

**GLOBALIZATION, PRIVATIZATION, WAR:
IN DEFENSE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
IN THE AMERICAS**

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Views expressed in this publication represent the positions of the speakers and participants at the conference. While the Professional Staff Congress is proud to present conference proceedings, the views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions of the PSC membership.



Preface

Dear Colleague:

I have the pleasure of introducing what I hope will be the first in a series of pamphlets produced by the Professional Staff Congress, the union of faculty and professional staff at the City University of New York. The pamphlet provides a summary of the proceedings of an activist academic conference organized by the PSC in October 2002: *Globalization, Privatization, War: In Defense of Public Education in the Americas*.

To start with the last word, “Americas”: an important premise of the conference and the articles in this pamphlet is that we cannot understand our own situation, right here in New York, here at CUNY—even at the bargaining table—without seeing ourselves as part of a larger political unit. Think of the way the weather map we know from the newspaper and the TV news reinforces national myopia: weather somehow stops at the US border, Canada and Mexico are voids. This conference used a different map, drawing deeply on the knowledge and history of scholars from Mexican and Canadian universities, as well as the US.

The critical point is the one the editors make in both the introduction and their powerful conclusion: the strongest political forces acting on us as both academics and trade unionists are global. Local issues leap into focus when viewed through a global lens. We read in this pamphlet how the systematic withdrawal of public funds from CUNY is connected to a larger politics—expressed in global trade agreements such as NAFTA and now the FTAA—of destroying public institutions and replacing them with privatization. We also read how such agreements turn education itself into a tradable commodity, threatening both our intellectual property rights and the idea of public education itself. Nor are we as academics isolated from war: one of the most challenging ideas these articles present is that war has to be understood as an intrinsic part of globalization, one way globalization makes itself felt in the daily lives of working people. To fight for better contracts, more state funding for CUNY or greater access to education without an understanding of global politics is to go into battle willfully blind.

I think of the conference and this pamphlet as a gesture towards doing politics with our eyes open. I urge you to dip into the rich and demanding articles presented here, perhaps using some of them in your teaching or your own scholarly and activist work. For me it is at once sobering and empowering to discover how deeply our struggles as a union at CUNY are implicated in larger political movements. No easy answers are presented, but a conversation is begun. On behalf of the entire union, I'd like to thank the members of the PSC International Committee for the challenge and hope this pamphlet offers.

In solidarity,
Barbara Bowen
President



Introduction

We are at war in a world where there is more than one war going on. Besides the regional wars of bombs and blood, there is a global war on people's needs. We feel it even here, in the richest country on the planet.

This war on us is taking the form of an assault on the public delivery of services such as health and education, voraciously privatizing them wherever possible. It is driven by neo-liberal economic schemes to increase profits and make working people pay the cost. As tax cuts for the rich limit resources for the poor, public universities like the City University of New York (CUNY) are forced to seek private sponsors and to outsource nearly everything from food to faculty.

Public education has historically been a vehicle for social mobility in the United States. Tuition costs were once low or non-existent. For example, from 1847 until 1975, CUNY charged no tuition. But for the last quarter century, as the asset share of the top 1 percent of the U.S. population has grown from less than 20 percent to over 40 percent and that of the bottom 40 percent of the population has shrunk to one-fifth of 1 percent, the majority of Americans have seen their educational opportunities dwindle. The United States now budgets proportionately less to higher education than any other industrial society.

Budget slashings and tax giveaways

In New York State, this social injustice has been perpetrated by Democrats and Republicans alike. Democratic Governor Mario Cuomo presided over the biggest budget cuts in CUNY's history, while his Republican successor George Pataki has continued to erode educational opportunities with his crude budget slashings and tax giveaways to the rich. Currently, CUNY senior college students pay \$4,000 annually in tuition and fees. At CUNY's Bronx Community College campus, for example, the new two-year tuition rate of \$2,800 annually is undoubtedly a hardship since 46 percent of student households earn less than \$20,000 a year.

Facing the undermining of public education

To counter this assault, the Professional Staff Congress in the spring of 2002 joined the hemisphere-wide group IDEA (Spanish acronym for Democratic Initiatives for Education in the Americas). Facing the undermining of public education—elementary, secondary, and university—through a combination of budget cuts and (especially at the university level) the promotion of private educational institutions, IDEA was founded in 1999 to resist. It was part of a coalition of educational organizations that planned a Continental Campaign in October, 2002, to counter the meeting of Western Hemisphere economic ministers in Quito, Ecuador, to discuss terms of the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement (FTAA). The FTAA would open the public service sector to private enterprise—in every country of the hemisphere—on the same conditions as commerce, which means welcoming private schools, generally with no monitoring of standards, to pick up the slack left by the decay of public institutions. The purpose of the Continental Campaign was to unmask this agreement and to mobilize against it.



The PSC participated in this campaign by organizing a conference on “Globalization, Privatization, War: In Defense of Public Education in the Americas” on October 26, 2002. This pamphlet offers highlights of the plenary speeches and workshops.

Larry Kuehn, Director of Research and former President of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation in Canada, began by laying out the ways in which trade agreements undermine the provision of services.

Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, Economics Professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, reviewed the history and importance of constructing continental social alliances.

Dan Leahy of Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, explained how the Tri-national Coalition for the Defense of Public Education in Canada, the United States and Mexico (which is an organizational member of IDEA) has fought privatization within the NAFTA Countries.

Vicky Smallman, Professional Officer of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, spoke of the ways that privatization has transformed Canadian universities, threatening academic freedom through corporate interference in research and teaching. Like Arriaga Lemus and Leahy, she stressed the vitality and importance of resistance.

Manning Marable, Professor of African-American Studies at Columbia University and a founder of the Black Radical Congress, showed how these policies have affected black and Hispanic Americans. By reducing race-based scholarships and raising the bar for access, they are reintroducing educational apartheid.

The ten workshops at the conference strove to find concrete ways to resist these various assaults, especially in the context of CUNY. Their proposals are summarized at the end of this publication. In all, we expressed creative and vigorous resistance to the heartless turn of our economic system. We came away determined to struggle and to reassert our conviction:

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT!



Keep Education Out of Trade Agreements

By Larry Kuehn

Director of Research, British Columbia Teachers' Federation and Member of coordinating committee of IDEA

Globalization and privatization are being spread throughout the world through a number of mechanisms: neo-liberal ideology, conditions required for loans from the IMF and the World Bank, concentration of control of global media and through trade agreements. Here I want to focus on the last of those—trade agreements that not only create a framework for more and more privatization, but also ensure that what has been privatized can never return to the public sector without impossibly high costs.

A couple of trends have brought education into the realm of trade agreements. One is the shift in the economies of all the advanced industrial countries—a shift from producing goods to producing services. According to the U.S. National Committee for International Trade in Education (NCITE), a lobbying group for private providers of education, “Services industry jobs account for 80 percent of U.S. private-sector employment.” Even in Canada, where the economy was built on natural resource extraction rather than manufacturing, more than 70 percent of employment is in services.

However, until the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and then its expansion into NAFTA, services had not been part of the trade regime. Trade had been thought of as involving “goods,” not as services. A breakthrough—if one chooses to see it that way—in NAFTA was expanding the trading rules to cover services. This was a particularly important objective of the U.S. trade negotiators. As NCITE points out, the United States “has a surplus of about \$80 billion in its trade in services.” An estimated \$6 billion of that is a surplus in trade in education. This surplus in services cancels out a significant portion of the huge U.S. trade deficit in goods.

If trade in education is to be expanded and if it is to be free of restrictions from pesky citizens who want to give their own local institutions an advantage over foreign institutions, then you need rules to stop them from protecting local institutions. Thus we have gotten NAFTA, and now are about to get the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and an expansion of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Package their service as a product

Of course, before a service can be traded, it must be commodified and privatized. Even public institutions created to serve a home public, if they want to trade, have to package their service as a product that can be sold. In my own home province, our new right-wing government is intent on turning our public education system into a product sold internationally. It is negotiating to open twenty private schools in China, Japan and Taiwan, using British Columbia curriculum, teachers and tests, and offer a graduation certificate that would provide access to B.C.'s public universities. In effect, the public



schools in Canada are creating private schools overseas to fund public schools in Canada.

Conceiving of education as a tradable commodity means abandoning the entire concept of public education—the common school, the creation of a public, and the building blocks of democracy.

Commodifying and privatizing is clearly a problem in itself. But the institutional structures of trade agreements make it worse. NAFTA has a “ratchet effect.” Services can only move from the public to the private. Once they are privatized, they cannot be moved back into the public sector. A Canadian right-wing think tank applauded NAFTA for just this reason. It said NAFTA would protect against a populist government being elected and then being able to bring services that had been privatized back into the public sector. In other words, the trade rules trump democracy. Seeing this threat, some education activists in the U.S., Mexico and Canada started to build an organizational structure that we have called the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education. But NAFTA was only the beginning. Soon after it came into effect, discussions started on expanding it to cover the Americas from North to South, in a FTAA. This is supposed to be in place by 2005, although the election in Brazil and the disaster in Argentina and Uruguay may at least slow it down.

And the World Trade Organization is in on the story as well. When the WTO came into existence, it included a little-noticed element—the GATS. This again promotes services as an expanding area of international trade. While the WTO Seattle meeting was not able to get another round of GATS negotiations off the ground, the WTO meeting in Doha did accomplish this. WTO members—nearly every country now—are in the middle of the negotiation process. At this stage, all countries are supposed to have made their *requests* for what they would like other countries to agree to be covered by the GATS. Then the next stage is for each country to make an *offer* of what it is prepared to have included in the GATS. This back-and-forth is the process of negotiation.

Listen, again, to what the NCITE says about the U.S. requests for what other countries should accept. The requests say “U.S. services industry goals for these negotiations are ambitious. They include: securing the right to establish commercial operations and the right to full majority ownership, the right to be treated on equal terms with local providers, the expansion of commitments to free cross-border trade, the ability to move professionals for short term assignments in other countries without visa and other red tape delays.”

What would this mean? Let me give an example. If private, for-profit Phoenix University wants to open a program in Vancouver, it could not be prohibited from doing so, even if the government adopted the principle that all education should be public education. Phoenix would have to be treated the same as local public universities—offered the same student loans or other so-called subsidies, for example. A government could not make regulations—for example that a university must have a library in order to offer an accredited university education—that would restrict the rights of the private corporation.

Government has no ability to regulate

One of the features of the trade regime is that regional trade agreements cannot include trade rules that are less liberal (liberal meaning that government has no ability to regulate) than the rules of the WTO. So for all practical purposes, the negotiation on education within the GATS process is also a factor in the FTAA process. If you are



interested in a detailed analysis of the GATS and education, you should look at *Perilous Lessons: The Impact of the WTO Services Agreement (GATS) on Canada's Public Education System*, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Just as the Tri-national Coalition was created to respond to NAFTA, so the FTAA and now the GATS have been central motivators behind the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA). IDEA has been a project to develop and share analyses of the trade negotiations—and to see if we can develop common understanding and common strategies. In the context of globalization, it is very clear that we must work together if we are to have any opportunity to challenge the trade agreements that are so anti-democratic and destructive of solidarity, equity and public institutions.

How can we challenge the ideology and institutions of free trade, globalization and privatization? How do we promote democracy and the right for us to make decisions that represent a social good, rather than letting the market and profit make our social choices? In IDEA, we have developed a cross-country research network examining three major topics: standardized testing, decentralization, and the development of a health and safety code for students and teachers. These are some strategic directions that we have discussed:

- 1) Defend public education at the local and national levels with a strategic consciousness of the global context. Inform and mobilize teachers to take part in this defense.
- 2) Counter neo-liberal ideology with an alternative program for public education nationally and internationally.
- 3) Conduct research and analysis and share it with other organizations throughout the Americas.
- 4) Build communication links among organizations with conferences and communication using the Internet.
- 5) Work in international and regional teacher and labor organizations (e.g., Education International, IDEA, CEA, ORIT) to develop common understanding and strategies.
- 6) Participate in building a global civil society that works toward a healthy environment, peace, social justice—and public education. Use these groups to challenge the international institutions of neo-liberalism—the WTO, the FTAA, the IMF and World Bank.
- 7) Join international campaigns for social rights, including the right to an education and the right for workers to form organizations that protect their rights.
- 8) Constantly challenge the "cult of the inevitable"—the claim that there is no alternative to neo-liberal policies.

It would be great to have the PSC join us in this work. While the forces pushing for globalization and privatization are powerful and pervasive, voices of opposition do exist. The reach and impact of opposition can be magnified if those who support a public sphere and challenge privatization need to support one another. We have to challenge a system that puts trade and the rights of corporations above solidarity, democracy and public education.



Public Education Is Not for Sale: Constructing Continental Social Alliances

By Maria de la Luz Arriaga Lemus

Professor of Economics, National Autonomous University of Mexico (Translated by Electa Arenal and Suzanne Oboler)

This is a very important conference, because it is part of a continental campaign in defense of public education as a social right; because it takes place in New York City, symbol of finance capital, but also of the union and other people's struggles to win respect for human and labor rights; and because PSC/CUNY has made it action-oriented.

Ten years after the first Tri-national conference, "The Future of Public Education in America," many things have changed—and fast.

- The North American Free Trade Agreement (or NAFTA) is a reality, its impact very different from the promise. Corporations and their governments now seek to pass the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), which would extend similar neo-liberal trade policies to all of South America.
- In Latin America, we have lived through terrible economic crises. Privatization or commercialization of public wealth has accelerated. Social rights—health and education—have become marketable goods. Social security policies decline and are replaced by a policy of public charities.
- Politically, throughout the continent, on the one hand, right-wing governments have come to power in most countries; on the other, social movements of resistance have increased both within and across borders. These are now more vulnerable than ever, because what seemed

impossible has happened. The United States is attacked on its own territory. The Twin Towers fall. President Bush declares a war on terrorism. Since it's an abstraction, such a war can be applied to anyone who defends peace, democracy and social rights.

Common trends, different conditions

How do these momentous changes affect public education? During the Fifth Tri-national Conference (in Zacatecas, Mexico, November, 2000), we found many common trends, in spite of very different educational conditions in our countries. They include: (1) tuition hikes; (2) distance learning substituted for direct education to which everyone has access; (3) loans that leave students in debt; (4) corporate and private financing replaces public funding; (5) vouchers promoted to subsidize private education, while public university subsidies are tied to merit; (6) decrease in funds for education, while military spending and pay-back to transnational lenders increase; (7) increase in standardized testing which excludes or tracks children and youth; (8) fragmentation creating some elite and other second-class educational systems; (9) permanent violation of labor and union



rights of teachers and all education workers and declining working conditions; (10) the opinion by those in power that teachers are a real threat, and must be fought.

Five of the most relevant themes for further study and for development of proposals by education workers and their unions are:

1. Educational budget restrictions and the growing use of public resources to subsidize private education (in other words, the education business).
2. Accelerated growth of distance learning.
3. Destabilization of the working conditions of teachers and education workers.
4. Imposition of terms rather than negotiated union contracts.
5. Increase in repression of internationalists and social activists.

In Mexico, Canada and the United States it is higher education that has suffered most attacks. The danger looming over us is that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements will be passed, turning education into merchandise, subject to commercial laws. Privatization has made our union and academic political tasks much more complicated. It demands a more precise knowledge of the educational systems, of trade unionism, of the way in which labor and professional organizations in each country work; of related government programs, and of the different struggles. It also makes us revise our union practices and initiatives, taking into account the conditions and the obstacles to doing so, in each country. It is imperative that we make progress in internationalizing the struggle. The building of the Tri-national Coalition and of IDEA is part of a notable advance in trans-border organizing. We have been working since 1993, in a very useful way.

Long-established teachers' organizations are very important, but their structures are not flexible. In Mexico, for that reason, rather than compete or challenge the corporatist, government-ruled national union (SNTE), the Tri-national Coalition and IDEA have sought to work together with it. The Coalition and IDEA networks are better suited for organizing campaigns, exchanging experiences and developing proposals for action. While a Continental Secretariat for Education was formed at the People's Summit that took place in Quebec in April of 2001, composed of representatives from many organizations, the Tri-national Coalition has been built by the union members who participate in it. They have taken the project to their own organizations, and convinced them of the importance of going beyond traditional international relations among organizations. Instead of mere diplomacy or international political tourism, they are urging the development of an ongoing and democratic space for trans-border union action.

The Mexican section, for example—a national coalition organized to act within an international (tri-national) framework, regardless of whether the actions develop within one union or region or in the country as a whole—is the only national entity of its kind. One of its key characteristics is that it was conceived as a broad but clearly democratic project, committed to the struggle in defense of free, secular and public education at all levels.

Coordinated international action

The solidarity campaigns we have undertaken at various times have proved the importance of coordinated international action in the face of neo-liberal globalization. Governments care about having a democratic public image. Therefore, it can be significant for our process of resistance or struggle for them to receive pressure from outside, such as letters demanding justice or respect for rights.

Several campaigns have both advanced our knowledge of each other and demonstrated the usefulness of international solidarity campaigns. One was the campaign



to free from prison the secretary-general and four other union members, all of whom were leaders of Section 9 of the primary school teachers in Mexico City. Others were the campaign to free the secretary-general of the Ecuadorian National Teachers Union; the campaign in solidarity with the strike at Mexico's National University (UNAM) in 1999-2000; the support for the Ontario teachers' strike; the support for the struggle of the British Columbia's Teachers' Federation to defend the right to strike and against a law that would restrict labor and union rights, displace teachers and close schools; the campaign developed to annul the expulsion order against Dan Leahy and his students by the Mexican government.

Participation in tri-national and hemispheric conferences, and more recently in continental and world forums, has been fundamental to the building of alternatives. Our campaigns in defense of higher education have become deeply grounded and our proposals highly analytical and well developed. We have become spokes-people in environments that were previously closed to us. We continually rethink local, regional or national issues in the framework of current international changes.

In its almost ten years of existence, the Coalition has enabled Mexican unions to participate with Canadian and United States partners in collective learning and action. Since November, 1999, when IDEA was created, Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Central America and the Caribbean also have participated. For Canadian unions, the interaction with Mexican unions and those of the rest of the continent has provided a "crash course" in how governments bowing to corporate interests reduce the quality of education and in how to resist—how to organize to prevent those detrimental cave-ins and their effects. I think it has reinforced the ability and willingness of Canadian teachers to act in solidarity. *We have shown that the issues and the enemies are the same in the region and in all of the Americas.*

We have to recover the social purpose and social benefits of employment, but also education as a human and social right of our communities. We need grassroots unionism mobilized to reinforce our organization and defend public education.

We could develop education projects with the democratic sectors of public universities, projects linked to our labor organizations. This is doable, given that we are union members as well as teachers with ongoing academic projects.

One of the limitations is the defensive logic of the unions stemming from current anti-union forces in the society. A narrow logic often dominates, forcing organizations to respond to particular interests without linking that response to international and national initiatives. Those involved in the field of education need to unify to defend public education and to bring together the efforts of students and parents as well. I propose that we explore ways of integrating researchers at our universities in tri-national projects.

The neo-liberal drive to privatize public education transfers financial responsibility to families, while companies seek to run the education process itself. Egalitarianism and democracy diminish. We cannot allow our sons and daughters, our children and youth to be robbed of their future. Together and organized we will prevail.



Tri-National Coalition

For the Defense Of Public Education in Canada,
the United States and Mexico: 1993-2003

By Dan Leahy
Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington

The Tri-national Coalition for the Defense of Public Education in Canada, the United States, and Mexico, was goaded into existence during the late 1980s by the neo-liberal attack on public education that appeared in the *Nation at Risk* report. We were soon fighting efforts to de-fund public education and alter its mission to serve all people, regardless of how poor they are. By the early 1990s we became involved in the fight against the Canadian-U.S. free trade agreement, and then NAFTA. Many of us, in fact, met in Canada and Mexico at forums and rallies against the implementation of NAFTA.

A new North American identity

As we watched NAFTA negotiations, we noticed a separate, yet parallel effort funded by the United States Information Agency (USIA) and U.S.-based foundations to oversee higher education institutions on a tri-national level. Their impetus came from NAFTA's mandate that economic integration be reinforced through an "educational common market" that would create a new "North American Identity."

In January 1993, we held our own conference, The Future of Public Education in North America, at Evergreen State College's Labor Education Center in Olympia, Washington—funded by education unions in all three countries. We proposed a North American Public Schools Commission to defend public education while monitoring and looking for ways to interfere with NAFTA's privatizing Free Trade Commission.

Over two hundred union delegates attended the four-day conference. They included delegates from Mexico, Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America, who represented every level of public education. We developed an extensive, tri-national work plan and the Olympia Declaration that proclaimed public education as a social right. We described our mission as follows:

"In order to protect the social fabric of our countries, we support an alternative education model that recognizes the right of self-determination with respect to culture, language, education and communication, that is based on social participation and subject to democratic processes, that promotes continental development which includes a plan to eliminate the Mexican debt, that guarantees a just distribution of wealth, recognizes the sovereign rights of states and sustains the dignity of all peoples, establishes a code of conduct for transnational corporations which protects basic labor and human rights such as the right to a just salary and defends and protects the environment."



Coordinate activities to defend public education

In October, 1994, at the Labor Center in Zacatecas, Mexico, Canadian and Mexican delegates agreed to create a Tri-national Coalition to coordinate activities to defend public education.

These important experiences taught us very important lessons.

We learned how to stage multilingual conferences with simultaneous translators who know the politics of public education so that we can truly share the richness of our discussions. We now incorporate school tours so that all delegates have a common experience prior to the conference itself. Coalition affiliates now help the host union with finances so that delegates from all three countries can participate.

We learned how to support each other's national work. One of our Coalition's first actions was to send letters in support of Mexico's National Teachers Day, May 15th. More recently, the Mexican Section mobilized Mexican union support for striking Ontario teachers and for British Columbia teachers fighting the anti-union legislation of the provincial government.

We learned to hold forums on issues that affect us all. In August of 1997, we organized a forum at the Law School of Mexico's national university on the subject of standardized tests. The Coalition marshaled experts from the United States and Canada to help analyze the potential effects of a new standardized test called the Examen Unico. This multiple choice test, designed and implemented by a private agency called CENEVAL, was designed to tell university-bound Mexican high school students, not only which university they must attend (if any), but what they must study!

We learned to facilitate "sister union" relations, such as the relationship between the Vancouver, B.C. teachers' union and Mexico City's Section 9 (Novena), which represents 60,000 primary school teachers.

The creation of IDEA

In November 1998, in Mexico City, we organized the forum that led to the creation of IDEA. Its purpose is to bring Latin American unions into discussions created by the formal participation of Education Ministers in negotiations around the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). NAFTA was negotiated without formal participation of education ministers. In the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) negotiations, "human resource ministries" participate in job training, but education as such is not on the table.

With the FTAA, however, education ministers are creating an Education Plan for the Americas and are formally asking for comment by civil society. IDEA was set up to provide that comment, especially during FTAA negotiations in Quebec City in April, 2001. The participation of the Mexican section and the Latin American unions organized by IDEA significantly improved the final statement of this forum.

We soon learned that we could be quite effective in mobilizing tri-national solidarity during emergencies. Just two months after our Tri-national conference in Queretaro, Mexico, their government jailed the leadership of Mexico City's Section 9, the union local representing Mexico City's primary school teachers. The teachers had protested in Mexico's federal Senate and were charged with mutiny and sedition, charges that did not allow bail and carried long jail sentences upon conviction.

The Tri-national, with the President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation in the lead, mobilized an international protest of letter writing, press releases, consular visits and court presentations that within two months had freed all the jailed teachers and eliminated



the charges and outstanding arrest warrants. One of the main reasons for the tremendous response by Canadian and U.S. teachers was that just two months earlier, as part of our tri-national conference, they had been given a tour of Mexico City's schools by the very teachers who were now jailed for sedition!

National University in Mexico City student strike

Our Coalition has also been instrumental in educating people in the United States and Canada about the incredible strike by students at the National University in Mexico City (UNAM). This is a university with over 300,000 students and 30,000 faculty. It even has its own city within Mexico City. The students struck for more than a year until April, 2000m protesting a series of proposed policies that would in effect privatize the National University. Among other things, they were opposed to charging tuition and the control of entrance and exit standardized examinations implemented by private agencies

In January, 2002, the Tri-national Coalition joined with IDEA and the Continental Alliance in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to place public education on the formal, plenary agenda of the World Social Forum. The WSF itself was organized two years ago to counter the efforts of the World Economic Forum to establish global governance directed by transnational corporations.

Our biggest obstacle remains the non-participation of U.S. unions in the work of the Coalition. There are several reasons for their absence.

First, our Coalition was formed based on an implicit critique of NAFTA and its privatizing dynamic. As many of you know, even though U.S. education unions had opposed NAFTA, once it was passed by Congress and President Clinton promised health care reform, criticism of NAFTA was criticism of Clinton. Clinton is gone now, so we're hoping to overcome this objection.

Second, both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers say that they already participate in international work through Education International (EI) and that there is no need, therefore, to participate in the Coalition. The EI has regional groupings. The North American region, however, contains the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean, but not Mexico. We still think our tri-national perspective can be valuable to the U.S. educational unions because our sheer size and uniform strategy can provide inspiration and protection for the smaller, more vulnerable nations in the hemisphere.

Third, part of our Mexican section is comprised of locals from SNTE, the official national union, who are dissidents from the SNTE leadership. SNTE does not participate in the Coalition. Neither do the NEA and AFT. It is possible that they believe that their participation in the Coalition might result in government retaliation.

AAUP and PSC join international discussion

Finally, unlike in Canada, where some provincial level teacher unions have quite active international relations committees, here in the United States, there is no tradition at the state affiliate level of engaging in international political activity. This probably stems from a fear instilled in union leaders during the McCarthy era that engaging in union solidarity outside the United States would inevitably lead to association with "communists."

Nevertheless, it appears as if we are beginning to overcome this difficulty. Two years ago, the American Association



of University Professors sent delegates to another Zacatecas conference. They are currently committed to participating in our tri-national conference in May, 2003, in Toronto. Plus, the Professional Staff Congress has established an International Committee and sent delegates to a conference on the status of women in education to Morelia, Mexico, and to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Our next major difficulty is that we have not mobilized sufficient resources to challenge NAFTA directly. NAFTA is still the most powerful trade agreement yet signed, due primarily to its Investment Chapter 11 provisions that allow corporations to sue the government of another country to overturn its environmental and labor regulations on grounds that they are anti-competitive. Just as important, however, especially for teachers, is its chapter on Cross Border Trade in Services that promote private competition to public education. At some point, we, as a Coalition, should be able to challenge this private government directly.

It is therefore important that the International Committee continue to receive PSC's budgetary resources to operate. This Committee can become a model for other state- and city-level U.S. education unions and educate them concerning tri-national and global conditions.



Canadian Faculty Union Fighting Corporate Control

By Vicky Smallman,
Canadian Association of University Teachers

Canadian universities, like all public institutions, have been subjected to a sustained attack due to neo-liberal policies, trade liberalization, privatization and corporate rule. Institutions that once served the public interest are now being transformed into deliverers of “education services.” Decades of serious cuts and the proliferation of the cult of the free market and its mantra of “inevitability” have led administrators, desperate for funds, to assume the persona of the corporate manager or CEO. Commercialization, or the shift from working in the public interest to working for private interests, is a serious threat to academic freedom and the integrity of our public institutions. As a result, our universities have been transformed.

In response, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has had to strengthen its role as an active defender of public education and of research in the public interest. CAUT was founded, much like the AAUP, to defend academic freedom, and much of our early work involved taking on the cases of individual faculty whose rights were being violated. In the 1970s we put greater emphasis on collective bargaining, and provided assistance to faculty associations interested in becoming certified unions (right now about 85 percent of universities have certified bargaining units; the rest have some form of negotiations, but not trade union status). The evolution continued as we sought to improve conditions for women and other groups seeking equity in the academy. From lobbying governments to providing collective bargaining and legal support, to working in national and international coalitions, CAUT actively advances the social and economic interests of its members. Today, advancing those interests means defending the universities against privatization and corporate control.

Let me describe a few ways that commercialization is affecting universities in Canada:

The “Branding” of Campuses

Universities are making deals with corporations that want to take advantage of a captive market: the students.

- You can divide Canadian campuses according to which soft-drink company holds the exclusive beverage distribution—Coke or Pepsi. Fortunately, some student associations have mobilized their members to resist the lure of the exclusive deal (McGill’s students, for example, rejected a soft drink deal in a referendum).
- Software and computer companies also make exclusive deals in exchange for “donations” of technology. Academics cannot choose which programs or equipment to use, ads appear on courseware, and so on.
- Classrooms, buildings, and campus events are all “branded” to honor private donors and funders.



The Corporate Campus

Universities have adopted business-based management models. Students are now called “clients” or “customers.” Massive tuition hikes (over 125 percent in the last decade) mean that users fund the system; graduate and professional tuition has been deregulated completely, so elite institutions like the University of Toronto Law School are now planning to charge \$22,000 a year. Services are being outsourced: fast-food outlets have replaced dining halls, and outside service providers have replaced formerly unionized cleaners or guards.

Most worrisome is the degradation of academic work through the use of nontenured and part-time faculty, teaching-only (or research-only) appointments, and labor-replacing technology (courses are now taught by video or a computer program). These pose a huge threat to the integrity of our profession, to academic freedom and to quality education.

Serving Private Interests

Corporate interference in both research and teaching is growing. CAUT has been involved in several prominent violations of academic freedom: most notably in the cases of Nancy Olivieri, a whistleblowing medical researcher, and David Healy, who was hired to head up Toronto’s Center for Addiction and Mental Health, only to have the offer withdrawn at the last minute after he criticized certain anti-depressant medications (whose manufacturers just happen to be major funders).

Even our government is encouraging private sector-sponsored research. Research proposals to the government-sponsored Canada Foundation for Innovation must first secure partial funding from private sources.

A few years ago the government named an Expert Panel on Commercialization, a stacked committee that did not include any researchers—just administrators and industry representatives. Their report’s conclusion was predictable: it recommended tying university research more closely to immediate corporate needs, and even making commercialization one of the core functions of the professoriate, alongside teaching, research and community service.

CAUT responded quickly and scored a notable victory: we asked researchers to sign a letter urging our Prime Minister to reject the report. We thought we’d get a few prominent Nobel Laureates and that would be enough. In just a few days we had the signatures of over 1500 researchers. The report was not implemented.

Resistance Is Fruitful

One instinctive way to respond to threats is flight—which, in the case of academia, means insularity and isolation (“I’ll just concentrate on my research”), leaves us vulnerable to divide-and-conquer strategies, and weakens faculty unions.

I prefer the *fight* instinct: we must resist the imposition of the corporate model on public education institutions.

The fight takes place on many levels—and it has to. CAUT’s responses have included:

- Public hearings on education funding
- Conferences on commercialization, on-line education, casualization and protecting the right to dissent



- A book series, featuring the report of the committee of inquiry into the Olivieri case and a new book exposing the use of performance indicators to monitor faculty
- Strengthening and radicalizing our member associations by giving them tools to organize and mobilize
- Exposing the corporate agenda
- Resisting attempts to divide and conquer
- Solidarity with students—our major public campaign this year is for access to higher education
- Working internationally, through groups like the Trinational Coalition, Education International and the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor.

Doing Politics Differently

We want to do more. We envision genuine democratic reform in decision-making at every level: inside our unions, in our universities, at all levels of government, and internationally. Representative democracy is no longer enough—as we’ve seen in Brazil, we need to integrate it with participatory democracy, and build strong social movements to work alongside political parties.

We have to do politics differently—giving up our privileges as academics, and learning to value practical knowledge as much as intellectual knowledge. We need to learn how to connect with and learn from other communities.

We have to start building a new kind of resistance. Small actions can be just as profound as mass mobilizations—sometimes even more so. Consensus based decision-making can make a big difference in an organization’s culture. So can creating a space for marginalized communities to be involved.

If corporate globalization is the export of neo-liberal victories to the rest of the world, then we must import some of the best examples of resistance from elsewhere.

We need to learn from Porto Alegre—not only from the World Social Forum, but from the success of the participatory budget process, which has spread to other parts of Brazil and has transformed the country’s political landscape.

Our work in broad coalitions must inform and transform our local action. We must celebrate the small victories and learn to build on them.

On War

War poses a different kind of challenge to those of us struggling for social and political change, but it affects us in Canada as well: maybe we don't see rampant patriotism and disturbing xenophobia, but we do have some pretty scary security-state legislation; we have felt a “chill” on freedom of expression—especially for academics—leading to a pattern of self-censorship, and blatant attacks on academic freedom.

The struggle against the war could overshadow all other campaigns, and become overwhelming—but it carries opportunities as well as challenges:

- We can build a new anti-war movement by making constructive new links with immigrant groups, ethnic and visible minorities, whose presence could enrich social movements.
- We can integrate the resistance to corporate globalization with the anti-war cause.



- We can learn to organize differently, integrating consensus-building and popular education techniques, engaging in creative activism, focusing on solidarity. There are obstacles, yes, but let's embrace the tension between global and local, micro and macro, learning and unlearning, teaching and acting, intellectual and practical. Let's work to restore a sense of hope to politics. We must learn to be, as the button on my lapel says, "joyfully subversive."



Do Neo-Liberal Economic Policies Foster a New Apartheid?

By Manning Marable
Professor of African-American Studies,
Columbia University

Higher education is today in the midst of a fundamental transformation. The GI Bill after World War II began an expansion in the numbers and diversity of Americans enrolled in universities. Now these gains are being reversed. Two of the primary factors behind the current changes in higher education, most educators agree, are the revolution in high technology and the transnational dynamics of globalization. The creation of cyberspace and new information technologies has transformed how we think about everything related to learning, from classroom instruction to knowledge production and research. Globalization, in particular the unprecedented integration of international markets, the vast migrations of labor, and the construction of multinational workforces, also creates a qualitatively new economic environment for colleges. "Competitiveness" can no longer be defined in parochial or traditional terms but must be taken in the context of increasingly international student populations, rapidly changing labor forces and new global economic developments.

Three factors will have profound effects on the future development of American higher education, especially in the context of a racially diverse, multicultural society. These factors are: (1) the ascendancy of the politics of neo-liberalism, which has caused the rapid dismantling of public institutions of all kinds, from human services programs and state universities to public works and public housing; (2) the glaring and unprecedented class stratification in the contemporary United States, with vast concentrations of wealth and affluence among a very small percentage of the population who coexist with millions of working poor people, the unemployed and people on fixed incomes; and (3) the polarization of racialized ethnicity, including the socioeconomic marginalization of blacks, Latinos, and immigrants from Third World countries, the elimination of affirmative-action and race-based scholarships, and the decline of educational opportunity and access to millions of nonwhite Americans.

In today's neo-liberal political environment, federal and state governments have moved to reduce expenditures for public colleges and universities. Working-class and low-income families making tremendous sacrifices to send their children to public universities are now expected to assume a significantly greater share of the costs. Federal and state governments have also made it much more difficult for working-class people and racialized minorities to finance their own education through state-assisted loans and grants. In the 1980s and 1990s, many state legislatures passed repressive legislation denying state-funded scholarship programs and state tax credits for college tuition for residents convicted of a felony or drug-related offense. Since about one-third of all African-American males in their twenties are at any time under the direct supervision of the criminal-justice system—either in jail or prison, on probation, on parole, or awaiting trial—the impact of disqualifying convicted felons from educational aid programs is profoundly racial.

Affluence for a privileged minority

The decade of the 1990s also symbolized an unprecedented affluence for a privileged minority of Americans—whose children are the core group recruited for



admission to elite colleges. The wealthiest 1 percent of all Americans (about 1.2 million families) have a greater combined net wealth than the bottom 90 percent of all U.S. households while more than one-quarter of all black families remain below the federal government's poverty line. In this extremely polarized environment of class and race, opportunity and access to higher education are determined primarily by wealth.

As government support for higher education has retreated, public and private colleges and universities alike in recent decades have had to turn to aggressive fundraising strategies, soliciting private gifts to cover their operating costs. Much of this surge of fundraising is coming directly from corporations, or foundations established by wealthy individuals. Presidents function more or less as corporate chief executive officers, rarely seeing the inside of a classroom, and are largely disconnected from student life.

Liberal-arts colleges also are aggressively focused on fundraising and are launching ambitious capital campaigns. Colleges and universities act like capitalist enterprises, investing in business ventures such as startup companies spun off from faculty research and in research parks and auxiliary units such as residence halls. Neo-liberal management strategies on college campuses include the reduction of salaries and benefits to college employees by extensive outsourcing of services, especially in food service, custodial maintenance, bookstores, and security, and by reducing or eliminating unions.

The impact of neo-liberal academic management may be best measured by an examination of what is happening to the faculty. Today, about 60 percent of higher education's teaching workforce is comprised of "contingent faculty." These include career academics who teach part-time jobs on multiple campuses, half-time instructors who hold full-time jobs outside of academe, and non-tenure track, full-time faculty hired on term appointments. The elimination of thousands of full-time faculty jobs in recent years has had the effect of greatly increasing the power of the administration at the expense of faculty governance and authority. Decisions over employment and curricula that were once faculty prerogatives are increasingly made by administrators.

To conclude: there is within the changing politics of American higher education the reconfigured reality of race: the deteriorating public support for affirmative-action and race-based scholarships, a retreat from needs-blind admissions, and the implicit "writing-off" or elimination of most low-income and urban poor students from having access to elite schools. Significantly, most administrators are the strongest supporters of racial and gender diversity in hiring policies and student recruitment. An overwhelming majority believes that racial and ethnic diversity has improved the quality of their institutions. By contrast, white students are far less supportive of affirmative action and diversity programs designed to recruit and retain minorities. A national telephone survey commissioned in 2000 by a conservative group, the Foundation for Academic Standards and Tradition, reported that 79 percent of the 1,004 respondents said that "lowering the entrance requirements for some students, regardless of the reason, was unfair to other applicants." The evidence suggests that the majority of white Americans favor multicultural and racial diversity, so long as they don't have to pay for it. The vast majority of black and Hispanic students continue to function under a kind of educational apartheid more than a generation after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Graduate and professional schools are the primary institutions for the reproduction of America's intelligentsia. The good news is that every year since 1984, the number of African Americans enrolled in graduate schools has increased. According to the spring



2002 issue of *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, as of 2002 there were 139,000 African Americans attending graduate programs—more than a 100 percent increase since 1984. Between 1989 and 2002, the number of African Americans who annually received professional degrees went up about 70 percent. And the 1,656 Ph.D.s received by blacks in 2000 is over twice the number of blacks earning Ph.D. degrees in the late 1980s.

These gains may appear to represent a remarkable multicultural transformation of higher education. But the truth is that blacks remain second-class citizens in the academy. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* has also documented numerous recent trends that undermine access and opportunity for African Americans in higher education. The overall percentages of African Americans employed in faculty, administrative and professional managerial positions remain minuscule. In 2001, the total number of African-American faculty at all institutions was 61,183, a figure representing only 6.1 percent of all U.S. faculty. The overwhelming majority of black teaching faculty are located in historically black colleges and universities, in two-year community colleges and at large, underfunded second- and third-tier public universities where teaching demands are high and resources for research, laboratories, travel to academic and professional conferences and libraries are modest.

American society's growing racial divide

How do we reverse the patterns of educational apartheid and class inequality in higher education? How can we achieve the ideal that access to advanced learning should be an entitlement in a democratic society? Liberal-arts colleges have a critical role to play in this regard through fostering the values of hope and opportunity. A college committed to liberal values should address in a thoughtful and creative manner American society's growing racial divide. This requires more than concerted efforts to recruit and retain racialized minorities within its student body. It should also initiate proactive measures to diversify its faculty and administrative staff. It could, for example, establish exchange programs with students and faculty at historically black colleges and universities or predominantly Hispanic institutions. It could reach out to nearby urban communities and, working with public-school officials, create mentorship programs, encouraging minority students to pursue postsecondary education. Administrators should set clear guidelines and expectations for the implementation of diversity policies within their institutions.

A more challenging task for liberal education is the deconstruction of the intricate patterns of social privilege, which are obscured from critical scrutiny by the ideology of meritocracy. The classical liberal ideal of free and fair competition in the marketplace has always been a lie. Private colleges "privilege" the children of their alumni through the policy of legacies, preserving traditional class and racial hierarchies.

More than 150 years ago, African Americans understood that knowledge is power. The fight to preserve and enhance public education is inseparable from the struggle for the empowerment of the oppressed toward the pursuit of human freedom.



The Workshops

THE PROBLEM

The workshops focused on actions, ways of rising to the challenges outlined by the plenary speakers. There were ten of them on the following themes:

- academic freedom
- contingent labor organizing
- responses to privatization and corporate influence on education
- racism internationally and access to higher education
- health and safety internationally
- education in a time of war
- migration and higher education in the Americas
- intellectual property and distance learning in the Americas
- gender and sexuality in the education crisis
- higher education unions in a globalized environment

The recorded discussions showed the irreducible link between corporate globalization, the current politics of war, and university concerns including organizing.

Employing the most exploitable part-time faculty

A recurrent theme was the connectedness of the local and the global. For one thing, it reveals a root cause of employing the most exploitable part-time faculty, which is currently carrying more than half the teaching load at CUNY. Not only does this result from the decimation and secrecy of public budgets, but it links the impoverishment of education in the public sector to the potential stifling of dissent in case of war: a vulnerable, untenured, low-paid faculty can be more effectively silenced. Academic freedom also is caught in the tension between the free flow of knowledge and private ownership of it, by either individual faculty, universities or corporations. The decimation of the public sector and nationalist rhetoric inflamed by war also exacerbates the social divisions of class, already crosscut by race and sex, threatening open access to higher education. Remedial and childcare needs, among others, lose out, and the prison-industrial complex takes over instead. The workshops arrived at a consensus that corporate globalization had devastating effects locally in the United States, specifically on public education.

Consensus also emerged on the realization that the poorly defined “war on terrorism” has led to a diversion of money from school funding to preparation for endless wars, whose costs will be astronomical. Again, this has differential effects: a narrow form of nationalism limns out marginalized groups, and unmet domestic needs force many poor people into the military, which sends them into war. War rhetoric further stifles university dialogue and dissent and threatens critical thinking.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The workshops brimmed with creative proposals to meet the challenges, ranging from dramatic actions to extended research. There was agreement on the central issue of the public budget and its financing. Local budgets should be made transparent, as the



Campaign for Fiscal Equity has proposed regarding the opaque New York City budget. A study is needed on the direct cost to education of the prison-industrial-military complex. Alternatives should be elaborated, for example on the model of the participatory budgets used by cities in Brazil governed by the Workers Party.

Corporatization has already arrived in the university

An underlying debate among workshop participants emerged, however, from different analyses of the present situation. One view was that we should accept the fact that corporatization has already arrived in the university and that we should negotiate within that paradigm for equal citizenship and greater empowerment through co-determination of such new issues as intellectual property rights as well as of traditional issues like employment and curricula. Contesting this was the view that we should resist corporatization and privatization by following militant Latin American models, by employing direct action, for example, to restore remediation and open access to CUNY, and by forming local and international coalitions for such actions.

Many specific proposals are consistent with both sides of this debate. For example, research on the budgetary shift of resources from education to the prison industry intersects with research on the ways in which race and gender crosscut class in the university, on the impact of recent labor migrations, and on the effects of a diminishing public sector on affirmative action and supportive services. Also useful are cooperative transnational research projects on the model of IDEA, which has done hemisphere-wide studies on standardized testing, decentralization of education, and health and safety codes for students and teachers. We might, for example, through IDEA, explore the comparative effects of transnational distance learning: does it accelerate the decline in faculty status in both the sending and receiving countries?

Without critical thinking, democracy withers

Academic freedom is always and again vulnerable. Possible violations should be researched and a clearinghouse and website be established for their dissemination and discussion. A proactive defense of academic freedom should be energetically pursued, lest the university become nothing more than a trade school serving corporate interests. Without critical thinking, democracy withers.

Coalitions were deemed essential. For international solidarity, the PSC has made a beginning by joining IDEA. Locally, other unions, community groups, churches and social movements are our natural allies, but above all are our students. CUNY has always been a terrain of struggle; we should present students with their own proud history of resisting oppression. They would also benefit from learning about student movements in other countries. Teach-ins and teach-outs on the links between globalization, privatization and war should be encouraged, as well as small groups of students learning together for the goal of organizing on their own behalf.

Pessimism was not absent. Some people wondered if part-time faculty would prefer to organize their own union and how such a separation would affect resistance to corporate endeavors for control of education. Others wondered if solidarity was attainable among unions competing at home for slices of budget and abroad for market share of, say, distance learning or teaching jobs. Some wondered if students who are indebted for tuition and financially vulnerable faculty were at all "mobilizable." But optimism predominated. Thinking together like this encourages us all to act together.



Conclusion

As we were putting the finishing touches on this pamphlet, the United States had just invaded Iraq. But while the dangers of the immediate future are uppermost in our minds, we publish this report for the long haul. We hope that it will provide material for reflection on our roles as educators and students and on the events in the wider world, both short run and long run, that affect us. The war is part of the process of globalization through which nations and corporations impinge on the lives of ordinary working people. We need to forge an alternative globalization, reaching out across borders to join forces in resistance. Education has an important part to play. We promote resistance by seeking to understand how the world works and how it affects us.

Countering the conservative ideology

In the university we need to resist tuition hikes, budget cuts and service cutbacks; in the country we need to resist tax giveaways to the rich, assaults on social services and repression of activism; in the world we need to resist war and militarism. Above all, we need to resist the propaganda barrage against social responsibility and in favor of the unbridled free market. It is here—countering the conservative ideology that attempts to distract and demobilize us—that our role as university teachers and students, trying to think clearly and provide alternatives, becomes especially important.

What is our mission as a university? CUNY is "Opportunity U," as the ads in the subway tell us, providing an education of high quality to the diverse, deprived, but hardworking new generation of New Yorkers and giving them the skills they will need to advance in the world. But a public university does not only offer individual opportunity. It builds community. We are not just a collection of individuals each seeking personal advantage, but a community working to improve our lives together. Education is a public good, and providing it is a social responsibility. CUNY is a proud monument to New York City's commitment to the public good, part of our tradition of welcoming people from all over the world to live and prosper together. Our commitment to providing education for everyone makes the city a better place for all of us.

We can't act alone

We know that to create the city we aspire to and to combat the global and ideological forces that would fragment us, we can't act alone. We only will succeed if we come together as students, teachers and other university workers, in coalition with other unions and community groups resisting cutbacks and promoting public services here in New York, and in concert with our fellow educators and unionists across the hemisphere. We of the editorial committee hope that this pamphlet will contribute to that effort.



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If you would like members of the International Committee of the PSC, which organized the conference and edited this pamphlet, to address your group and to engage in discussion, please contact the chairperson, Renate Bridenthal, at rbriden1@juno.com.

If you would like additional copies of this pamphlet, please contact Mary Crystal Cage, Director of Public Relations at ccage@pscmail.org or 212-354-1252. You may also send your request to the PSC, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036.

