

Boyer, W. H. (2003). *Myth America: Democracy vs. Capitalism*. New York, NY: Apex

Press. 133 – 165.

Chapter 8 Education for Democracy

I consider this a book on “education” because understanding needs to precede political action. The tie between education and politics is inextricable and within it lies the potential for a transformed future. Education is formalized in schools, but the media and all informal contacts are part of our education. Radio, television, and the non-mainstream press are often more involved in issues-education than the schools. When this book refers to “education,” that term encompasses schools plus all institutions that transmit information and ideas.

Democratic education should help people participate in the needed transition to assert democratic control over both the political and economic process. The inventions called institutions are now often used to control the minds of people so that they become followers, not democratic citizens. Redirection is needed for twenty-first century education.

Most twentieth century education:

- Trained people to become employable but not as democratic citizens
- Helped shift power to the corporations
- Ignored environmental issues
- Taught capitalist economics
- Ignored public planning
- Was nationalist and ethnocentric

Twenty-first Century Education Should:

- Educate people to become democratic citizens
- Shift power from corporations to people
- Teach ecological planning
- Teach humanistic economics
- Focus on long-range goals
- Shift to global perspectives

Roles and Qualities of Teacher

Howard Zinn has said, "The choice is between teaching and acting according to our most deeply felt values, whether or not it meets approval from those with power over us—or being dishonest with ourselves, censoring ourselves, in order to be safe (Zinn 1997a)."

The institutional pressures to conform to local beliefs are very great, and most people capitulate. The pressures are also strong to adopt the mores of communities, where orthodoxies tied to religion, politics, and economics brand people as accepted or as heretics, often affecting their ability to earn a living. Most people learn little by little to bend with the wind and do what is expected, even though "deeply felt values" and even common sense are violated incrementally until people hold few convictions of their own.

As a result the people called "leaders" often have sold themselves many times over to gain power and wealth, while the actual leaders are committed to uphold values that serve people. Such leaders are both honest and morally courageous. In the conformist world, courage is measured through physical acts such as climbing mountains. But courage needs to be tied to intellectual and moral courage—saying and doing what we strongly believe is right and are willing to defend even though we may be subjecting ourselves to criticism.

A teacher should have these qualities and try to cultivate these qualities in students—thinking critically and being willing to resist pressures from others. Democracy is not created by conformist consensus but by thoughtful consideration of diverse points of view. A superior teacher encourages students to ask questions about the meaning of life. Are we to just have fun and satisfy our desires, reproduce and then die, or do we want to become more human by living significantly and affecting some change in the historical process?

The difference is in being an object or in being a person. Economic institutions may turn us into commodities in order to create more commodities. People then become part of a treadmill and follow others who are themselves part of a collective treadmill in a state of perpetual motion. When we teach courses such as math, chemistry, and other natural sciences, they may be taught merely about facts, skills, and techniques. But the core of being a democratic citizen is about asserting ourselves as human beings and using knowledge in a socially valuable way, facilitating a process whereby others can also become persons rather than objects. Critical thinking, dissent, and questioning of authority provide the power for being a democratic citizen.

In our own society, we need to work against authoritarian institutions—cultivate those that enhance community well-being and include public policies that promote human rights and a healthful environment. Many of our institutions are anti-democratic and authoritarian, the military being the most obvious. But many businesses are also anti-democratic and authoritarian, and conservative churches are often structured to produce intellectual passivity.

The role of the teacher should be to encourage moral qualities in people to help them gain responsible power over authoritarian institutions. This is largely a way of defining democracy. It means that a teacher must not be the hired puppet of a school board, a principal, a superintendent or president of a corporation. A true educational role is served when the teacher is helping students learn intellectual processes and ethical social objectives. For a teacher to accept any other role would be like a doctor selling out the health of a patient in order to obey orders of a hospital administrator. The ethical connection between teacher and student is profound and must often be used to override the arbitrary power of those in charge of the institution.

Of course all of this has a larger purpose—namely, to help convert the arbitrary power of any institution into a system of governance that provides participatory power for those it serves. Twentieth century authoritarian institutions should be converted into democratic institutions in the twenty-first century, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to help facilitate this historic transition. What is at stake is **truth** and the rational process that must underlie democracy. A teacher must welcome and even encourage students who offer better arguments and information than the teacher does, for both profit by the knowledge. This rational dialogue is the foundation of democracy and anyone who does not want to participate in democracy building should not consider teaching in public schools.

The Objectivity Trap

"We're proud of being objective in our reporting," is a typical statement of a newspaper publisher. This word "objective" needs closer analysis.

It is easiest to begin by pointing out what "objective" is not. A story about an event which distorts facts to the point that witnesses can say, "That is not at all what really happened," can then be called non-objective. But if a report of an event has all the facts right, is it then "objective"?

A cluster of facts requires interpretation and explanation. At that point, what is the requirement for being "objective"? If someone was beaten up by the police should there be a judgment of wrongdoing? Or should it be said simply that the citizen was clubbed without suggesting the cruelty

of the act? If it is reported as "cruel," a value judgment is attached. That judgment comes from an ethical principle, such as "people are important and should not be treated cruelly." This might be virtually the same as the assumption of the "worth and dignity of the human person," the most universal of ethical principles.

So this raises the question of whether there is an "obligation" to help a reader see that a moral or ethical issue is at stake. If so, then the idea of a report being "objective" would in many cases make the report "unethical" if it treated people as objects merely to be described without any value judgment, as though people existed in an ethical vacuum.

The logic of this argument is that facts should be accurate, but reporting about people should suggest whether human rights issues are involved, and give an indication of what the issue is. A description of the **effects on people** then becomes appropriate, and reporting, whether in newspapers or by academics, becomes a way of focusing on events that bear on the well-being of people.

An explanatory theory should use the same humanistic analysis. For instance it is commonplace to report unemployment in relation to labor supply and demand, but not dare to question the ethics of the explanation that treats people like commodities. Prices of goods are usually given the same "objective" and detached reporting as the unemployment of people—yet the unemployed, particularly those who are blocked from employment for institutional reasons, are being treated cruelly if unemployment is unnecessary. Capitalist supply and demand should not be treated as an accepted dogma, but rather evaluated on pragmatic consequences such as whether people are finding employment opportunities.

The myth of "objectivity" permits people to stand outside the real world, providing excuses to look in but to do nothing about the injustices they see.

When people should be conveying some sense of outrage at an injustice, they often treat human events as mere data.

For publishing, teaching, writing, or broadcasting, responsible communication should indicate that people are affected and suggest whether their predicament is necessary or unnecessary. Even more, whenever possible the solution should be suggested. In the case of compulsory unemployment, there is no ethical excuse. A technical obstacle does not exist—only an ideological obstacle. In a society that calls itself advanced and progressive, we have not met the achievement of even the most "primitive" societies that always have work for everyone and a chance for all to participate in the productive process.

A fundamental error is to equate "objectivity" with "neutrality." We must be accurate with information, but being neutral about people and the institutions we have invented means we have failed to assign ethical values to them. By transferring the idea of "objective" science from the physical world to the social world, which is common in descriptive university publications, we often avoid ethics and human rights. Such belief and behavior are endemic in our current society. It undermines the potential of education to develop responsible connections between people.

Education should not be propaganda serving a particular ideology, nor should it be neutral. I have often seen sensitive and competent teachers who think "both sides" need to be brought in because "truth lies in the middle." One teacher always used both *Time* and *Newsweek* to reveal "both sides" and didn't see that this only duplicated the same ideology. The only reason to bring in different points of view is to get better information and better analysis of the ethical issues. There is no reason to think that truth is in the "middle" of the sides. Was the "truth" somewhere between Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Ku Klux Klan? Students should be learning to ask the kinds of questions that permit them to see through the propaganda, mythology, and distortion that lead most people to accept the beliefs and institutions that exploit people and destroy our planetary life-support system. The "objectivity" ploy is part of the problem.

Student As History Creator

We have no choice about whether or not to be a history creator, because whatever we do or whatever we fail to do, we will be determiners of some of the future. Those who believe they have chosen to be non-political do not understand the nature of political power. Since we can choose to participate in shaping public policy, the failure to participate simply shifts decision making to others, giving them greater power. The **failure** to use the power we have to vote, lobby, join interest groups, and run for office, is therefore a political "act." We **cannot** be non-political.

Since the institutions we have created in the past carry the power to shape the future, the assessment of institutions is crucial to our destiny. No institution is more important than the school for having the opportunity to help people understand where the current world is going, what the alternatives are, what our responsibilities are in choosing the best alternative, and how to be effective in participating in directing the future. **This knowledge is the substance of citizenship education.**

But the Catch 22 is that the schools like all other institutions in our society are rooted in traditions that were established before the new era developed. The focus has been on teaching the three R's, some principles of math and science, and a few skills such as typing (now computer skills). This permitted people to be employable and to meet the demands of everyday life.

A major educational challenge is to identify the kind of politics and economics that is appropriate for this new era of mandatory global cooperation between peoples and nations. **This means designing the future rather than merely adjusting to trends. It does not mean uprooting all traditions, for it is the current world that indiscriminately obliterates traditions for short range economic profit.** Rather, we now need to evaluate traditions so that we support those that are valuable and change those that threaten the well being of the human future.

The current world is rife with myths and self-fulfilling prophecies that keep the old order intact. Education should help students demystify and demythify. Among the leading contenders are beliefs such as "peace through strength," "growth equals progress," and "you can't stop progress."

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

The Tragedy of the Commons

Garrett Hardin's "parable of the commons" (1968) is one of the most essential educational concepts, for it refers to competition within finite resources and how such expansion finally produces collapse when the carrying capacity is exceeded. Students should all understand why the collapse occurs and design alternatives to avoid collapse.

Specific modern-day situations that illustrate the concept include ocean conditions which have produced the collapse of the sardine fishery in California and Peru, the over fishing that has caused near-collapse of cod in the Atlantic, the use of the finite global biosphere for CC>2 disposal, the degradation which has resulted from the use of the Mississippi river by each separate community putting its sewage in the river, and the destruction of natural systems such as forests.

Solutions involve creating an enforceable method that will preserve or sustain the resources. This may mean shifting away from traditional geographic units to political units based on ecosystems. In the case of oceans, there is a need for a sustainable regulatory mechanism for the entire ocean. In the case of the Mississippi River, there is a need to have a political system that supersedes the geographical area of local communities. In the case of the global atmosphere, an enforceable system of world law needs to override the self-interest sovereignty of nations.

Systems Education

We are currently trapped by the old conception of knowledge which says that "facts" are what count. This leads us to treat "data" and "information" as knowledge.

The natural sciences make use of "systems" such as solar systems, the circulatory system of the body, the respiratory system, etc. Engineers use a systems approach to build bridges and make electronic components. But this is all within the principles of physics and mechanics. Engineers do not work with "ecosystems." They only work within ecosystems when they are

required to do so. Biological systems and social systems are in a different domain.

We teach history as a description of the past, not as systems, yet the best approach to history teaching would probably be a systems approach, such as by asking "What international system was in place or what could have been in place that might have averted World War II?" Marxist history is systems history, but systems history does not need to be Marxist. A systems approach can help us design the future by seeing that if we had different economic and political systems in place in the past, war, poverty, and environmental degradation could have been avoided.

If we are to identify our major problems as retention of obsolete systems, we need to shift to a systems approach to design new systems. Education will then include ecological systems, political systems, and economic systems. If an obsolete economic system produces poverty we can either try to "fix" it by tinkering with it or take steps toward structural changes in the economic system. The fix currently used involves mitigative fixes to poverty. This is much like using an aspirin to cure cancer. It would, at best, merely mask symptoms. The current dominant method of treating major social diseases is to react to the symptoms. The result is that the basic causes of the problems continue. Since many factors influence social justice and even human survival, our error in failing to consider alternative systems is tragic.

Through years of teaching systems alternatives I have found that students learn these concepts easily. The human mind operates well to grasp concepts and ideas that in association produce whole clusters of meaningful information held together in a gestalt. The human mind seeks "meaning," while the computer is happy with data. The human mind directed toward solving vital issues and searching for systems alternatives may find the computer to be a useful tool. But when there is no **systematic** social direction, the computer program guides the human mind into technical computer logic.

The result is the failure to use human intelligence to control technology for human purposes, and even worse, **the crippling of mental potential by converting education into technical training**. The human mind then atrophies from a creative organ to a mechanistic robot programmed by computer logic. Hal, in the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, suggested how this kind of mentality can be brilliant but dangerous. It does not care for the human consequences of what it does—only for technical efficiency. It is amoral.

Negative Causality

Since there are a variety of political "systems" which can influence historical events—the current nation-state system, the capitalist system, communist systems, etc.—we can move to a new level of causality by suggesting the possibility that a factor which was not present might be considered a *primary cause*. For instance, there was no world law or global peacekeeping system in the 1930s. Lack of any international structure to prevent war might then be considered a cause of war. In designing the future and looking at policy alternatives, we can take a new look at history and ask not only what antecedent events were in the system (positive causation) but also what may have been lacking which, if added in the future, might change the outcome. What was **lacking** can be called "negative causality."

After World War II, it was in fact precisely this logic that gave impetus to a new institution—The United Nations. It was expressly designed to help prevent the "scourge of war" in the future but adding something new that hadn't been there. But the UN system was not sufficiently "radical" for it largely retained the old nation-state and kept power in the nations that had emerged as the winners of World War II, providing them with the power to nullify creation of a supra-national system by authorizing veto power to members of the Security Council.

Negative causality opens human imagination to a new level of creativity and hope. Instead of "freedom" meaning only an individual's freedom to adapt to established institutions, it can also mean that people can redesign institutions and put them under control of the public.

People who call themselves "realists" reject basic changes in institutions and want to retain established international and national systems. This preserves the power of the status quo, largely the rich and the powerful. Since World War II such "realism" led to acceptance of the bi-polar

power struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States and the nearly 50-year-long Cold War. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the realists have treated the dominance of the United States as the reality that prevails and must continue to prevail. American military superiority has permitted continuation of priorities based on the first consideration being continuation of the military-industrial complex instead of on social needs.

Marx provided a structural explanation of social conditions, treating capitalism as a "system" which produced predictable effects. To the extent that he was correct we can use the general approach of systems analysis to compare capitalism with other "systems" in order to identify the system that will produce the best outcomes. This applies some science to politics. Similarly we can compare the current system of the sovereignty of nations with a system of world law (supra-national representative law).

We can ask why we have unemployment, and the answer might be given in terms of recent interest rates and the vagaries of the international market. But all that is a way of explaining in relation to positive causality. If, however, we say "there is unemployment because of the lack of enforceable employment rights," we are using negative causality—namely that **what is not in the system is the main cause**. Then what could be added is a way to not only explain current unemployment but also to suggest what could be added to the political system to produce a desirable outcome.

Understanding different kinds of causality should be incorporated into twenty-first century education. Negative causality is a new concept that I have developed and is not found by that term in current educational materials. It may be one of the most useful educational tools for breaking through the tunnel vision of conventional thought and opening up alternatives which can be used to help solve our most serious problems.

The Ethnocentric Trap: Growing Up Absurd

Culture Against Man is the title of a 1968 book by Jules Henry, an anthropologist who broke away from the conventional view that human development should consist of passive enculturation by which we induct people into the habits and beliefs of society. He encouraged the "active" role of people involved in creating culture.

This insight is vital to bring in a new era in human evolution that would free the human spirit from dominance by myth and mysticism, used so often to colonize people. We think of "primitive" societies as those that have created many deceptions to give order and meaning to their way of life, but the modern world still inducts people into beliefs and habits that deprive people of control over their institutions.

When culture in the name of either religion or patriotism is dogmatic and absolutistic, it can turn into totalitarianism where people learn obedience rituals that make them controllable to serve either the purposes of a church or a state. The United States has struggled with the issues of church and state and has confused the constitutional separation by quoting on its currency "in God we trust." In countless communities in the United States people salute a flag—a compulsory loyalty oath—in which their nation is "under God," before they begin their deliberations. ("Under God" was slipped in during the Eisenhower administration.) The authority of "God" is invariably joined to the state to justify military invasions to advance the cause of "peace and freedom."

Narrow nationalism is on the decline in the more educated areas of the world, but the religious belief system that is embracing the entire world is "moneytheism." Most economic courses taught in universities treat capitalist economics as "truth" rather than as "belief"—not as merely a theoretical construct but often as a secular religion. Those who believe are being inducted into the prevailing business-economics "in-group." Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity at Harvard University wrote the following in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

At the apex of any theological system, of course, is its doctrine of God. In the new theology this celestial pinnacle is occupied by The Market, which I capitalize to signify both the mystery that enshrouds it and the reverence it inspires in business . . . The Market, we

are assured, possesses these divine attributes; they are not always completely evident to mortals but must be trusted and affirmed by faith. "Further along," as another old gospel song says, "we'll understand why."

Most media and many institutions including the stock market are based on such "believers." In places where capitalist assumptions are questioned the American media have a chance to create another "devil." Military policies under George W. Bush authorize killing as part of a God-based American foreign policy.

Early indoctrination of children clearly has such deep life-long effects that concepts such as "God" often pervade people's minds for the rest of their lives. Any group that wants to control the minds of people tries to get the children indoctrinated at an early age so that beliefs are driven into the unconscious, thus controlling their thoughts without their awareness. The Pope knows that. Hitler knew that. The English with their "elite" schools for the aristocracy knew that. Prejudice against other races and ethnic groups often begins at an early age. The family is the common setting to implant racial and ethnic discrimination before children know what is happening to them.

The kind of education now needed is one that helps people understand how colonization and indoctrination works by blocking the ability to question. **Early indoctrination of beliefs that undermine people's later capacity to look openly at symbols and social systems should be considered a violation of the human rights of children**, a kind of lobotomy of their potentiality which violates their worth and dignity. Such "education" not only cripples the children but reduces the capacity of the society to rely on their intelligence to construct institutions which serve the common good. People become hollow.

he came
he went
he made no difference
left nothing, really
except that he was known
for saluting the flag and
praising God

Moving From Ethnocentrism

Every child begins life in a geographical location and in a cultural context. Ethical behavior must first begin in this narrow world which is phase one of the child's developmental process. If the world never becomes larger than this local environment, the child will become highly ethnocentric and view the rest of the world through the values of this narrow local community.

There are usually some very decent values people share in this local community, and in earlier days of isolated groups, this pattern worked fairly well. Even then, however, the conflicts with nearby villages, tribes, and cultures could turn into killing, stemming often from absolute ethnocentric belief that "our way is the right way."

What is needed is to help people move psychologically into a larger geographic and cultural world. Social policy can facilitate or hinder this process. Hierarchical societies ruled by a fixed elite inhibit mobility. Democracy, as John Dewey described it in *Democracy and Education*, (1916) connects people into an expanding community and can help us toward world community in the twenty-first century.

Huge differences in income and group discrimination produce stratification and dominance. The stratification of housing is seen in gated communities for the rich. This is part of a process and a system which is anti-community, anti-empathy, and anti-human development. The need for jails and more police becomes predictable.

Ethics and Empathy

How can we develop ethical behavior in people? Empathy is the key, but more is involved. A

child first needs the closeness and security of its mother and father. The anthropologist Ashley Montagu defined "love" as the "conferring of survival benefits," and when a child has an emotional attachment to its parents and good nutrition, preferably breastfeeding, it is off to a good start.

Then a process is needed to help develop ethical behavior at an early age. Kindness and acceptance displayed by the parents is the beginning of the right example for the child, rather than anger and rejection. When violence is part of the environment of the young child, including spankings and displays of hostility, the child is being moved in the wrong direction, taking on those same behaviors as coping skills.

The lessons for the child need to involve extension of the self into the world of other people and animals, so that a child who is happy can empathize with others. A child who develops in a hostile world where images of violence are common may have little empathy for others. Social Darwinism, survival of the fittest, can easily become this child's view of reality if egocentric self-interest dominates the social environment.

What is crucial in this process is whether life is important for the child—is there joy in the child's life—is life increasingly the great opportunity to be alive and to help with others in the life-affirming process? If the child thinks that people hate him and if life has no joy, empathy can take on a reverse effect and produce sadism rather than compassion. If the child wants to injure and punish himself, he may also want to injure and punish others. This may be the beginning of a psychopathic personality.

Activities that model psychopathic behavior—killing in gangs, killing in the military, playing games that permit killing to be treated as the real thing—all deter the development of ethical behavior. Our capitalist television provides far more "food" for the psychopath than for the empathizer. There are some exceptions—programs that are humane and compassionate especially those with nature scenes that help people think of animals as having their own right to life. Killing and hunting and the old male macho ethos are in decline among the more civilized segments of society, yet violence and killing are used as a device for attracting attention to TV programs for the purpose of selling corporate products. In this case, the corporation is the anti-ethical teacher, playing a role in a system permitted by the public for the purpose of upholding the sacred ideology of "freedom of the market place."

The most important contribution to education is getting students to ask questions about the ethical issues that underlie society. This requires that the teacher initiate questions that students would never ordinarily hear, such as why some people are so rich and some so poor. And why we call the military system "defense" instead of a "war system," and why some are unable to find jobs even though there are many necessary kinds of work that need to be done.

Breaking the Vicious Circle

Though psychological and social processes are one side of the coin in the development of human behavior, the other side is the institutional structure. Developing good people and a good society needs to go beyond the cliché of the 1990s, which talked about "family values." To focus only on the family is a way of avoiding the institutional complicity that is destructive to families, such as unemployment and corporate control of mass media. Good public policy is one of the instruments to break up the vicious circle of anti-social behavior. For schools to concentrate on science and math and avoid the social experiences that would diminish ethnocentrism is also a way of stultifying human development. **The capitalist economic system hinders ethical development.** When people are used as instruments, bought and sold in the market-place to enhance the wealth of a minority, a mother raising her child properly will be turning that child out into a world that has forces which could easily supersede the good start she has provided. She therefore must be astute about politics and her model as a citizen. Parents provide a powerful example of what it means to be a citizen, and serve as a teacher to help bring about ethical political changes which can shape their child's future.

When schools now talk about twenty-first century education, they may refer to science and computer "literacy" as the characteristics of such future education. In fact the current institutions

will simply be reinforced without education which gives ethical and ecological direction to change. Technofanaticism drives much of the kind of "science" we see in NASA and exotic military weapons. The vacuum in education is in ethics, which involves human rights.

As schools increasingly use achievement examinations for diplomas and qualification for college entrance, the content of those examinations should consist of the kinds of knowledge that are most important, for the content of standardized examinations has great influence on the curriculum. Instead of "neutral" information, students should be examined to see if they understand such crucial information as the difference between the comparative lack of human rights in the twentieth century and the needs for the twenty-first century. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the unwillingness of the United States during the twentieth century to support the positive economic rights of the Declaration should be basic subject matter, essential to democratic and liberal education and included in qualifying college entrance examinations. Math classes should show how exponential projections are basic to doubling time, which is necessary for population planning.

Good schools should make students resistant to propaganda, they should help deprogram them from conventional indoctrination.

Textbooks are part of the problem. High school textbooks, especially social studies texts such as American history are developed by profit making corporations. They seek to be "politically correct" and usually become propaganda through omission. For example, a nation wide history text first published in 1992, includes material on the United States relationship with Cuba, **but omits any mention of the embargo**. The embargo has consistently been condemned since it was instituted by President Kennedy in 1962 by nearly every member of the United Nations as a violation of international law, human rights, and a threat to the health and the economy of Cuba. If we found that current history texts used in Germany did not mention the holocaust, what would we say about the responsibility to truth and democracy? We expected that education would be planned propaganda in Stalin's Russia, but the cause of American propaganda is different. Since textbook publishing is a huge business for corporations in the United States we can understand why truth is second to ideology. School boards are responsive to political pressures by businesses, and professors who write these books must please the publisher. The lucrative writing contract can be fulfilled with a little selective amnesia.

I talked with a social studies teacher who considered most history texts to be corruptions of education, driven as he said "by money not by concern for truth." He has his students use the computer as a research tool to contact a variety of sources. This use of the computer is very different from creating student technicians who will be marketable to corporations. The computer may be used to reach out to libraries and information sources that corporate text books may choose to overlook (though the web is increasingly cluttered with commercial advertising). But without a good library of journals and books students will be deprived of the opportunity to take reading materials with them wherever they go.

Corporate influence on the schools has accelerated to the point where public reaction is developing. A national movement is underway to get school boards and state legislatures to oppose school commercialism. In September 1999 two state bills to halt commercialism in schools were passed in California. Social studies and science fields have been corrupted by corporate teaching units donated by lumber companies (timber "harvesting" companies) that provide films and pamphlets on environmental education which convey corporate ideology. Economics "education" is similarly well endowed with corporate curriculum.

A number of cities have opposed Channel One, a public affairs TV broadcast used exclusively for public schools. By bribing schools with free TV sets Channel One can provide some current events clippings followed by lucrative commercial advertising. The company claims to reach a captive teen market 50 times larger than MTV's. Coca Cola and Pepsi also buy their way into schools to "serve the needs of students."

Local Control As Loco Control

When the American occupation after World War II imposed structural revisions on the Japanese political system, reform of the schools included mandatory shifting to local control. Americans had difficulty explaining why this was necessary, except to use the following logic: "The United States is a democracy—in the United States schools are under local control, therefore in order to create democracy in Japan the schools must be like they are in the United States." The Japanese then learned that the United States uses its own tradition as the standard of democracy.

During the early "Jeffersonian" days local communities had their own schools and their town meetings and there was little national community. As the nation developed politically and economically the early local control system failed to change, so it was necessary to give it a justification. Being "close to the people" was the rationalization but means and ends simply didn't connect. If schools were to help develop democratic citizens who participate in national elections, how could there be as many different meanings of "democratic" and good education as there are local communities? Since a citizen of Mississippi can vote for a national senator, should the quality of education be any different than for a citizen of California? Why would the decentralization of a nation's educational system improve the quality of education? It would surely provide variety, but is the transmission of local mores and political influences the way to understanding the increasingly complex world? When educational reform movements developed in the twentieth century they did not address the basic questions of authority and control. Rather, satellite TV systems were installed, math programs were changed, and computers substituted for typewriters.

Many local communities have decided to provide Jr. ROTC programs, taught and paid for by someone in the armed forces who follows the prescribed program from the Pentagon. I watched the high school graduation ceremonies in Hawaii where the Jr. ROTC students demonstrated their skills by throwing dummy hand grenades. Their admiring teacher had pride in a job well done. If a "democratic" education is defined as being the same as nationalistic and one suitable also for a "totalitarian" country, we have intellectual and moral anarchy. Local authority without adequate democratic theory is endemic.

Local descriptions of curriculum objectives invariably mention "critical thinking" as a general goal. In 1999 the Legislature in Oregon supported the American Legion request for compulsory flag salutes in schools even while "critical thinking" is listed as a state educational goal. When there are no real intellectual standards, political power of interest groups control educational goals. American education is vulnerable to the influence of special interest groups because there are no clear intellectual directions, no clear overriding theory to include and exclude goals to give meaning to "democratic."

The results are disastrous. There are some very good teachers in the schools, but without clear theory the arbitrary power of the administration and the local school boards usually prevails. Unless teachers unionize they have little protection from arbitrary action. But even if they unionize they are vulnerable to pressures from various religious and political groups who are often appeased by administrators who have little understanding of any concept of "democracy" but have considerable understanding of how to survive in a system of local control.

National corporate publishing houses that supply the textbooks know how the game is played. "Don't rock the local political boat." They provide a version of history that avoids the ire of local nationalistic and religious organizations. If the students graduate and go to a high quality college they may be subject to trauma when critical thinking is the norm, and where logic, reason, and evidence become the authority rather than the mores and traditions of a society.

Two basic considerations are involved in future planning of public schools. 1. What should be the financial and administrative unit? 2. What should be purpose of the institution? Hawaii provides a good example of an administrative unit that moved away from local control. There is only one school board for the state. The funds for maintenance, salary, and new buildings are provided by the legislature. This changes the behavior of the administrators, who in mainland states spend much of their time on budgets, not on program. In Hawaii all students throughout the state receive the same economic support, which overcomes the usual rural deficit. The model should be

extended to the national level. Students in Mississippi should have the same level of school support as those in California. They are all American citizens with the same rights. It is clearly time to change the administrative and budgetary unit.

The second consideration is to recognize that to have a democracy the schools must consider the difference between a democratic and a totalitarian society. It is clear that a citizen in a democratic society is a participant who needs to understand social issues and how to join with others as a citizen in helping direct the course of the future. Totalitarian societies need obedient technicians to increase the power of the economic system and to reinforce the concentrated power of the state.

Democratic societies must provide an environment of equality between races, sexes, and social classes. The school then must perform a reconstructing role, for the larger society is white dominated and power is unequal since wealth and income are mal-distributed and concentrated. All the issues of what constitutes fairness in comparison with current society need to be on the table for discussion. When students graduate from high school they should be able to understand ethical issues in public policy and should have some experience in local and state government, if only through letters to the editor.

Conflict is normal in human society, but the method of resolution is crucial. Will it be overt violence through guns, violence through the exploitation of people and the environment, or will reason, debate, and evidence be the method? Will the rule of law be the rule of the power of corporations to control the law, or will law represent the public interest?

The democratic "process" is not merely participatory—voting etc.—but substantive requiring evidence and debate. When I ask students if we should "respect other peoples opinions" they usually fall into the trap. We should respect other people's *"right to have an opinion and to express it"* but since many opinions are wrong, immoral, and absurd the important thing is to learn to use rational dialogue between people to improve our opinions, a process central to good education.

The twenty-first century should be the time to develop democratic citizens who can help design and create a better future. A new educational curriculum is needed to prepare people to reconsider alternatives and priorities rather than merely continue training people to fit into the market place and to simply reinforce the old order.