
>
> a belief in empowerment so we take charge of our actions." (my emphasis)

The family is key to Michigan Future planning. They want a family which will bring a child to school prepared to emulate these values, which "teaches right from wrong", because, "knowing how to take orders is now longer enough. Successful students and employees must be able to organize activities and make decisions with peers in self-directed work teams". Youth need to see themselves as "corporate partners who are compensated on the basis of a companies performance and success".

It is true, says Michigan Future, that rising inequality is a problem in Michigan. The hope is to create the technological and material developments, relying heavily on shifts in schooling, that will some day, somehow, create well-paying jobs for everyone. The many competing interests, especially the economic interests which Michigan Future agrees reflect a widening gap of income differentials, will be so thoroughly churned by techno-development that they may disappear. At bottom we are all in this together, though presently the evidence says we are not.

Michigan Future has a plan. Others in the business and political arenas plan as well. Educators who do not plan, or critically evaluate the circumstances at hand, will find themselves as unwitting participants in this strategy for tomorrow, or another one not unlike it--the new corporate state reflecting the old corporate state's unity of labor, business, and politicians.

Schools are ready for Michigan Future's plan, in part because the unions and the intellectual education establishment have long called for precisely this corporatist approach, and the liberal left, particularly the liberal postmodernist left, has so disconnected the relative autonomy of the state from the roles of dominance in school that there is practically no academic opposition whatsoever. In addition, the "posties", following a perverse retranslation of Gramsci's notions of counter-hegemony, often advocate worker-boss cooperation in order to gain a feigned sense of cultural control of the work place. In education, right-wing postmodernism, simultaneously denying the existence or centripetal role of a working class, focused on consumer culture as if consumption could be isolated from production, affirming difference except when it might apply to their relationship with funders, has set the table for the corporatist project in school.

Nevertheless, because Michigan is so pivotally located in the post-industrial economy, because the history of the state is full of what can only be called class struggle, and because the question of standardized education is still contested terrain in the state, it is significant to examine the particular route of the Michigan social studies standards in detail.28

The standardization of social studies comes late to the Great Lakes State. Mathematics, reading, writing, science, all have state standards and their own state-wide exam, the MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program). MEAP testing, which occurs, depending on subject area, in the third or fourth, fifth, seventh, eight, and eleventh grades, coupled with the High School Proficiency Test (11th grade), the ACT, and the SAT, probably directly consumes about 20% of the academic year. Given that some schools teach only to the test, that figure could go higher. There is considerable evidence, including testimony from those state officials who administer the MEAP, that it only measures parental income, class, race, and to some degree, sex/gender. Moreover, less than half the state's students pass muster, they come in categorized as "not yet novice". Put less kindly: they flunked. While State Department of Education officials stand behind the exams' validity, lawmakers are questioning whether the validity is linked to the internal logic of the tests--or to students.29

The Michigan Social Studies Content Standards

In a world that is more and more materially unequal and more and more tyrannical rather than democratic, it is not possible to plunk down a template of state-regulated standards, link those standards to tests, funding, and promotion, and expect those standards to do anything but intensify tyranny and inequality. It is naive to believe that a state, a government, which has devoted itself to the service of the wealthy is going to deliberately conduct school in ways that will create a critically conscious class of citizens. But the naive played a big role in writing these standards. And the naive continue to insist, in self-contradictory fashion, that the exams are more than neutral instruments, they will help equalize education in Michigan.

Michigan's regulated Social Studies Standards are not a neutral curriculum but a partisan political document. I offer these pieces of evidence:

1) The Michigan standards uncritically omit traditional pillars of the social studies psychology, religion, archeology, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. Only four areas--geography, history, civics and economics--now equate "social studies", which replaces what was known as "social science". The old term was surely an objectionable notion to a state school board president who, during the period social science became "studies", demanded that Christian values be taught in public schools. Society is not a science to an irrationalist.

If we approach the disciplines in a systematic fashion, omitting sociology means the study of social class is outside the social studies, as is the history of production (most pointedly addressed in anthropology and archaeology), as is the study of how things change, addressed in philosophy, and the study of sexuality and consciousness, withdrawn in psychology. The power of comparing myths and testing irrationalism as a study of religion is deserted.

The extraordinary omissions stem from the fact that the partisan Michigan state legislature wrote these key constituents out of the social studies (as defined by the National Council for the Social Studies) and out of the law, deliberately, on December 1, 1995. These are social studies peculiar to Michigan merely because of prevailing political winds. These content standards have limited content because of partisan considerations.

(2) The motivation to write regulated standards, and the motivation for students to personify the state regulated knowledge, is questionable. Evidence: like the national standards, one motive to write the Michigan standards was to preserve social studies teachers' jobs. Social studies educators feared that they were left out of American 2000 demands for standards and testing, and they were missing from the Michigan Assessment demands. So, with the leadership of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies playing key roles, they wrote standards to prevent themselves from looking like art or language teachers, unstandardized and laid off.

A second motive was to create student who would become a worker-artisan initiated in the national standards and slightly re-tooled by organizations like Michigan Future. Michigan regulations are written in a directive-precise format because the authors had already seen the state board reject the English standards which were deliberately vague. The form of the standards is commanding and anti-exploratory, really uncritical, because the authors took partisan warnings from other disciplines--and because the desired student is one with an extraordinarily limited educational horizon.

In the abstract, adopting the regulated knowledge as a habit and disgorging it for a test deepens the alienation of motivation. The "why to learn" is owned by the regulators, not the student and not the classroom educator. Hence, external regulation is disguised as self-regulation. This is a nice ploy for those who want to create an employee who identifies his/her interests with an employer, but who knows well that his/her link to that employer may last but a couple of years.

(3) That the standards are partisan is philosophically true and practically true.

Evidence: philosophically, nothing exists in a vacuum. Nothing comes from nothing. What is to be known officially, state knowledge, is knowledge that must arise, not from the mists, but out of the actions of people who themselves have horizons limited by their material upbringing. Therefore, the standards do not stand outside the political world, as the history standards already demonstrate. Any curricula contains an analysis of the past, a representation of the present, and some form of call to action for the future. The Michigan Social Studies Content Standards are no different, and that is a political project.

Truth, as both a practical and philosophical question, is found on the answer sheet, embedded in the minds of people far distant from the classroom, people whose notions of truth are skewed in partisan fashion from an overwhelmingly white and middle-class background. Thus, the struggle for truth in a classroom, an endless spiral of gaining and testing of knowledge which grows deeper through discovery, through the movement of appearances to essence. Truth is closed, fixed, distant, alien, and partisan.

Practically the standards must be considered partisan because these standards were written by, overwhelmingly, white upper-middle-class people and will, mostly, measure the social class and parental income of those who take the exams. Those who reject the goal of becoming a worker artisan, for example, those sufficiently conscious to see differences in material and power interests at work in school, are not going to be rewarded on the social studies MEAP. An inversion of the remarkable coincidence I suggested early on is made practical here. Those at the extremes of hegemony, those who benefit most and least from regulated knowledge, are those who will have nothing to do with this. The students in the state's wealthiest private schools, Cranbrook Academy for example, will never take the exams because they have nothing to learn from, or gain from, them. Students in public school who have rebel parents, or those students who principals deem likely to fail, won't take the test either.

(4) The content of regulated knowledge in the social studies standards cannot be separated from the form in which that knowledge is presented. Any curricula standards are really, first, literacy and language standards. The exams are only given in standard English. Those students whose language and discourse background match the background of the people who wrote the curricula, and the tests that follow, will have a powerful advantage over those whose class, race, and ethnic backgrounds make it necessary to translate and re-translate material. For example, the use of standard English is fraught with economic, social, and political pressures. Latino students whose homes reflect a different culture and language heritage, as well as a different way of envisioning how to decode the world, are at a disadvantage in a test situation designed by upper-middle-class white people, just as those upper-middle-class white people would be at a disadvantage in trying to discover how to untangle travel arrangements in Mexico, or even Grenada, where the standard English is not what one hears in Michigan. The notion that one standard curriculum, invariably followed by a standard exam, is fair for all is subverted by the stubborn reality that students are not all starting at the same point. Nor are all of the test examiners. The Michigan Department of Education agrees that the overwhelming majority of readers will be white women, most of them middle class. The subtle and often unconscious understandings they bring to their reading about how knowledge should be organized and presented will influence the kinds of scores they award to children.

Evidence that the foundation and language of the standards lie in the upper middle class is the fact that the early drafts of the standards used a template developed for West Bloomfield, one of the wealthiest areas in the nation. The process of the writing of the content standards is indelibly marred by the fact that representation from the Detroit Council of the Social Studies was systematically discouraged. Leaders of the DCSS, an

organization of mostly African-American social studies educators, in interviews in June, 1997, told me they had been "invited out of this process". Hence, what Popkewitz suggests--that "[e]liminated from scrutiny (in the regulations) are the social differentiations between urban, suburban, and rural schools; between African Americans and whites, Hispanics and Asians...between male and female and poor and wealthy..."--represents the mannerr in which regulated knowledge becomes a material enforcer for inequality, masked as a liberator.30

The selection process of those who did regulate this knowledge was tainted. There was nothing democratic about the selection of the people who wrote the standards in Michigan or at the national level. Indeed, the writing groups actually represent privately selected groups overseeing public education's curricula. The people writing the standards at the state level were primarily drawn from the private Michigan Council for the Social studies, a dues-based organization of social studies professionals. The Michigan Council for the Social Studies (MCSS) members used the standards of their parent body, the National Council for the Social Studies, also a dues-driven private body, as a template for their work.

To widen this proof, I attended the February, 1997, conference of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies. I visited, and video-taped, all of the major sessions and several workshops as well. Teachers flocked to the sessions that offered direction on how to teach to the social studies tests. In one large session, in a mirrored ballroom of the Hyatt Regency not far from the Ford Rouge Plant, nearly three hundred educators gathered to hear a lecture on the social studies standards. Less than ten of the participants, in a video tape that sweeps systematically across the room, were people of color. This was reflective of the make-up of the entire conference. While some data says that about 7% of the educator force is African American, black representation in the conference was less than one-half of that--for reasons.

The conference was held in Dearborn, Michigan, long famous as a bastion of white supremacy. The mall attached to the hotel was being boycotted by black leaders from Detroit, about 10 miles to the east. White replacement workers, scabs, from the struck Detroit newspapers were active in the conference advertising section. The active Detroit Council for the Social Studies membership, already estranged from MCSS, was nowhere to be seen.

(6) The projected results on the tests are a partisan maneuver. The standards do not represent one step forward, two steps back in assessment. In replacing old and horribly outdated textbooks, the standards may, in some areas, give classroom teachers a bit more flexibility--in theory. But in practice, once the standards are linked to accreditation, student promotion and records, and eventually teacher pay and school funding, as they will be, these standards become even more rigid than their predecessors. That the standards are linked to funding is clearly indicated by Governor Engler's threats to seize school systems where students performed poorly. The standards in some rural areas have already prompted some superintendents to offer to pay students up to 100 dollars to pass the tests, a pedagogical boner of incredible proportions.

The standards will rob more and more of an educator's most precious commodity: time with students. Twenty percent of the educator-student time (and still more of teacher time) is already spent on standardized testing. While the standards seek to create a more cooperative and ingenious employee, for both teacher and student the thinking and controlling mind is alien to the classroom. The authors of the standards are not the people in the school, and the body implementing the regulated knowledge, the classroom educator, is held strictly to the task. This contradicts all that is known about linking pedagogy with the specificities of the student and the community. But, as Apple notes, it is a historically common stratagem in controlling the actions of a predominantly female work force.31

7) That the standards, regulated knowledge, are hardly neutral but subject to partisan pressure was made especially clear in a series of events in 1997. The Michigan Board of Education held a series of hearing around the state to gather citizen response to the testing. I attended three of the hearings. In each, nearly 100 people attended: students, parents, and educators. Nearly to a person, they denounced the exams as incompetently drawn, intrusive, and worthless from an educational standpoint as the classroom teachers don't get the results until months after the exams are given, if at all. many teachers noted that students with weak academic histories were being exempted from the exam by local administrators, or their parents were told tho keep them home on exam day. The standards were defended by state bureaucrats who insisted that this form of regulated knowledge is measurable and useful to understand the abilities of students and teachers. In one wealthy suburban district, though, a local administrator rose to the occasion. His students, nearly all college-bound, most of them to the finest colleges in the country, had frequently failed the test. The state stamped "not yet novice" on their diplomas. Following this, nearly two-thirds of the parents refused to subject their kids to the exam and exempted them or kept them home ill. This administrator was straightforward. He said to the Board bureaucrats, "If you think the parents of this community are going to allow you to force their children to take this test, you are profoundly confused about how power works", and took his seat. Weeks later, the testing was postponed by the Board for a year so the exam could be re-written.

The standards, like the old standards or any mediocre textbook or irrelevant curricula, will be adroitly circumvented by most good teachers who still have some freedom to close their doors, work with colleagues, and teach well. But even these good teachers will be severely restricted by the incredible time demands of more standardized exams, and the concern administrators will create to present high marks to the public.

Even so, the standpoint of the Michigan framework is to present a dogma, an unquestioned creed, underlining the partisan nature of the false objectivity of the standards. The standards press a partisan and forged notion of national commonality under a brittle and diminished understanding of "core democratic values".

In part, what is at work is a deepening segregation of kids, even before the exam schedule is in full swing. Children will be divided by the exams (many principles now suggest poor students stay home on test day), by the pedagogy (some schools will teach

to the test more than others. Truly wealthy schools will ignore the exams), and by the test results.

Even so, what is also at work is the result of competing elites caught hanging on their own scaffold: the local/state/individual rights emphasis of conservatism caused the Michigan lawmakers to make it possible to circumvent the exam, by choosing not to participate. While the Governor is moving forcefully to close the loophole, this is a potential wedge into redirecting the assault inherent in the standards.

The Partisan Content of the Content Standards

The content standards (adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education on July 19, 1995) already drive what will become the teaching methods (pedagogical) standards and the examinations which will follow. Hence, the content standards are at the axis of social studies official knowledge in Michigan. (The State Department of Education and MCSS have filled out the standards with criteria and definitions like "core democratic values", but these additions have not been adopted in law and will only be parenthetically addressed here.)

There are two ways to examine curricula regulations. One can look at the content and see what is there and what is missing. And one can review the form of the regulations: what is the method of knowing that is at work here and how shall it be taught? I will try to weave these factors together as we proceed.

The content standards purport to demonstrate the "social aspects of the human condition" and build "responsible citizens". Remarkably, this is accomplished through students "construct(ing) meaning from disciplinary knowledge" which will enable them to engage in "civic discourse", to safeguard ...rights.. and "honor(ing) the dignity of all people". Though couched in staggering academic jargon, this might sound good.

It's not. The content standards, on one hand, are written about an academic olympus, a utopia that does not exist, a mirage in which everyone is in the same boat; not our society driven apart by economic trends which underpin class and racial segregation. Really, the standards adopt the standpoint of an upper-middle-class suburbanite--or a plant manager. The standards urge students to recreate the status quo, to take action which will, at best, only recreate inequality and authoritarianism. For example, at every level, the standards insist that a core democratic value is to obey the law. Where would Martin Luther King, Sam Adams, Thomas Jefferson, or, Sojourner Truth, fit in this? How shall we deal with Frederick Douglass' comment about the U.S. Constitution, from which law emanates? "We hold it to be the most cunningly devised and wicked compact, demanding the ...efforts of the friends of righteous freedom for its complete overthrow. It was 'conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity'".[32]

The standards construct a very confined universe in which students are expected to operate, like an ant crawling out of its hole in the Detroit Lions' Silverdome and declaring, "I have seen the universe". The standards, regulations, are myopia encoded as educational vision.

The standards are pictured with seven pillars, or strands: Historical perspective, geographic perspective, purposes of government, economic perspective, and public discourse, decision making, and responsible personal conduct.

Remember, critical analytical tools like anthropology, sociology, and psychology are denied the framework with no complaint from the authors. Surely the loss of these social sciences, which enable people to grasp the historical relationship of labor and society, the role of social classes, and the part played by emotions and sexuality, damages the effort to understand and transform our world. This absence is a partisan one.

Let us turn to the strands, one by one.

Strand 1: The Historical Perspective

This History strand combines four subsections: Time and chronology, Comprehending the past, Analyzing and interpreting the past, and Judging decisions from the past.

What is offered here is an unanchored view of history, one way of viewing the past is as good as the next. For example, among historians there is a lingering debate about how history should be written, what causes historical change. The debate centers around analyses which focus on great men (Napoleon did it), inevitable forces (God's will for example--or hurricanes), great events (wars), social forces (the struggle for production and resistance to domination), and popular will. Any one of these, or none of them, might fit easily into the Michigan historical strand, even a view of history propelled by fascist understandings of genetics. The strand says "...conclusions about the past are tentative and arguable". Of course, this is relatively true. Any conclusion about the past can be enriched, debated. Mono-casual, reductive templates to decode reality are usually insufficient. However, one method, and one conclusion is not as good as the next. If it is, there is no reason to do history at all. What is left from an utterly relative approach to history is incoherence, irrationalism. Surely part of the historian's task is to develop a hierarchy of causes, which in fact is what even an irrational approach does. But at the end of the day, at issue is just whose interests are served by taking one position or another. And what tests shall be applied to discover if one conclusion is superior to another? What is the measure--the interests of most of humanity? History is an analysis of the past, from a standpoint in a shifting present (now is never exactly now), embedded with some notion of what will, or should, come next. Related to that, social studies comprises both an inquiry into the past, and a call to action for some kind of citizenship. If all is, finally, merely tentative, how shall we choose to act? So, at once, we have a sort of incoherent

relativism and, simultaneously, the likelihood that the classroom teacher is left wondering anxiously: what will be on the test?

In question is not the conclusions of fact that history might draw, always subjective and always open to be enriched, but the method of historical investigation itself. What does the student believe is the motive force of history and how can that be traced or proven? If all understandings of history are tentative and arguable, why not one day say all of history is rooted in genetics, the next, that history is rooted in the machinations of god, and the next day that history is the struggle against overpopulation? The tendency, however, is to lean to a "great men" picture of history, as seen in the stress on the evaluation of "key decisions made at critical points", as if these decisions stood outside the developing social constructs of the decision-makers.

There is some cautious wording in the strand that avoids any hint of conflicting interests, the fact that social classes have opposing interests, less in common than more. For example, the documents carefully refer to differences as "diversity" (rather than mention white supremacy or racism) and substitutes the word "status" for class.

More importantly, there is little here to point educators toward an understanding of the trajectory of history which grapples with the material fact of private (and individual) interests at odds with the reality of the increasing socialization of people. We do not get help in understanding what is at the root of things, or how things change. We do not get methods that can assist a student in moving from the immediate appearances of history to the essence of events. Instead, we get: one notion is as good as the next, things may or may not change; a form of agnosticism which can only perpetuate our present social condition. Perhaps more significantly, teachers are not even offered the outlines of the many scholarly debates at hand, again, leaving them to guess what will be on the test. Hence, active citizenship, always a pillar of the social studies, is confined to repeated ratification of what already is.

For example, time and chronology is linked, not to the progression of a series of stages of history, all of them tied to the development of productive and social relationships, but to disjointed events---one having no continuous tie to the next. If there is no unifying sense to history, then the passage of time really is best presented as a series of unrelated dates to be memorized, or a weave of significant and insignificant strands of time that create a hodgepodge cloth. This was the thinking that stood behind the "old" way of social studies, and unfortunately, also underlies the "new".

In addition, time and chronology are presented as a fixed understanding of all people. This is a partisan vision hiding behind a middle-class veil of neutrality. Time and chronology are not the same for all people. Time and chronology are constructions of the mind. The mind never stands outside social conditions. The passage of time is addressed much differently in third-world and imperial nations--as well as by people of different classes within those nations. At issue is, at base, whose history, or whose time, is this? Time available to my students at Wayne State University in Detroit, a working-class school in a major city, is considerably different from time available to my former

students at Penn State, a mostly upper-middle-class campus in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Time is a commodity. That time is purchased is so deeply ingrained in the middle-class psyche that to view it as anything but neutral violates second nature.

Strand 2: Geographic Perspective

Separated from the central human issue of labor, which is utterly absent in the presentation, geography is a mere dogma. The relationship of people and the spot on which they stand creates and recreates their tools of work and their social lives, the relationship of the inorganic reflecting back on the organic. Culture and geographic boundaries isolated from social class are meaningless.

Moreover, the geographic standards isolate the ecosystems from labor, exchange, and profit, two factors at odds with each other as well as the environment. The absence of any discussion of labor or production in the geographic section-- pretending that transportation, communications, borders, and interdependence are somehow driven by something other than the productive process (labor/value/consumption)--is simply disingenuous.

It is probably to the credit of the organizational abilities of the educators focused on geography that this section is one of the more vaguely constructed and which does at least point to some relationship between institutions and economic activities. Still, even with this vague construction, it is likely that classroom educators will simply turn to the test to see what is important, just as they flocked for instructions on the MEAP at the MCSS conference.

Strand 3: Civics

I place particular importance on this strand, both because of what is in it and what is not. What is not in it, the content standards adopted in law, is what the MCSS leadership later called "core democratic values". We will address these absent but often-voiced criteria later.

The civics section begins, "Civic knowledge builds understanding about the exercise of power". But we are never urged to ask, "what is the basis for power?" nor are we given the modest clue that under any capitalist system, power lies in the ownership of the means of production: civic power is the power of property. With power disconnected from its context, in this case capital, competing social interests operate as fiction. There is no notice of an obvious weakness in governance, claims of political democracy meeting repeated realities of economic servitude. Here civics processes are left as a dogma, an unquestioned creed, above and outside the tests of life.

This section says, "All societies establish governments". There is evidence that this is not true, that governments as we know them, even in their most formative periods, only came to being when surpluses coupled with social, sexual, and class inequality grated enough against the separate parties that those with privilege established governments as weapons to protect their status. Again, the opening statement creates an extraordinarily constricted ground on which students and teachers are expected to operate. Rather than to teach "to the root" methods of investigation, students are merely invited to look at the flowers.

In the Michigan public law that adopts the MCSS standards, the civics section embraces the notion that students will explain the meaning and origin of the core democratic values of the "declaration of independence, the constitution, and other foundational documents". But each one of these values, to even begin to come to grips with what was what, requires a book, many books. Beyond the sweeping nature of this statement is the likelihood that most students will not be told that Jefferson was thrilled with the French revolution and all the bloodshed that attended to it, that throughout his life he was calling for the blood of tyrants and revolution. Instead, the democratic values, which were then and should be today seen as paeans to conflict and rebellion, calls to uprising, these defiant values are seen as what "provides social cohesion". Now, in the standards, these charged calls to treason are presented as the foundation to "seek consensus", the lowest common denominator of acquiescence to oppression.

Of course, the basis of this thinking grows from the belief that the U.S. is a "free" society. Recent scholarship on the downward spiral of women's rights after the adoption of the constitution is unnoticed. When one stops seeing work, the development of rational ideas, and sexuality as central issues of life, this could be true. But work is a central issue and freedom, every paragraph of the Bill of Rights, stops at the work place, or school-house, door. No one has freedom of speech at work, unless they own the work place. No student has freedom of speech in school, as the Supreme Court recently ruled in regard to K-12 newspapers. Beyond this harsh reality lies the fact that freedom cannot be seen as a simpleminded abstraction. As Anatole France said long ago, both the rich man and the poor man are equally free to sleep under a bridge in a cardboard box. But, again more importantly, students are not urged to ask the questions that go to the root, "What is freedom? What is the foundation of freedom in relation to work? What is a free society? Do I live in one? Am I free if I must sell my labor to live?". Instead, the U.S. as a free society is a given--an unquestioned dogma.

According to the standards, ours is a system based on "shared power". This is a step back, remarkably, from the notion of checks and balances, which at least held some notion of conflict. This shared power is bunk. Is Henry Ford sharing power with his workers? Did the *Detroit News* share power with its striking work force? Statements like this, again, can only be legitimated if power is not seen to be the exercise of real power (which under capitalism is the exercise of wealth/ownership), but as an idea set apart from social reality. Schools do not share power with children or teachers. Politicians only share the appearance of power. Ruling classes exercises power---which is in every instance met by resistance from competing classes. But rather than examine the roots of

conflict, students are invited to deny conflict exists, precisely on point with the Michigan Future project to create a united work force. Nothing in the civics standards mentions the critique of tyranny which served as the intellectual foundation of the U.S.

Then, to close the section, "all students will understand how the world is organized politically, the formation of American foreign policy, and the role the U.S. plays in the international arena". Not only is such a sweeping grasp worthy of, at least, a Harvard dissertation, it is eroded by the absence of the words "imperialism", "cheap labor", "raw materials", "markets". In the absence of these terms, no one can begin to understand American foreign policy. Presumably, some Michigan regulator of knowledge knows how the world is organized politically--and can outline that in a few scintillating paragraphs on a standardized exam which would be read by a suburban middle-class American who is unlikely to have visited the slums of Calcutta.

In sum, what the civics section creates is a form of witless nationalism, the very opposite of the insurgent intentions of the founding fathers and mothers, probably like that which motivated the very well educated and prominent thinker--Robert Macnamara, test-taking whiz kid, losing strategist of the war on Vietnam.[33]

Strand 4: The Economic Perspective

While this strand actually does mention production, it does not do so in the section adopted into law. The strand presents "how the economic forces of scarcity and choice affect the management of personal financial resources, shape consumer decisions regarding purchase, use and disposal of goods...and affect the economic well-being of individuals". This inverts and mystifies economics, which must necessarily begin with the role of work/labor, the evolution of ever more collective forms of production and interchange, and the social systems that evolve from and reflect back on these relations of production and exchange. Again, more significantly in a document designed as an educational tool, students are offered an uncritiqued opening ground (the ant's Silverdome) and no method of questioning (or even doubting) its existence is advanced.

Instead, the strand posits scarcity and individual consumption, a dog-eat-dog world. This is a partisan position, a politicized view of the middle and upper classes of the U.S. In fact, scarcity is not the natural state of all human kind and has not been for about a century. What produces scarcity today is inequality, the product of a social system used to mask class privilege, as are the standards themselves. Rather than posing the student as a potential worker, as the overwhelming majority of people in the world are, the strand's partisan view positions the student as a consumer, assuming the student has considerable resources to consume from the start. There is a shortage of Reeboks and you need to figure out how to get some.

Let us contrast this with the real shortage of good health care in the U.S., and the fact that the federal government is now paying New York hospitals to NOT train doctors

(*New York Times*, 2-18-97). Scarcity meets non-choice, regulation, and deepens inequality in life and death matters like health care.

Notable, under "business choices" the strand fails to note the sole choice of a surviving business: profits; nor does it note the source of all business wealth: labor.

In a section on the "role of government", the partisan regulations never mention the key debate on the issue: is government a neutral arbitrator of disputes, or is government a weapon in the hands of the class in power? Absent this debate, any discussion of government in regard to economics is hollow.

"Trade" is presented as a "voluntary exchange" on what is presented as a level playing field. Again, this is a partisan, middle- and upper-middle-class vision of the world. Trade is not voluntary. Under capitalism, which must expand or die, trade is a necessity. Trade does not take place on a level playing field. This is more a matter of big fish eating the small. It is remarkable that the role of international trade is presented without ever using the word "imperialism." At the opposite end, workers must trade their labor for pay. Most people in the world are in this position. It is not a voluntary one. It's the result of being born into classes which do not own much land or productive equipment, which must work or starve.[34]

Extensions of this standard use the story of the ants and the grasshopper to illustrate the economic point. In brief, the fable concerns a group of hard-working ants who spend their summer in production, while a lazy grasshopper outside their door plays his fiddle. Come winter, the ants are toasty warm inside, enjoying the fruits of the summer's labor. The grasshopper comes knocking, cold and hungry, looking for a share. The ants turn him away.

This is an Amos and Andy story for the working class. The working ants are caricatured and their context, labor that owns the products of its work, inverted from reality. In fact, as most working people know, they do the work, the grasshopper owns the proceeds, and rarely shares.

What is afoot here is the foundation of the thinking that underpins a corporate state, and over-arching unity of business, government and labor consolidated under a national banner, ready to shift the burden of scarcity onto someone else.

Strand 5: Investigation

"Students will use methods of social science investigation to answer questions about society". Keeping in mind that the tools of social science are quite limited in Michigan, this is a partisan and inverted, up-side down, middle-class view of how to study society. It is not possible to seriously conduct a study without a notion of what central questions to ask, already absent in the initially incoherent vision of the world presented in earlier

strands. If we do not know the key motive forces of history, or even much about that debate, just what questions shall we ask? Will it be, "What is the material base of, and employment of, power around here?" Or will it be, "How do I question in ways that will appeal to the reviewer on the exam?" A real investigation is not simply conducted to answer questions, but to develop a template of good questions that could be used to analyze any text. And a real investigation is whole, not limited to certain aspects or disciplines, but an investigation that includes all of the facets of testing ideas, math to science to art and literature. Here, though, the investigation will be for an officially acceptable answer.

What is happening here is offering students instruments of hegemony (cultural rule) and suggesting that they play in this sandbox alone, never leaping out. In a capitalist world, it makes little sense to discuss media and technology without wondering about the ownership and motives of the texts at hand. But this minimal clue to unravelling the veils of reality is never offered.

There is a notable emphasis on technology and media in this section. Two things are absent: the thought social studies might be conducted in your immediate society (go interview your neighbor--draw the geography of power in your school, i.e., who has a window and a telephone?), and that when using media and technology, thoughtful people wonder about the standpoint of those who own the media and technology.

While the strand does suggest "Investigations may be carried out by individuals or by groups" it never notes that all knowledge is developed socially, collectively, yet that the knowledge students supposedly attain in this process will be tested and rewarded or punished individually.

Investigation, at least since Aristotle, has been considered the practice of using critical methods to get at the heart, the origins, of an issue at hand. In social studies, it is reasonable to ask, "Where does society come from?" But this preliminary question, one of several questions which could make an inquiry into social studies a rational pursuit, is never raised. Instead, the existence of society as it is is presented as a given, as the default mode from which there is no escape.

Strand 6: Public Discourse and Decision Making

Good stuff, on the face of it: students are supposed to "trace the origins of issues". But what is the notion of how that is to be done. What is the origin of an issue? Genes? God? Sexuality? What? If we know not, if this is utterly tentative, not simultaneously tentative and complete, then why bother? More significantly, perhaps, is the unfortunate reality that the issues now in public discourse are hardly issues. For example, in the eyes of some of the authors of the standards, there are "two sides to every question". But, as we have seen, the questions the authors urge are about the interior of the ant's silverdome, not the possibility that something may be outside of it. Are there two sides to the debate

between, say, Anne Frank and Hitler? Will a well-constructed argument for Hitler be graded well?

Under the sub-head "persuasive writing" state formulators of the document have said, "Every paper should begin with the word 'should'...."This rather neatly sums up the mechanical notions of investigation and persuasion herein. What about, "These are the times that try men's souls", the opening of a rather persuasive document that helped foment a revolution?

Strand 7: Citizen Involvement

Citizen involvement: here we get to the heart of the matter: "how one acts in accordance with the law". Whose law is this? The unwritten law that now segregates schools and society in my home community, Detroit? The laws once on the books that made unions illegal? The laws that today make it legal to use the hidden violence of starvation as a weapon against the unemployed to force them to work for less than the (legal) minimum wage? The illegal invasion of Grenada? The mining of Nicaragua's harbors? The assassination of the head of Iran in the 1950s? What would the bus boycott look like without Ms. Park's defiance of the law? Are we discussing the law that makes it fair and equitable for multi-million dollar companies to force people into the streets because they cannot afford to pay for heat? Are we interrogating the relationship of the Nuremburg Law, making it a crime of death to obey inhumane laws, to, say, the actions of Wirtz, the commander at Andersonville, and the people who now own for-profit prisons in the U.S., a country which requires massive unemployment in the world?

Again, what is absent here is a fundamental social studies question: where does law come from and who does it serve? The ant in the Silverdome will declare it a law of nature: the origin of rain is a hose.

What is Absent From the Social Studies Standards

In a society propelled by inequality, rooted in birth-right by class, race and sex, those words are never mentioned in the standards. Nor is injustice, creation of value, labor, exploitation, or revolution ever addressed in any part of the standards adopted in law. The "core democratic values" as defined later on, and not yet part of the law, never describe one of the most revolutionary ideas of the founding period in the U.S., the separation of church and state. Nor do they ever get to the fundamental idea that drove the notion of democracy: the critique of tyranny (which, again, goes back beyond Aristotle). Instead, as a core democratic value, we get the "right to private property", a value which has a lot to do with capitalism and little to do with any positive notion about democracy.

The definition of "core democratic values" is heaped with hollow phrases like "public good". It is if the revolution of 1776 had no ideological or material base, and as if we had learned nothing since then. For example, where is "the right to organize and bargain collectively"? Where is the right to be free of hunger and want? Where is the right to revolution itself (excluded from the core values)?

Perhaps more critically is a list of those words, concepts, and questions which any serious investigator doing a study of our society today would consider obvious and important. Incredibly, in the public law about the way we will conduct social studies, these words are never mentioned, or never defined:

Labor
Class
Racism
Sexism
Sexuality
Profit
Inequality
Exploitation
Imperialism
Injustice
Revolution

In Closing

I want to close with two thoughts: what came to be and what can be done. As outlined above, I went to the state convention of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies in Dearborn, Michigan, in February, 1997. I had friends there. Some of them wrote the standards; others support the standards. The people who wrote the standards are people of good will who would decry racism and probably put their jobs on the line to defeat any appearance of racism in their classrooms. Indeed, I know specific instances of authors who have.

I can offer no explanation of why people of good conscience would write the Michigan standards except to repeat what they have said to me: they believe the standards will help make education in Michigan more equitable.

I am happy to work in a community, education, where vigorous debate is still tolerated. I disagree with their views, vehemently. I think their beliefs are naive.

At the social studies convention, two things struck me: the continued segregation of our profession and the moths to flame eagerness of educators who want to learn how to teach to the test, how to get along. But we live in a world where at least the elites know the answer to Rodney King's question, "Can't we all get along?", is: "No".

Educators are about to enter an era when about 95% of the teachers will be white, around 50% of the students will be children of color. We are among the last working people in our communities with stable jobs and health benefits. The schools where our collective work creates the hope of our society are now the central points of our communities. We have seen our tax systems shifted onto the backs of poor and working people, and those people now often resent our wages. Our power rises from gaining control of what we create, the product and the process. This means we need to recognize that our power can only be collective, in conjunction with other school workers, parents, and children. We need to decide to take sides.

If we do not act consciously and deliberately on what is rightly seen in many ways as a political and cultural invasion, we become instruments of our own future oppression. Our futures are inextricably tied to the future of the children we teach. If we either are used to tamp down their expectations, or to impose standards from a culture that is partially alien to their experience, we will find ourselves very alone--not unlike the ant in the Silverdome who cannot find her way, or the ants whose grasshopper boss is likely to leave them cold in the winter. It is the professional responsibility of educators to lead the way in battles around the curriculum, class size, and more just systems of taxation--issues which tie us to parents and kids--to stand up now, before it is too late. We should not stand by while standards like these are imposed on our children. Teachers and parents have the option to demand that children not be subjected to the examination. Children can be absent. For educators, all of the issues are bargainable, subject to contract demands and job actions. In the absence of teacher union support, teachers, parents and kids need to organize outside the traditional groupings, and return inside when they have enough power to begin to force change.

In fact, there is a social study to demonstrate this has already happened, in history. Margaret Haley, a radical feminist and organizer of the beginnings of teacher unionism in the early 1900s, designed the framework for the alliance, demands, and strategy I propose. She united children, parents, and educators (all school workers) in fights around class size, academic freedom, and fair taxes. She frequently won. On her deathbed, she called for a more class conscious, critically aware, movement of educators.[35]

As I suggested at the outset, good teaching comes from very specific ingredients which cannot be standardized: the particular passions, abilities, and strengths of a teacher, the unique individual student filled with specific cognitive and affective issues, a community with idiosyncratic resources. All of this must be wrapped in an atmosphere of committed love: a classroom where the teachers' paradigm is open to critique and honesty is privileged to the point it is possible to take risks to gain and test knowledge. And all of this is negated by standardization and testing which promotes ignorance, false competition, segregation, dishonesty, and disharmony.

I suspect there will be some concern that I wish to substitute my own partisan curriculum regulation for the one chosen by the education elites of Michigan. No. I oppose standards, regulated knowledge. I oppose them in the U.S. and every other society. I favor Dewey and his line, who argued that the best text book is outside the

door, the books in the library, the books you write or film, and the community around you. You do not need a formal, government-sponsored (or corporate) guide to figure out the terrain. You don't need a test whipsawing your kids against the school down the street in a frantic effort to improve a meaningless score--and get funded. Social studies are all around you. You need good questions, the willingness to risk changing yourself when the light of social practice says there is a gap between you and your ideals, and the courage to fight on the side of comprehending and transforming reality.

Notes

1 This shipwreck of socialism which claimed to press forward democracy and equality but practiced technological development with the promise of future abundance is best summed up in E.H. Carr's *What is History*?, Vintage Books, 1961 p191.

2 *Emile*, John Jacques Rosseau, Gallinard, Paris, p277. The Educational Testing Service has serious problems with cheating on its national exams. See *New York Times*, 9-29-9.

3 *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1973, Oxford, p813.

4 See *New York Times*, 30 September 1997, for a discussion of the profitability of the Educational Testing Service and its private subsidiaries.

5 For a discussion of Michigan's lead role in the past, see James Lorence, 1997, *Organizing the Unorganized*, Suny Press, New York, page 1.

6 *Kids Count in Michigan, 1996 Data Book*, Lawson Printing, Battle Creek Michigan (fax-517-371-4546). "Michigan Statistical Abstract, 1996", Michigan Employment Security System Research Division, University of Michigan Press p95. Re: food stamps: "No Breaks at All", by Ann Mullen, *Detroit Metro Times*, 2 April 1997, Re: median income, *Detroit Free Press* 29 September 1997.

7 WWJ radio interview of 8-31-97. Proponents of standards say the way to solve this problem is to have every teacher on the same page every day, giving the same tests. See, Sara Mosle, "The Answer is National Standards", *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 28 October 1996.

8 *Double Exposure*, Charles Hartman editor, M. Sharpe Publications, New York, 1997 p218.

9 *UAW Research Bulletin*, prepared by the Research Department. Summer 1997.

10 Jack Kresnak, *Detroit Free Press*, March 4, 1997, WWW edition. For a discussion of

the debate between President Clinton and House Speaker Gingrich, who unlike Engler, currently opposes national education standards, see the *New York Times*, 9/9/97. *Education Week* on 10-1-97 indicates that the national standards in math and science have been delayed because of debates about the use of calculators and the English-only literacy exam. This tactical dispute will not slow by much the drive to nationally regulated knowledge.

11 For a discussion of the continuing tendency for inequality in the U.S. economy, see *The State of Working America, 1996-97* by Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, Sharpe and Company, 1997 New York. To examine the position of American education in this framework, see Patrick Shannon, *Reading Poverty*, Heinneman, New York (forthcoming); and *Cultural Politics and Education* by Michael Apple, Teachers College Press 1996, especially Chapter 4. For a philosophical explanation, see Georg Lukacs, *The Ontology of Social Being*, Merlin Press 1978, London, especially the volume "Labor".

12 Franklin Folsom, 1991, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, University Press of Colorado, Niwot, Colorado. p69.

13 Ravitch is positioned as a rightist demanding a traditional national canon. Freire is the most widely-known educator in the world and is commonly seen as a Marxist. Everywhere Freire has worked in revolutionary societies, he has supervised the immediate creation of standardized curricula and the writing of textbooks. See Rich Gibson, "The Promethean Literacy", unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Penn State University 1995, available from UMI Dissertation Services, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Stalin supervised the tightening of the curricular standards in the U.S.S.R. in the twenties. For a discussion of the role of standardization in education, see Raymond Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, University of Chicago Press, 1962 p25-41.

14 *New York Times*, March 6, 1997.

15 For more thorough discussions of these assertions see Harvey Kaye, "Whose History is it?", *Monthly Review*, November 1996; Craig A. Lockard, "National Standards and the Ownership of World History", *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, October, 1995; Michael Whelan, "National Standards Are Not The Answer", *Theory and Research in Social Education*, July, 1996; Kim McCollum-Clark, "National Council of Teachers of English, Corporate Philanthropy, and National Education Standards: Challenging the Ideologies of English Education Reform", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Penn State University, December, 1995.

16 For a detailed examination of opposition to standardized texts, basals, see my WWW page Geocities:Athens/forum/1875. Click on "Textbooks".

17 *FIrst Yearbook of the John Dewey Society: The Teacher and Society*, edited by William Kilpatrick, 1937, D. Appleton-Century Company, New York p105.

18 For a discussion on textbooks in schools, see: Mark Schug, Richard Western, Larry Enochs, "Why do teachers use social studies textbooks", in *Social Education* 61 (February 1997) 96-101.

19 McCullom-Clark p59. While the right sees bogus conspiracies everywhere, there is indeed an education establishment: people involved in private organizations claiming to faithfully represent the public interest. Among these are the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the AFT, the NEA, NCATE, and so on, each a dues or foundation generated private organization, often sharing leadership.

20 *USA Today*, September 29, 1997.

21 See also Harvey Kaye's discussion of the Olin and Bradley Foundations' funding activities, *Monthly Review*, November 1996 p25. The outpouring of grief (he was afforded two full-page obituaries in the *New York Times*) around Shanker's death in March, 1997, came mostly from the education establishment. But Shanker was no friend of education. He got his start in the racist Ocean Hill Brownsville strike and never looked back. He was deeply involved with American intelligence (the AFL-CIO spends about 1/2 its dues overseas) through the National Endowment for Democracy and the American Institute for Free Labor Development. He was a founder of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an organization pressing the worst craft union interests in teachers' ranks (and whose tests for national certification are wholly racist). He used AFT money, drawn heavily from minority teachers, to attack affirmative action. Shanker forcefully pressed an agenda of the unity of business, politicians, and labor, under a rubric of fervent nationalism. In all, like a crowned thug, he did nothing but help organize despair as his union collaborated in the collapse of the nation's big-city schools. His chosen protege, Sandra Feldman, the AFT president on Shanker's death, has followed Shanker's path even more stridently, recently taking out ads in the Detroit radio market urging standardized tests as a method of school reform. For a brief biography of Feldman, see *Education Week*, 14 May, 1997 p3.

22 I interviewed dozens of educators at the NCSS convention in 1996 and the MCSS convention in 1997. The linkage of standardized tests and jobs was repeatedly raised as the crucial reason to support standards.

23 Interview with my colleague Craig Register, 4-2-97, contained in unpublished thesis, April 1997. For a discussion of the Saturn impact on schools, see *Education Week* 14 May 1997 p38. Here Albert Shanker praises Saturn and compares it to a "charter school".

24 *Education Week*, April 12, 1995. "Special Report on the Standards", p10-13. That NCSS is influenced to some degree by textbook corporations is probably like arguing that President Clinton may or may not be influenced by massive contributions from nations and individuals. It is important to point out that both the national organization, NCSS, and state affiliates rely on textbook monies--to the point that the NCSS magazine runs adds from Disney, Harper-Collins, the Educational Testing Service, etc., an unusual practice. NCSS and state affiliates also draw heavily on corporate dollars to support their

annual conventions, a practice following most other professional discipline organizations.

25 Robert Johnston, "District Push to Get Students to Forgo Test Assailed", *Education Week*, February 26, 1997 6-7. Another Birmingham student won a full journalism scholarship to Northwestern, one of the top journalism schools in the U.S. She too failed the writing exam. On 9-28-97, the Birmingham superintendent changed his mind. Quoted in a banner headline in the *Eccentric*, he said that revisions made to the exams made it acceptable.

26 It is true that there are many others in the contest. On a state and national scale, there is competition for the attentions of school. It is tempting to reduce the competition to struggles between old money (big manufacturers,etc.) and new (techno-based firms, investment companies, etc.) but this seems to grossly oversimplify an extraordinarily complex interplay of standpoints. For example, The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a conservative think-tank which sometimes guides Governor Engler's actions, has a World Wide Web site full of prescriptions for education. Some of their thoughts will be noted in this piece. Nevertheless, the organizing actions of Michigan Future make it a more interesting intruder. See HTTP://www.mackinac.org.viewpoin/1993cv/v9321.htm.

27 Available from Michigan Future, Inc. P.O. Box 130416, Ann Arbor MI 48113-0416 (fax: 313-769-4064).

28 The Detroit newspapers beat an 18-month strike of six unions into submission in February, 1997. Detroit is home to the Big Three automakers who reported combined profits in the vicinity of $13 billion in 1996, down about 20% from the previous year, mostly because of a strike at GM. (UAW Research Bulletin, January-February 1997). The Ford Rouge Plant, once the largest industrial center in the world with more than 100,000 workers, now employs less than 10,000 people, many of them working for a Japanese iron company.

29 *Kids Count In Michigan Data Book* 31-36. In an off-the-record interview with a top official of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies, I was told that "Certainly, those exams all measure class and race. That's it. But what else can we do?" See also *Detroit Free Press*, February 27, 1997, "Lawmaker Opposes New Student Test", 13a.

30 For a discussion of the different ways class and communities influence impressions of literacy, see *Ways With Words* by Shirley Brice-Heath, Cambridge University Press 1983. Interview with the coordinator of the Detroit Council for the Social studies who asked to remain anonymous. Thomas Popkewitz, *The Changing Patterns of Power*, Suny Press, 1993 p276.

31 Michael Apple, *Education and Power*, Introduction to 1997 edition, Teachers College Press, New York.

32 Frederick Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery", in Bertell Ollman, *The United States Constitution*, New York University Press, 1990 p91.

33 Robert Macnamara was one of Henry Ford's "Whiz Kids", bright young managers. He later helped formulate the policies which drove the war in Vietnam, killing over one million Vietnamese and about 60,000 North Americans. He then led the World Bank. In 1996, Macnamara admitted that he had lied to the American people about the war, which he called a mistake.

34 For an elaboration of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans are not owners, but workers who have no choice but to sell their labor, see *The State Of Working America, 1996-97*, Mishel editor, M.E. Sharpe, New York.

35 Celia Zitron, *The New York City Teachers Union*, Humanities Press, New York, 1968.