

**Boyer, W. H. (2006). *Myth America: Democracy vs. capitalism*. New York: Apex Press. 133 – 165.**

*We can have democracy in this country or we can have great concentrated wealth in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.*

—Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

## **Introduction**

The worldwide protests against globalization that began in 1999 were driven largely by awareness of the bankruptcy of current global capitalism and reaction against the ways in which giant corporations are involved in secret arrangements through the World Trade Organization. The protests recognized that we are not moving toward global democracy but rather toward global oligarchy—control by the rich and the powerful—and the United States has been the leader in this globalization movement.

Enron provided useful unintentional education of the American public in 2001 when its bankruptcy revealed that the corporate managers had lied about their profitability and people throughout the United States lost their retirements, tied to 401 K accounts. At the same time the corporate CEOs skimmed billions for themselves.

As an educator, I am interested in the kind of citizen education where people in and out of schools have information that will help them regain control over government and the laws affecting the economy. Changes are needed in nearly all our institutions in order for them to become more democratic. Unfortunately many people have become accustomed to an anti-democratic culture.

Anthropologists have often used the analogy that if a fish were a scientist the last thing it would discover would be water. Fish do not see water; they only see through it. It explains why people have a problem understanding their own culture: They seldom know how their thoughts are being shaped by the ideas and beliefs imbedded like lenses in the culture that surrounds them.

Extrication from this trap is not easy, but it is essential. People cannot control their future if they are driven by blind beliefs. Harvey Cox, professor of religion at Harvard, says in "The Market as God," (*Atlantic Monthly*, March 99, 18-23) that capitalism has become the new religion. Most Americans are true believers in capitalism as if it were a religion, and most American institutions are driven by faith based capitalistic rules. Even our schools are institutions that prepare us to be efficient contributors to a capitalist economic order, though they tell students that they live in a democracy. The new "age of communication" mainly adds technology to make the current system more efficient, without questioning its goals or values.

Americans lose control over the meaning of capitalism when they equate "capitalism" with "democracy." American foreign policy uses this deception when the United States is said to be dedicated to furthering democracy in the world; but the truth is that the objective is mainly to further capitalism. The most favored term is freedom. When the terms "capitalism," "democracy," and "freedom" are intertwined in domestic or foreign policy, there is no chance of conceptual clarity. They mesh together. That is the point of meshing them—public *misunderstanding is essential to the perpetuation of the power structures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.*

The word "freedom" has a positive halo effect in most parts of the world. It is often used to paralyze thought, so that capitalism and corporate power are "free" to carry on. If we distinguish between "capitalism" and "democracy," we engage in radical political philosophy for they are not the same. I want to make such distinctions in this book to help people clarify thinking, gain more control over ideology and social philosophy, and thus have a better chance to control their institutions instead of being controlled by them.

I remember people saying in the 1930s, "The reason the unemployed have no jobs is that they are lazy." At that time I first saw how people were exploited by public ignorance and how politics and beliefs about human nature came together. When shipyards opened and the war economy made work available for everyone, these "lazy" people changed amazingly almost overnight. The problem was not human

nature but an obsolete government that denied work to people.

After World War II, the GI Bill was a massive government program provided to veterans to gain higher education. It is now considered to have produced one of the highest national economic returns on investment. The return to the veterans and to the public was equally high. This planned economic stimulation through government produced jobs and housing and provided a basis for optimism, replacing the pessimism of the 1930s.

My life-long interest in democracy began in my three years in the Army Air Force during World War II, for the military was a vivid example of what democracy is not. I was surprised at the ease with which people raised in a "democratic" society could be manipulated and rapidly transformed to obey orders. I saw that the military psychology of "obedience" underlay the psychology of the very fascist countries with which we were at war, and in my first book, *Education for Annihilation* (1972) I raised the question of whether such deep involvement in war would transform most Americans psychologically. It was clearly transforming the United States economically, as Eisenhower correctly warned us in the 1950s regarding our creation of a "military-industrial" economy. The use of Keynesian economics, where government was used to prime the pump of the economy, increasingly became "Keynesian militarism," as government stimulated the economy through war production. Even Thomas L. Friedman, writing in the *New York Times Magazine* (March 28, 1999), makes this admission: "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonalds cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15." War production and business continue to be highly intertwined. American capitalism has never been economically successful without the stimulus of military production. America continues to be the world's leading producer of war machines, available for export as a profitable commodity.

The anti-democratic, anti-intellectual character of the military culture encouraged my search in the opposite direction—toward the philosophers of western civilization. I had studied engineering before the war, but after my military experience I returned to the university to study philosophy. My central concern was with the question: *If a social system such as the military could dehumanize, why couldn't a different kind of system humanize?*

After graduation, I worked in the democratization phase of the American occupation in Germany. It was a time in history when Americans overseas were actually doing some good deeds, especially with the Marshall plan, which funded European recovery. Later in graduate work and then high school and university teaching, I focused on how people could learn to gain control of their institutions. The right kind of education seemed crucial, and this idea has propelled me ever since. We stand at the end of what is often called a century of progress, yet the chainsaw bulldozer society continues full speed ahead, depriving future generations of a healthy planet and a sustain-able society.

In the 1960s I helped develop community organizations to try to save special places—the giant redwoods of California and some undeveloped shorelines in Hawaii. There were some successes but the forces of destruction dominated, so I shifted to the idea of large-scale long range planning of the future as the alternative to our standard piece-meal mitigation and market-oriented non-planning. I proposed a national park to save the old growth redwoods, lobbied for its creation, and contributed to a movement that established the Redwood National Park. A later plan for classifying the Smith River in California was developed on the floor of my cabin with local people and eventually led to protecting this exceptional river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It remains the only coastal California River without any dam.

But over all, the world is moving entirely in the wrong direction. United States leaders continue to promote world domination by multinational corporations. Instead of schools educating democratic citizens they primarily prepare them to be consumers and producers—grist for the corporate mill. Instead of teaching them how to be involved in democratic planning, we try only to **mitigate** the social and environmental effects of capitalist "growth economics." We avoid real planning altogether.

Oregon and Hawaii (where I taught for 20 years) were pioneers in centralized land use planning, a bold step that limited the old belief in absolute rights of land ownership. During the 1990s I focused on land use planning in Oregon, which had become a national model through reforms started in the early 1970s under Governor McCall.

Public involvement in planning the future has increased in many states, but most government is fragmented by separate interest groups vying for power, while candidates are usually marketed for their personalities. There are no elections of political goals. Think of it: we vote for the candidates we hope will

do the things we want done, but there is no way we can vote for the actual things we want done.

The **election of goals** became my central interest. I focused on environmental rights as an extension of human rights, and I initiated a bill and then an initiative that could create environmental rights in the Oregon State Constitution. One objective was to grant legal standing and rights to future generations so that natural ecological systems could be protected in courts of law. The other objective was to shift the burden of proof to polluters, requiring them to show that they were not producing a threat to human health. These steps would extend principles in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which does not at present include environmental rights.

Such rights would provide more power to the public and permit greater participation in the creation of enforceable human rights. Expansion of enforceable human rights moves us in the direction of a global, legally enforceable system of world law. Naturally, such a future comes squarely in conflict with the current control of the world by multinational corporations and nations.

Since such a future bucks most trends, I am asked: Am I optimistic or pessimistic? Well, pessimistic about most trends, yet optimistic about the largely untapped **potential** of people to recreate their own culture and institutions. But the United States is a major obstacle. Parading worldwide as the leader of democracy, the U.S. in reality is using its power to impose corporate capitalism throughout the world. This requires a system of propaganda through the schools, the media, and advertising—propaganda which puts blinders on the public. However, the great ideas of freedom and democracy still contain the possibilities of a better world and the development of real global community.

What should we do? **We desperately need national and global priorities that are ecologically sustainable and economic systems that are driven by human rights policies.** Then we can and must create institutions where technology is controlled for human use rather than for war and for corporate profit.

How to move from here to there? It will require educational and political movements. It requires understanding where we are going and analyzing alternatives. As the civil rights movement of the 1960s demonstrated, peaceful forms of change can come from democratic means, but if democracy is ineffective, change may require non-violent resistance. Democracy is civilization's great non-violent instrument of social change but when conditions are highly unjust, the failure of non-violent means to produce change can then lead to change through violence.

*The central American myth is that democracy is the American way of life.* Democracy, however, requires an educated public. The sad reality we face is that the prospect of a public educated to issues and alternatives is perceived as threatening to the privileges of the minority that hold most of our wealth and power, so virtually all of our institutions work to disarm this threat. Operating with an effective confusion of "information" with propaganda, our media, our schools, our corporations, and our government support information technology and produce an increasing flood of its product. Through what I call "the strategic use of trivia," members of the public are under the illusion that the "information" they receive is educating them on subjects that matter. In fact they are by and large being fed what the institutions that perpetuate the power of corporate America wish to feed them.

I am writing this book at age 78 when the temptation is to coast, have fun, and spend one's savings. But after a half century of involvement in education and politics, I believe I can contribute some ideas to help redirect political change. Because I look at alternatives that can create a better twenty-first century, I have been called a "futurist," and this book is my way of developing theory and practical steps for the reform of politics, economics, and education, hoping to lead to that better future. As a professor, an activist, and a llama rancher, I have seen in my lifetime changes which are encouraging and also changes which are so discouraging that they could lead to the termination of the human race. In fact, in the last few years I have personally experienced some of the deadly legacy created in the nuclear age.

In 1945, when I was in the Air Force and stationed down wind from the Hanford nuclear plant, there were high releases of radioactive iodine. I found recently that I had acquired thyroid cancer from the releases and I am now trying to control the progress of the disease. Others were also affected by those radioactive releases; and we are in a class action suit against the Department of Energy. The major corporations involved in Hanford are actual objects of the suit and, unbelievably, the Department of Energy has provided the corporations with over \$55 million of public money to pay their attorneys to fight us. This is one of many lessons about connections between government, the military, and nuclear power.

I hope that many others believe, as I do, that we have a fundamental responsibility to future

generations. I want to show in this book ways in which future generations are in jeopardy through our present institutions and the ways in which we can make changes that protect them. Creation of the future has usually been limited to the powerful, but it now can be an opportunity for all of us. What we must do is to take the myth of American democracy and turn it into reality. This requires analysis of our institutions to see if they are viable or obsolete. Each chapter involves ways to assess American institutions and how to take steps toward necessary change.

The central theme is how dominance and oligarchy through corporate capitalism is tied to increasing concentration of wealth and power. This must be changed if democracy and human rights are to prevail in the twenty-first century. The belief that a bad society is caused mainly by bad people is a major myth that hinders structural and institutional change. To claim that greedy people are the main problem ignores the way in which an institution such as corporate capitalism makes people greedy. We had better learn to change our institutions if we are to have better people.

## Chapter 1 The Upside Down Society

*A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives superficial appearance of being right.*

—Thomas Paine

*If we appear to be headed for a future of societal and environmental disaster we need to recognize that we have the knowledge to design a desirable and workable future. A better future for the human race is now possible but it requires that we conduct an honest assessment of where we are, how we got here, where we are heading, and what needs to be done.*

### Why We Need To Change Our Twentieth Century Institutions

*We Have An Upside Down Society*; Instead of promoting democracy and human rights our government::

- Promotes global free trade without ecological or economic justice standards.
- Blocks empowerment of the poor in order to enrich the wealthy.
- Expands national military power instead of creating world law.
- Advocates human rights but supports national sovereignty.
- Blames unemployment on schools instead of public policy.
- Uses schools to reinforce the trends that create the upside down society.
- Supports petroleum-based transportation while global warming is increasing.
- Accelerates the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few.
- Relies on technology rather than public policy to solve environmental problems.
- Subsidizes growth in areas where growth is already destructively out of control.
- Subsidizes products that threaten human health while medical costs expand.
- Creates more and more nuclear waste without having any means of safe disposal.
- Encourages the use of wealth to control elections instead of campaign finance reform.
- Gives more power to contrived corporate "persons" than to natural persons.
- Allows the release of large amounts of chemicals into the environment without knowing the effects on health and the biosphere.
- Avoids policies and discussions of equitable wealth and income distribution.
- Permits people who make money from money and their investments to pay lower taxes (capital gains) than those who work
- Supports growth by consuming the natural heritage of future generations.
- Permits cities to expand into farmland, diminishing future capacity to grow food.
- Allows over fishing without meaningful controls to sustain the resources.
- Avoids long range planning, reacts only to crises.
- Subsidizes mining operations which destroy public land.
- Provides subsidy to tobacco farmers while their product is killing 420,000 people each year.

(And this list is just a start).

### The Example of Global Warming

Leading scientists have been trying desperately to awaken the world to the threat of global warming. In 1995, a team of 1,500 scientists worldwide produced a report called the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which concluded that there is "a discernible human influence" on the earth's climate because of the greenhouse effect caused by the buildup of heat-trapping chemicals in the atmosphere. President Clinton admitted that the "overwhelming balance of evidence and scientific opinion is that it is no longer a theory but now a fact that global warming is real." In 1999 even Texas Governor George W. Bush

admitted that there is global warming. With only 4 percent of the world's population, the United States contributes 22 percent of the carbon dioxide. This makes the U.S. the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. By being tied highly to a fossil fuel economy, the economic pressures to avoid leadership in controlling global warming emissions are very strong.

The multinational corporations responded to the greenhouse effect in a way that reveals how corporate power has become a threat to the human future. In the past the response to scientific evidence by the Fortune 500 and other major corporations when policies might threaten their profit has often been to find a way to deceive the public by denying the validity of the evidence or to have a public relations misinformation campaign. The Global Climate Coalition was created by some of the most powerful corporations involved with fossil fuel to propagandize the public against taking action.

The group's action was so extreme that some members withdrew, and in 1997 British Petroleum began the break away from corporate orthodoxy by stating that "the policy dimensions of climate change is not when the link between greenhouse gasses and climate change is conclusively proven but when the possibility cannot be discounted." (*State of the World 2002*, 41).

The evidence on the relationship between global release of carbon dioxide and warming of the world's atmosphere became so well documented that it was undeniable and became the evidence for an attempt in 1997 to create the Kyoto treaty to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 2012 to 7 percent below 1990 levels. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said emissions must decline by 50 to 70 percent if humanity is to avoid drastic changes. Such changes could include a one-meter rise in global sea levels by 2100, leaving parts of New York, Amsterdam, Bombay, and Shanghai underwater.

Here is how corporations responded. They met after the Kyoto summit. Previous strategy had been to use the corporate sponsored Global Climate Coalition to provide a propaganda campaign for convincing the public that global warming was a "mere theory" for which nothing needed to be done. But when evidence was irrefutable, the next best strategy thought to preserve profits connected to a worldwide petroleum-based economy was to *get the United States to be the nation that would slow the transition instead of leading it*. They launched a national campaign alleging threats to the U.S. economy and with their campaign financing influence they persuaded the U.S. Senate to pass a Senate Resolution which kept the Senate from ratifying the Kyoto protocol. "The fossil fuel lobby spent \$13 million on TV ads to reinforce the opposition in the months before Kyoto (Gelbspan, 102)."

The Global Climate Coalition promoted a voluntary, market-based approach advantageous to U.S. business. Heavily supported by Enron and Exxon Mobil they sponsored ads and lobbied congress. Gelbspan said "with their relentless attacks on the world's scientific establishments and with their ceaseless interference in intergovernmental negotiations, the fossil fuel lobbies have been extraordinarily successful in blocking meaningful efforts to address the climate crisis (102)."

This use of the political power of global corporations should be a major lesson to every citizen that corporations will serve their own economic objectives even to the detriment of the rest of the human race. It also reveals that they have the economic power to distort or control governments that are supposed to represent the public.

Any plan for twenty-first century education must include ways to control the power of corporations. They now violate their original authorization to serve the public interest (see chapter 2) and have become controllers of the press and the government. They exploit human labor and consume irreplaceable natural resources. We do not need to totally eliminate corporations but rather to control their size, regulate their impact on environment and people, and restrict their political power. Education should help people understand where we are going so people are able to help provide a political counterforce to support the public interest. Corporations can be expected to provide strong resistance to such "citizenship" education.

Global warming may be the evidence we need to galvanize world wide political action, for the entire human race is in danger. In October 2000 the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most authoritative voice on the issue, concluded that new evidence shows man-made pollution has already contributed substantially to global warming, and the earth is likely to get *even hotter than previously predicted*. From these revised estimates, the scientists concluded that if greenhouse emissions are not curtailed, *the earth's average surface temperatures could increase by as much as 11 degrees by the end of the twenty-first century*. In 2002, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the nation's most august scientific body, said that climate change from global warming does not need to be

gradual but could dramatically accelerate and that on the basis of inference from the record, it is possible that projected changes will occur not through gradual evolution proportional to greenhouse concentrations, but through abrupt and persistent shifts. The Arctic and Antarctic ice is already melting. If an ecological holocaust equal to the changes of the period that produced dinosaur extinction is possible, should continued profits of corporations be the deciding factor for the human future?

Understanding this clear and present danger could be an effective means of global cooperation to change policies and create new plans for common human survival. If an enemy is needed to unify us, our life threatening obsolete institutions based on fossil fuels might be an appropriate enemy.

### ***The human race is now:***

- Altering between one-third and one-half of the earth's land surface.
- Depleting two-thirds of the world's marine fisheries.
- Raising the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by nearly 30 percent since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.
- Using more than half of all accessible fresh water, with large rivers such as the Colorado, Nile, and Ganges almost drained before they reach the sea.
- Driving about a quarter of the bird species to extinction.

Worse yet, the forces driving us toward disaster are not slowing, but rather are accelerating. In most industrial countries of the world, people think that "progress" requires economic expansion. Competitive capitalism is used as the main driving force. It is based on expansion without ecological sustainability—no limits—the more the better. Global free trade policies drive the system ever faster. With population expansion and with Third World nations just beginning to accelerate their economies by using the pre-ecological western model, forecasts of the future are dismal.

Economists such as Kenneth Boulding in his many speeches throughout the United States in the 1950s and 1960s called this model of expansion through exploitation of nature the cowboy economy—an extension of the eighteenth and nineteenth century view that there really are no environmental limits and that everything—people and nature—is for sale. Herman Daly, who helped pioneer ecological economics, says it is a way of producing massive involuntary subsidy for those who dominate by shifting pollution and resource costs onto others—especially future generations.

Most technology now serves this old order, which is concentrating wealth and power into a worldwide corporate oligarchy in which a small minority have most of the wealth and the power. The first goal of real education is to tell the truth about the world and help people see what is happening, instead of permitting themselves to be used as instruments to accelerate an obsolete world system structure over which people have little or no control. The longer we wait, the more difficult the task; earth's living systems are being run down and may soon prove to be irreversible.

### **Reverse Priorities**

The United States is not only an upside down society but is the world leader of *reverse* priorities. When I ask my students, "What are our country's current priorities in relation to *economics, social needs, and ecological systems*?" they know the obvious answer which is: economics is first. They also know what the correct ordering of priorities should be. Yet this common sense eludes national and state policy.

#### **NOW: WRONG PRIORITIES FROM**

1. Economics first
2. Human needs second
3. Ecology third

#### **FUTURE: RIGHT PRIORITIES TO**

1. Ecology first
2. Human needs second
3. Economics third

The biological life support system, another name for "biosphere," is the necessary prerequisite for everything—survival and a sustainable future. Therefore, ecological sustainability needs to be given first priority.

With a protected planet, the basic needs of people should be next. This commitment to human life would mean that economics had ethical priorities. Maximizing growth and profit—the current economic objectives— could then be accommodated only by making the environment and human needs the first priorities.

This is how it should work, but not how it currently works—quite the opposite. Economics overrides and is first. Then come some considerations of public needs. Ecological considerations are last, if included at all.

This is the upside-down society. This model is exported worldwide, particularly by the United States. Whether in the name of economic freedom, global markets, free trade, or whatever, the game being sold is really the upside down society.

The rationale is that if an economy expands, it will provide more to everyone, even though those at the top get most of it. This assumes that people's needs are automatically served by the "trickling down" of the wealth spent by the upper classes. Maybe a little safety net is needed here or there, but priorities should be based on economic benefits. If it is profitable, it is justified.

As for ecology, when natural systems have been polluted or degraded (aquifers, watersheds, soils, riparian areas, etc.), the presumption is that effects can be mitigated. This could be called mopping up. On the other hand, correcting these upside-down priorities would avoid the ecological degradation in the first place.

Mopping up is also used with respect to social needs, for the American model of expansion and trickle down economics always means that many at the bottom don't get much trickle. In that case, social agencies and churches are used as mop up squads to mitigate the effects on people who are left without economic benefits.

Upside down advocates consider the indicator of success to be GNP, the gross national product. Growth begets growth, and the more the better, with a dash of mitigation. The future will take care of itself if everyone works hard, invests, and contributes to increased productive efficiency. The meaning of life is to produce and consume. This ideology has even been introduced to over a billion Chinese and most of the developing world. *Gross production and consumption are increasingly considered the key to the future, not ethical policies or sustainable economics.*

### **The Opiate of the Masses**

Mass media—newspapers, television, radio, and magazines—are businesses that need to make sure that the belief systems underlying corporate capitalism are accepted by the public. The dialogue and debate on politics and economics is therefore narrow, shallow, and largely irrelevant to most crucial issues. If the corporate ownership of the media is not enough to ensure ideological orthodoxy, the corporate advertising which is the main source of profit will guarantee that content is carefully selected.

One of the most effective forms of political control is to make life a matter of entertainment to distract the public's attention from issues which could cause discontentment. Fun and entertainment becomes "the opiate of the masses," when it becomes central to the entire way of life. It constitutes an effective form of distraction from politics when golf, beer, television, and spectator sports are the centerpieces of popular culture. It is as if there is a corporate mantra that says:

LET THEM EAT TRIVIA.  
SANITIZE.  
DO NOT OFFEND.  
KEEP THEM LAUGHING.  
THEY WILL NOT KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THEM.



The Constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and speech have helped to keep enough openness so that it is possible to obtain books and magazines that do not promote corporate capitalism or American nationalism. In a totalitarian society, government would shut these intellectual doors. In the United States the closing of doors is mainly through media that affect the mass public. Corporate television has usually tried to minimize public understanding, while public television has opened some intellectual doors. But these doors have been increasingly shut from the 1980s on by Congressional budget cuts that drive public television programs into corporate sponsorship. Even the Jim Lehrer public television news show was increasingly put under corporate sponsorship. We can now experience reports on energy and the environment sponsored by petroleum corporations with predictable content. Also public radio, which trickles in a few valuable non-mainstream ideas, has increasingly been subject to the same budget restrictions as public television. Programs have become more politically safe. However, some local public radio stations have aired tapes on talks given by some top intellectuals, people ordinarily never heard by the public. The programs that are broadcast by Alternative Radio are a small opening to critical ideas, and people such as Ralph Nader and Noam Chomsky—usually heard only on university campuses—provide analysis of issues that far exceeds what is usually heard in the business controlled media.

### **Concealing Alternatives to the War System**

Our dangerous and obsolete world order is held to its present course by the extent to which people are unaware of the alternatives. For instance we take for granted that "nations" are a normal part of the world, yet they were invented quite recently. The nation-state system developed after the Thirty Years War in Europe with agreements made under the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

National sovereignty was created in place, of the sovereignty of kings. *This "modern" world of sovereign nations in which there is no binding law above individual nations means that the ultimate authority in international conflict is the military violence of nations.*

The violence that nations can produce is connected with the state of technology—from spears, to bows and arrows, to rifles, to cannons, to bombs, etc. This has "advanced" to the level of intercontinental nuclear missiles. Though national military power was as often used for aggression as for defense, the concept of "defense" through military violence turned into "mutual assured destruction," known as MAD. Nuclear violence employed for either aggression or defense leads to human genocide where there is actually no more national defense. All nations become vulnerable but can retain what has they continue to call a "national defense" system, even though it became a mutual annihilation system. With the help of word magic, this is institutional obsolescence at its highest level. Because of this structural anarchy in the nation-state system, military power is still the ultimate authority. Enforceable representative law replaces violence within most modern nations, so states such as Oregon and California will never go to war for the reason that enforceable federal law will take over in any irresolvable conflict between states. The domestic system was planned that way.

A parallel model is applicable to the world system—a federated structure with enforceable law would serve as the instrument to substitute law for war. Given the current dominance of the United States and the lack of public knowledge of world alternatives, the current model, the war system, is likely to continue. The United States has been a major obstacle in structural change, often using its veto power in the Security Council of the UN to prevent change which might reduce American dominance. If the American public follows the media and the old "realist" national-interest view of international politics, the American government will continue to be the keeper of the old order. What is called "education," therefore, can be either the keeper of ignorance that could lead to annihilation or the major instrument for twenty-first century survival.

Designing the future requires consideration of alternative systems, yet modern education is largely devoid of systems education, with the exception of technical systems—those which fit into engineering concepts and administrative efficiency. For example, it is well known that population

increases tend to be exponential based on doubling time and cannot continue without disaster. The dominant response is to rely on birth control devices even though there is now good evidence that the most effective basis for population stability is the education of women. The combination of these two elements is quite effective for stabilizing population in developed countries, but in most of the world poverty is still increasing, which undermines education and family planning by women. This increase in poverty results in large part from capitalist systems that profit from exploiting poverty through cheap labor—also from autocratic governments that maintain the two-class system of very rich and very poor.

Few Americans know that the United States conducts a foreign policy that contributes to population increase in poor sectors of the world, that have the majority of the world's population. American foreign policy is tied to support of the multinational corporate economic system and to arrangements with juntas and dictators that make resources and cheap labor available to these corporations. Governments that are uncooperative such as Chile, Cuba, or Nicaragua, receive the full force of American coercion ranging from economic pressures to direct military intervention. All this is well known to people who have access to the non-popular media, but for those who have not, books such as Michael Parenti's *Dirty Truths* points out that "U.S. administrations have worked hard to subvert constitutional and popularly accepted governments that pursued policies of social reform favorable to the downtrodden and working poor. . . the United States has supported some of the worst butchers in the world: Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, the Shah in Iran, Salazar in Portugal, Evren in Turkey, and even Pol Pot in Cambodia (59-60)." In the same book Parenti provides a more detailed analysis of U.S. foreign policy in the chapter "Making the World Safe for Hypocrisy."

### **The "Progress" Myth**

Economic and political systems tend to be "locked-in" when they are supported by the belief that growth will inevitably provide progress. We have become tied mainly to quantitative economic indicators in which an expanding "gross national product" (GNP) is the standard for "progress." The presumption is that quality of life will improve with expansion in the size of the economy as measured in dollar amounts.

Some of these GNP assumptions lead to absurd results. Cigarette sales become "plus" indicators, in which more sales produce more money for doctors, hospitals, and drug companies treating cancer, and then more business for morticians. Without any *qualitative* indicators, *all profit* becomes a sign of progress, which of course is moral and intellectual chaos. Even disasters such as tornadoes help the GNP, for if houses are destroyed, the construction industry will benefit. Crime also is an economic contributor, according to GNP, providing jobs for police and construction jobs for new jails.

*So when we don't know where we are going, we concentrate on quantitative ways of getting there.* Change, expansion, construction, and development are paraded and compared with last year's GNP to show if things are better or worse. Presidential elections can then be based on showing the public whether the nation is going upward or downward. The United States leads the world in selling this conception of "progress" and most other nations have fallen into the trap.

Growth mythology is essential to drive the current economic system. People are encouraged to accept unemployment, environmental degradation (air and water pollution and congestion), and crime, based on the assurance that these are minor aberrations which are the price of progress. The promise is that tomorrow will be better, even if today is somewhat miserable. Drugs are available if there is a bit too much pain. If one's community has more problems than ever, if taxes keep draining us, if fear of job loss is pervasive, the upward movement of the indicated gross national product will tell us that everything is actually OK. So there is no reason to organize with others to take control, for to apply democracy to the economic system is the supreme heresy. Have faith in technology and economic expansion. Tomorrow will be better. The best government is the least government. Let the magic of the market determine the future, here and abroad.

Such a belief system protects itself from verification. If depression occurs, faith tells us that

cycles of business will correct themselves. Short-run rewards of income reinforce the belief that society's future is heading in the right direction. Take-home pay is more tangible than loss of air quality or water quality, top-soil, old growth forests, fisheries and other non-renewables that will affect future generations.

The solution is both simple and drastic. The economic process needs to be tied to *sustainable common quality of life indicators*. A "better" future needs to be defined by a specific set of indicators that affect the health, security, and well being of the community. The "market" does not need to be eliminated, but it must be required to operate within the constraints of sustainability, and human needs should be given the first priority over human wants. It is only when the priorities of the economy are under the guidance and control of such public policy that the future has the prospect of improving.

This twenty-first century model requires a change from a deterministic belief system such as the presumed natural forces of "supply and demand" to a system that involves people in cooperative planning—from a future beyond public control to a future under public control. Democracy and human rights, including rights for future generations, will need to supersede the dominant institutions of the twentieth century that treated people as commodities and consumed the life-support system of the entire planet. This can be done if ethical principles guide future institutions, if a new public education helps reconstruct obsolete institutions, and if public movements toward structural change take place.

### **How Means Become Ends**

My first book, published in 1972, was titled *Education for Annihilation*. It extended the Eisenhower concept of the "military-industrial complex" which helped explain that the military-economic system was not merely a means but had become an end. The public began to understand more clearly that corporations were political influences with vested interest in the expansion of Pentagon budgets. The naive view that the "defense" industries were simply instruments to serve "national security" was given the necessary reinterpretation. This is only one of many examples of how "means" often become "ends." Military expenditure had become a self-perpetuating "end."

In that book I showed how the military cultural complex was also an outcome of World War II. In the 1930s, if a President had proposed compulsory military training, he would not have survived the next election, but by the end of WWII, President Truman was able to institute a military draft on the basis of the argument that it was inherently good for Americans to be in the military—it represented good education. *After four years of war the military had moved beyond being a necessary evil to being a positive good* (Truman 1955, 51). A new meaning of citizenship was being born. This made it easy in the 1950s and 1960s to emphasize that schools should make students into contributors to the military-industrial complex by learning math and science so that the United States could make bigger and more powerful atomic missiles than the Soviet Union. (The objective had nothing to do with actual national security, since nuclear overkill had been achieved by the end of the 1950s.)

John Hersey wrote a novel in the 1950s called *The Child Buyer* that illustrated how the emphasis on science in schools was being used to capture school children for use in the military-industrial complex. About that time, GI Joe dolls became popular and war toys were in vogue, even for celebrating Christmas. Junior ROTC programs were expanding in public high schools to indoctrinate American students in what the Pentagon calls "leadership" and "discipline." The meanings of these terms actually change according to the ideology of which they are a part, thus the "leadership" and intellectual (self) "discipline" in a democracy are poles apart from their meaning in a totalitarian society.

The upside down society involves reversals of means and ends. Few institutions serve the goals they claim to serve, and in the field of law, medicine, religion, social services, or urban planning, the reversal is so ingrained that most people working in such areas do so without understanding the real objectives they serve. The institutions assign members to roles and usually

convert them into agents to produce self-perpetuation of the organizations, complete with rationalizations for what people are required to do, with rewards and punishments to sustain the viability of the institution. The research on social psychology has consistently shown how the change in the rules in an institutional "game" changes the behavior of people. The self-interest rules of capitalism produce greed. The public then rationalizes the institution by saying it merely reflects the natural "greed" of people.

The game of Monopoly provides simulation of the immediate conversion to self-interest and the enjoyment of winning and the acceptance of the loss of others. The reality of losing was played out in real life during the high unemployment of the 1930s, and there was no recognition of the irony of the Monopoly parlor game even when it was played by the unemployed.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, public concern for crime increased and became useful both politically and economically. In 1996 Steven R. Donziger as President of the non-profit National Criminal Justice Commission, published a two-year study called *The Real War on Crime*. It describes how crime has become good business, for if growth rates continue apace for the next few years, by the year 2020, our prison population will top 10 million and more than six out of ten African-American men will be in prisons. (In comparison, Canada has roughly the same crime rate but one-fifth the prison population.)

Why are both private and public prisons expanding so rapidly in a time of declining crime rates? Based on this study it has to do with the economic imperatives of the prison industry. The economic well being of a large number of people is tied to the growth of the prison industry and to the existence of crime itself. In addition to the stockholders of CCA and Wackenhut corporations, one need only look at the many depressed areas competing for new prisons and the jobs they bring to understand this phenomenon.

Because there are not enough violent criminals to fill all the new prison cells, we are flooding the criminal justice system with low-level offenders such as marijuana dealers who are savored by private prison companies as ideal for-profit prisoners. They tend to be better behaved, so staffing can be kept to a minimum. They can help run the facility by cooking and cleaning. And, they can be "leased" as in-prison laborers to outside companies for less than the minimum wage.

Like the military-industrial complex, the prison-industry complex has an implacable internal logic that allows it to expand regardless of whether its stated objectives succeed or fail. If crime rates rise, we need more prisons; if crime is down, we need to continue to build more prisons so it stays down. And money is then siphoned away from education, the best crime-prevention measure.

## **The Legal System**

So crime pays—not for the criminal but for the prison industry. The legal system has similar characteristics—encouraging the enactment of as many complex laws as possible and using arcane language and courtroom procedures that usually force people to hire expensive attorneys. The "fair" level of attorney fees is authorized by judges who are themselves attorneys, an established conflict-of-interest process. The noble ideal of "the rule of law" and "government under law" has been transformed into an expensive morass which prevents the average citizen from making use of the law without incurring huge costs. But the large wealthy corporations not only can afford such attorneys, they can dominate the less affluent and turn the "rule of law" into the rule of the oligarchy. Through campaign contributions, they can get the best government money can buy and create the laws that will rule.

## **The Medical System**

Even medicine has some of these "means become ends" characteristics. Instead of putting as much emphasis on the prevention of disease as on the lucrative area of treatment, the institution of medicine has itself become a cause of many illnesses. Doctors waited a very long while to challenge cigarette smoking and unhealthy food. The emphasis on "treatment" of cancer is to

obtain more and more money for new research for a cure even though at least 80 percent of cancer is from known environmental causes and little of the existing research is being used for prevention (Eckholm 1977, 90).

Doctors are trained in medical school to emphasize drugs and surgery rather than prevention. One example of the unnecessary (but profitable) surgery is the high number of bypass heart surgeries, often conducted to the detriment of the patient's health (Ornish 1996).

Physicians have had control over their own fees, which seem astronomical to the average person. The rising cost of medicine far exceeds the rise in the GNP, and projections of current increases point toward an impossible time when, at current exponential levels, the medical costs could equal the entire GNP! So the system is unsustainable even in capitalistic economic terms. In the meantime, national medical organizations have led the effort to prevent the development of a national health care system. The current one is just too lucrative. And doctors have become major drug pushers. Though many medicines are very valuable and needed, Thomas Moore claims in *Prescription for Disaster* (1998) that by prescribing excessive medicines (drugs) far more deaths result from legal drugs than from all the illegal hard drugs combined.

### **Churches**

Some fundamentalist churches turn morality upside down by working closely in elections with the political forces that promote militarism and by convincing the poor and uneducated to support an ideology which promotes the concentration of wealth and power in a small minority. Encouraging anti-government politics and hostility toward intellectual dissenters, these fundamentalists encourage bigotry and racism and do so in the name of "God." American institutional change is discouraged while personal afterlife salvation is advocated. Neither compassion nor enlightenment is stressed, but instead these right wing churches promote anti-democratic, ethnocentric, nationalistic, authoritarianism, which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a clergy that claims to have a direct connection to God and promises personal salvation for the impoverished faithful who often cannot afford such donations. Typically such groups find little inconsistency in supporting anti-abortion politics while also supporting capital punishment, and when they support war-oriented policies it is often in the name of the "Prince of Peace" (Harding 2001).

### **Planners**

The newly developing field of "planning" has produced many people who think of themselves as professional planners dedicated to guiding and implementing laws in the public interest. However when they do so, they find that the forces of development—builders and real estate organizations—have usually taken over the politics of local elected officials. Therefore, planners who work for such officials often learn to tilt their reports and recommendations toward the developer's interests. Planners learn that it is through this game that they will be retained. Job security through selling out the public interest then too often becomes the unintended reality of planning. Professional ethics is usually so narrowly defined that it applies only to client relationships and not to the larger public interest. It then becomes easy to conform to political demands and aid the dominant controllers of local politics.

### **Going Beyond Our Upside Down Society**

As formidable as the obstacles appear, people have the capacity not only to change themselves but also to change their institutions. Democracy is the major instrument for civilized and nonviolent change but it requires an informed public. There are many forces that have a stake in an uninformed public, yet the task before all of us is to avoid pessimism and cynicism and to examine the problems and the alternatives. Democracy has in the past been defined as a set of *procedures and processes*. We now need to stipulate the necessary *ethical outcomes* of

democracy, for the procedures must now help achieve ways to enhance human rights. It makes no sense to create a political process called "democracy" which in fact permits exploitation of people and the environment through economic power. Mere voting in conventional elections is not enough, for constitutional guarantees of universal human rights must now be the inherent and prescribed outcome of the political process, in which democratic participation is the method to implement such rights. The alternative is for established inequality to replicate and enhance itself in the name of democracy.

How many institutions in the United States or worldwide can stand up against these "radical" standards of democracy and human rights? These should be the basis for testing current institutions and for prescribing necessary change.

Which road will future generations wish we had taken—upside down or right side up? How will we be able to evaluate our relentless human experiment with the human race? Are some experiments irreversible in their effects? Are they unchangeable in their formulation?

Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats ask serious questions about macro-priorities. While Republicans leave the future to the market, Democrats are usually more willing to throw a lifeline—to fish, birds, and people, providing the system is allowed to continue full speed ahead. In the meantime we are driven by what William Greider calls "the manic logic of global capitalism," where "there are skillful hands on board, but no one is at the wheel. In fact, this machine has no wheel nor any internal governor to control the speed and direction. It is sustained by its own forward motion, guided mainly by its own appetites. And it is accelerating" (1997, 11).

Are we willing to ask where we are going? Or are we, to borrow from Santayana's definition of fanaticism, "redoubling our effort when we have forgotten our aim"?