

Abstract

This paper looks at the economic policy alternatives emerging on the political left in the United States, as a response to the continuing crisis of the American economy. Focusing on the two most significant of these — increased government intervention on behalf of corporate needs, and economic democratization — the author considers each in terms of its implications for education. He concludes that they represent profoundly conflicting views of education, culture, and the role of the worker in U.S. society.

Résumé

L'article examine la politique économique de rechange qui se développe du côté de la gauche américaine par suite de la crise économique qui persiste aux Etats-Unis. En se référant aux deux aspects les plus importants de cette politique — une intervention gouvernementale accrue en faveur des grandes sociétés et une libéralisation de l'économie — l'auteur en fait voir les implications sur l'éducation. Il conclut que cette politique reflète des opinions fortement contradictoires sur l'éducation, la culture et le rôle de l'ouvrier dans la société américaine.

Svi Shapiro*

**SCHOOLING AND THE LEFT:
POLICY ALTERNATIVES FOR EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY
IN THE 80's**

Conservative Failure and the Return to the Interventionist State

Now into its sixth year, Reaganomics and the ideology of supply-side economics has provided the most spectacular example of the failure of conservative economic policies. No less than in other industrial democratic countries that have, in recent years, turned away from the politically exhausted liberal Keynesianism of the post-war era, such conservative policies have failed to promote the low inflation, high employment, high productivity[†] and budgetarily solvent economies that they have promised. Notwithstanding the 'recovery' from the deepest recession of the post-war era, huge budget deficits, the 'deindustrialization' of large and basic elements of the American economic infrastructure and reductions in government support for research and education, etc. reinforce the belief that the present government has failed to fundamentally redress the declining health of the economy. It is a decline that is manifested in high unemployment, low utilization of productive capacity, declining profits, plant closings, and the disassembling of basic American industries. In addition to this are social and fiscal policies that have sharply and regressively redistributed income and other resources leading some to accuse the government of waging a class war on behalf of the rich.¹

[†] Productivity has slowed dramatically. From 1979 to the present, GNP adjusted for inflation grew at an annual rate of only 2.1%. That compares with 3.1% during the 1970's and 4.2% during the 1960's.

* Professor of Education, University of North Carolina

Out of this context, and against the Reagan administration's advocacy of a return to a free, unregulated economy in which the role of the state is minimized, has begun to emerge a new 'left' response. Centered around a group of economists that includes Lester C. Thurow, Felix Rohatyn, Bennett Harrison, Barry Bluestone, Martin Carnoy, Robert Reich, David Smith, Gar Alperovitz, and James Galbraith,² members of the group have in different ways argued against the appropriateness or effectiveness of laissez faire economic policies* in the conditions of present-day American capitalism. As Thurow comments:

the 'too much government' hypothesis is not one that will have to be disproved theoretically. The Reaganauts will prove whether the hypothesis is true or false during the next three years. If current policies restore economic growth, Reaganomics will have been proven right and debate about industrial policies will die out. If current policies do not restore economic growth, then it will be obviously true that salvation does not lie in the direction of 'getting the government off the backs of the people.' Debates about less government will die out and be replaced with debates not about more government but about what the government should do to promote economic growth.³

Many of the new liberal economists favor renewed government interventions in the market to help achieve full employment, redistribution of wealth, encouragement of fast-growth sectors of the economy (the so-called 'sun-rise industries') and renovation of America's crumbling infrastructure. They have focused on the need for a formal industrial-planning policy like that of France or Japan. For Robert Reich, perhaps the most influential of the younger economists, such a policy would include the following elements:

- improving the competitive position of home-based industries
- assisting the restructuring of industries towards ones that provide higher real wages
- assisting workers and communities hard hit by industry restructuring by providing them with new jobs in new industries
- promoting the growth of high technology industries through the funding of research and development, high-risk investment, and initial market development⁴

Summarizing his argument that the key to the 'reindustrialization' of America is planned government interventions that would channel capital into targeted industries, Felix Rohatyn notes that an active, vigorously interventionist state is needed 'to save our cities, to save our industrial and financial institutions, to save the regional balance of our country and the social balance of our society.'⁵ Indeed, Rohatyn asserts that without the adoption of such industrial and regional policies it may be impossible to save the 'free enterprise' system.

The Liberal Educational Response: Reasserting Human Capital Theory

While the elements of a formal industrial planning policy are disparate (including as they do a concern with the level of interest rates, investment in basic research, trade policies, public works programs, immigration policies, capital assistance, tax, energy, and defence policies) those who advocate such a policy as a way of dealing with our economic problems pay special attention to the issue of what economists call human capital formation. David A. Smith, for example, who

* In actual fact the real thrust of the attempt to reduce government interventions and regulations has been reserved for what might be called the human and social role of the state (environmental protection, consumer safety, occupational conditions, civil rights, education, medical care, social security, etc.). Government support of big business through, for example, enormously expanded military budgets continues unabated.

became Senator Edward Kennedy's chief economic advisor in July 1982 argues: "We've got to develop an integrated strategy that treats public investment, private investment and investment in human capital as a part of one policy."⁶

In most cases such references to human capital refer to the need for an educated, trained and skilled work force capable of adequately meeting the demands of an advanced industrial infrastructure. Reich, for example, in emphasizing the importance of a skilled work force argues that it is one important means for "a developed country to defend itself against low-wage competition from developing countries."⁷ A manufacturing process, he says, that requires a skilled labor force is often the best defense against low-wage competition. Broadly reflecting these positions *Newsweek* magazine's special editorial on jobs (October 18, 1982) advocated the following 'human investment' strategies:⁸

A smart work force is America's best resource — and education is the best guarantee to workers that they will always be qualified for a job. A great deal of attention is now being paid to the minimal requirements being demanded of U.S. students in mathematics and science, two crucial disciplines for a high-tech future. But the education problem is broader than that."

The editorial continues by advocating the need for schools to stress the acquisition of computer skills. In addition it advocates a revised and upgraded version of technical training in the educational system. *Newsweek's* strategy, however, goes even further:

Workers of the future will need more than a solid grounding in math, science, computer and technical fields. Many corporate leaders emphasize the necessity for a new stress on far more *basic skills*. Work attitudes — showing up, being on time, and getting along with co-workers — are among them. And so are reading and writing. Workers in a rapidly changing labor market will need to be generalists flexible enough to choose courses and training for new careers with a minimum of disruption, and for that they will need a goodly dose of very traditional skills . . .

Above all, even the most cost-conscious society should recognize that money spent on human capital is the single most important investment it can make. All the support programs and economic tinkering will make no difference at all if tomorrow's workers are not prepared to handle the changes to come.

It is already clear that this view of 'human capital' investment with all that it means for education is finding strong political support — especially among Democrats. The notion of increasing the orientation of the educational system towards technical and industrial training is reflected in recently approved bills that authorize \$425 million for new science education programs in fiscal 1984 — such an expenditure being about \$350 million more than requested by President Reagan. Speaking in support of the measure Rep. Carl D. Perkins (D. Kentucky) and Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee argued:

This legislation tackles a grave national problem that threatens to compromise our competitiveness in world markets, weakens our industrial base, and undermines our national defense.⁹

It is of course clear that the 'human capital' view of schooling in the U.S. is not a new one. The concept of public education as primarily a vehicle for the production of a technically skilled and industrially trained work force reaches back to the 19th century. Fred Pincus in his review of the history of vocational education¹⁰ notes that the Morrill Act of 1862 was an attempt to break the tradition in which colleges taught students Greek, Latin and Theology but were unrelated to the needs of industrialists. The latter wanted to use science to promote production and needed skilled workers to develop technology. The Act endowed land to colleges specializing in the agricultural and industrial arts. This, says Pincus, was an important first step towards the creation of a practical education and eventual training of scientists and professionals.

The acceptance of vocationalism in the colleges was to have an important influence in the movement, a quarter of a century later, to extend technical and industrial training to the secondary schools. Joel Spring, for example, notes that the institution of the comprehensive high school with its differentiated curriculum and the use of vocational guidance, in the early years of the 20th century, reflected a belief that public schools should supply trained and technically skilled individuals to meet the needs of the labor market.¹¹ In New York City during this period, for example, Eli Weaver, the pioneer of vocational guidance, envisioned the establishment of a central government bureau that would conduct surveys of the labor market to determine manpower shortages and surpluses. This information would be used to encourage and discourage training in particular occupations dependent on the needs of the labor market. Within schools guidance and educational programs were to be based on information supplied by the bureau. Weaver wrote that the guidance agency "would facilitate the exchange of labor between the worker and employers as the exchange of other commodities is now assisted through the standardizing operations of other exchanges."¹² These ideas culminated in the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917 which authorized \$7 million to subsidize vocational education programs in secondary schools throughout the country.*

After World War II, says Pincus, numerous government and foundation-sponsored commissions began to argue the important role that vocational education could play in the U.S. economy. Giving particular support to community colleges and post-secondary education, reports emphasized the increased need for skilled labor and the importance of investing in human capital. From 1963 on, and with the passage of the Vocational Education Act, the federal government has expanded its support for programs aimed at enhancing the quantity and quality of skilled, technically-trained workers in the U.S. economy. (Pincus notes the spectacular rise in vocationally-oriented community college programs after World War II: between 1948 and 1960 enrollment grew by half a million, and between 1960 and 1970 it increased from 650,000 to over 4 million — a sixfold increase. More than half of all college freshmen in 1978 were enrolled in community colleges. And of these large numbers more and more students were ending up in vocational rather than college-transfer programs. The proportion of community college students enrolled in vocational programs increased from 13% in 1965 to 50% in 1976.)¹³

While we will return below to a discussion of education that is oriented towards technical preparation and industrial readiness, it is important to recognize here that current liberal pronouncements on the need for an educational policy that emphasizes human capital considerations is, in no way, a radical departure from existing tendencies. It may perhaps be more accurately viewed as the intensification of an already present fundamental aspect of American education.**

Alternatives on the Left: Towards an Economic Democracy

Alongside the emerging demands on the political left for an industrial policy that would deal with the present economic crisis by making more rational use of resources — including human

* Pincus and others have noted that large segments of the American labor movement initially opposed vocational education because it was so clearly dominated by big business and therefore promised to produce workers willing to labor for low wages and be loyal to the company rather than to the union.

** Of course once we move from a concern with the consciously-organized curricular aspect of schooling to the 'hidden curriculum' a, by now, rich literature illuminates the way the educational process is thoroughly permeated by the ideology of the industrial order and the corporate structure.

resources, another, perhaps less publicized, set of proposals has begun to emerge. While these proposals are now to be found in a wide variety of places (and not only in the U.S.) they have perhaps received their most concrete summation in the work of Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer working at Stanford University and the Center for Economic Studies at Palo Alto, California.¹⁴ Their proposals center around what these authors call 'economic democracy.' The educational policy implications of this approach, though still to be spelled out, would, I believe, differ markedly from the technical orientation of policies outlined above. We will return to this comparison later. It is important, first, to sketch out some of the 'economic democracy' proposals themselves.

At the core is what Carnoy and Shearer refer to as a strategy aimed at greater democratic participation in economic affairs. Such participation would center around measures to ensure greater democratic control of investment decisions, a democratization of the structure of the work place, support for the introduction of 'democratic technology,' and the need for a more responsive and accountable corporate sector. They argue that only through such changes will it be possible to really address the economic, social and human needs of the United States in the coming years. They note, for example, that as long as financial control of capital remains so "tightly concentrated and interwoven, competition for funds will be heavily weighted in favor of the needs and priorities of the large corporations."¹⁵ The result was that in the late 1970's it became almost impossible for new enterprise to raise capital through public offerings of common stock, and the inability of small and medium sized companies to compete for capital with 'blue chip' firms. In addition, and more importantly, the 'stacked deck' of capital competition has made it impossible to properly meet public needs in this country (better and more universal health care, low income housing and neighborhood revitalization, rebuilding of cities and economic rebirth of rural areas, pollution control, transportation upgrading, environmental enhancement, energy retrofitting, etc.). State and local governments do not currently control enough sources of revenue to expand their capital spending. And the federal government is constrained by the political power of the top wealth holders and the need for price stability. Carnoy and Shearer argue that only through a greater assertion of public control over capital assets and funds can a different set of priorities be designated.*

The enlargement of the public management of the economy would not, however, stop at the issue of investment. It would expand into the very organizational structure of the firms themselves. The aim here would be to promote a democratic restructuring of the work place usurping traditional hierarchical forms of relationships. Such a change would alter the power relationship within firms in order to achieve some measure of worker control. Of course, Carnoy and Shearer note that bringing about this kind of radical reform requires us to confront the belief in American ideology which claims that the capitalist division of labor and its resultant hierarchy is the most efficient way to produce goods and services. Such a view of efficiency, they assert, includes a concern with worker well-being, interest and satisfaction from work, fuller employment, etc., only when these are consistent with increasing the return to capital. They note that maximizing the return to capital has frequently meant choosing capital intensive technology and reduced employment opportunities, as well as the intensification of fragmented and stultifying labor. For Carnoy and Shearer such a trade off is in no way an inevitable one:

* Such funds, they note, are frequently owned in theory by public groups, but are not controlled in any meaningful way by them. They include federal, state and local government funds now controlled by private financial institutions, and employee retirement funds now managed by private financial institutions.

Worker control of production and the accompanying alternative organization of work (such as a greatly reduced division of labor) could well result in greater output, more employment, more efficient use of labor, and less intensive use of capital than the present hierarchical arrangements. Workers might also enjoy their work more if they had greater say about how it is organized and what they produce, and participated directly in productivity increases.¹⁶

Carnoy and Shearer note that in the seventies worker participation and the conditions of work have been important issues for both workers and management. It is, they say, the logical outgrowth of the dissatisfaction of workers even in the face of relatively high wage rates — dissatisfaction that manifests itself in rising absenteeism, higher worker turnover, sabotage, low quality output and wildcat strikes. Changes in the relationship between workers and bosses that do not fundamentally alter the undemocratic nature of production (and are concerned only with trivial issues such as the availability of a coffee machine, parking spaces, etc.) will not affect behavior. This can only occur, say Carnoy and Shearer, if workers themselves are truly and directly involved in the firm's production and financial decisions. It means, they say, control over how work is to be done, how work is to be allocated, and how much workers are to be paid.

In looking at a wide variety of experiences and data concerning worker controlled firms both in the U.S. and Europe the authors note that in terms of productivity they do as well or better than individually or managerially controlled firms. There is, they state, a consensus in existing studies that productivity is enhanced in firms where worker participation is introduced:

Worker-controlled firms are as productive as — sometimes even more productive than — traditional capitalist enterprises. When workers own and manage production they have more equal wage distribution and steadier employment, and thus feel better about their work. These factors are obviously related: when workers have more equal wage distribution and steady work and pay, they tend to feel better about their jobs; and when they feel better about their job they show higher productivity.¹⁷

While, they note, democratic participation in the work place decision-making does not guarantee financial success (this often depends on market conditions beyond the workers' control) it does improve productivity, help workers solve production and financial problems and increase the non-material rewards of greater commitment to one another and the sense of cooperation.

It is clear, they note, that all such considerations of a democratically managed work-place have to be set within the wider attempt to exert greater public control over the major corporate enterprises that effectively govern the economy. Certainly, they argue, without this any attempt at reforms aimed at greater worker and consumer participation in economic governance will be faced with the problem of corporate relocation, flights of capital, etc.* Such enterprises, they assert, which control sizeable shares of national and foreign markets are not run by their private owners — like stockholders — but by a managerial elite that is overwhelmingly white and male, and unaccountable to any constituency. Their proposals to combat a united front of corporate opposition to a program of economic democracy include the need to bring the large corporations under greater democratic control as well as creating alternative sources of finance (e.g., public banks, and pension funds) and production (worker cooperatives and public enterprises). A democratically controlled economy, they argue, must be constructed in parallel to the existing private sector:

*The authors note that existing laws proved unable to limit the growth, concentration and autonomous power of the top 200 manufacturing corporations that control more than 60% of U.S. manufacturing assets.

The elements of a more democratic economy are thus constructed alongside and within the existing system; simultaneously, the power and prerogatives of the corporations' managerial elite are steadily reduced by opening up the corporation to workers, consumers, and community representatives as well as to public representatives.¹⁸

Educational Proposals for an Economic Democracy

It is clear that the proposals for economic democracy presented briefly above contain definite policy implications for education. We have already noted that those proposing increased centralized planning in order to further economic development in the U.S. assert the need for education to be directed towards the goal of human capital formation. Such an orientation, as we have seen, augurs a further turn of the screw in American education towards greater technical specialization and training. It is an orientation that prefigures a further erosion of any remaining humanistic, cultural, or democratic values traditionally associated with liberal education.* It promises, instead, greater and more precise integration of the educational curriculum with the needs of the corporate economy. Concerned with neither polity nor individuality the human capital view of education asserts only the need to mesh human skills and capabilities with the demands of the corporately-organized market. In Marxian categories such policies assume the commodity-like character of the school process; human beings are raw material to be worked over till they assume the required form of labor power that may usefully be bought by employers. Education, in this view, sees human beings preeminently as 'factors of production', and educational policy as a matter of ensuring that schools maximally elevate the quality of labor power available to the labor market. The purpose of such schooling, it is safe to say, is a humanly 'stripped-down' one. Adaptation to the requirements of international trade, not individual enrichment, cultural literacy or ethical living becomes the overriding purpose. And the emphasis on specialized training ensures that individuals know more and more about less and less.

The turn towards an increased integration of state and corporate economy proposed by neo-liberals carries with it the promise of a further reduction in the relative autonomy of education. Education is more and more concerned with the development of the economic infrastructure and less with the issue of cultural transmission and reproduction.** Its activities are ever more precisely aligned with the imperatives of the national and international division of labor, and its purposes defined by the criteria of an instrumental rationality. Such changes while, on the one hand, certainly presaged by the declining competitive position of the U.S. vis-à-vis the world market, also indicate, perhaps, the public school's declining significance as a cultural agency. It may be that the New Right's moral crusade concerning schools in America is no more than a rearguard action by members of the middle class in the face of the now far more powerful ideological role of the corporately-organized media.²⁰ Further erosion of the school's 'cultural'

¹⁸ This is certainly demonstrated in the recent series of national reports on the ill-health of American public education, in which economic not democratic concerns are uppermost.

^{**} It must be admitted that any straightforward distinction in education between preparation for one's work-role and cultural 'socialization' oversimplifies things. It is clear that a part of economic training is always more than merely technical; it contains implicit messages about the division of labor, the 'natural' distinctions in human competencies and intelligence, ways of socially relating, etc. — in short, the transmission of cultural values and meanings.¹⁹

function opens the way to increased technicization of curriculum content, at least for the great majority of those attending school.*

In the face of mounting pressure to further technicize education, the schools' residual 'progressive' ideology such as the concern for an 'individualized curriculum' may be absorbed and transformed so as to imply training which equips the individual to find his or her place in the usually fragmented, bureaucratic and hierarchical work situation of the present industrial order.²¹ Indeed, the emphasis on the need to invest in new technology in order to 'reindustrialize' America shows every sign of intensifying just such work situations. Testifying before the Subcommittee on Economic Stabilization of the House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs in July 1981, William W. Winpisinger, President of the International Association of Machinists, pointed to the effects of the new technology on skilled labor.²² He argued that the search for short-term profits has dovetailed with labor-saving technology to encourage job fragmentation. Machinists, he said, have been replaced by low-skilled machine operators backed up by a relatively small number of specialized service people. While unemployment has been one result of the new technology, another result has been the lowering of the skill level of the average worker. The government, the machinists claim, has aided and abetted this process by supporting vocational and technical school training rather than the more general training obtained through collective-bargaining-based apprenticeship programs. In addition, through efforts like the Department of Defense's 'Partners in Preparedness' program, the government has promoted reindustrialization programs without the benefit of public involvement and without labor representation. The result has been reductions in health and safety regulations, increased corporate tax incentives, relaxed environmental restraints, and the encouragement of more labor-saving technology which excludes the interests of skilled labor.

Neo-liberal advocacy of human capital development as a way of dealing with the current economic crisis implies, whether intentionally or otherwise, education and training programs adapted to work that will be increasingly de-skilled and fragmented. It implies preparation for work in which there is an intensification of the separation between the conception and execution of tasks. Such policies, whatever their effect on the U.S. trading position in the world economy, will certainly intensify the dehumanizing and alienating character of work. It implies occupational situations in which workers are further removed from any overall comprehension or control of their tasks; in which they become ever-more mindless appendages to the mechanical process. It is precisely this separation of execution from conception implicit in 'human capital' proposals that is challenged by the concept of economic democracy as we have seen outlined by Carnoy and Shearer and others. At the core of this concept is the belief that only with the continuation of existing forms of institutional and economic control are the twin concerns of productivity and humanized work situations mutually exclusive goals. Their proposals for a democratic restructuring of the work place so that workers cease to be mere factors of production and assume, instead, the integrated tasks of conception, management and execution, opens the way to a resolution of *both* the economic and human crises of the industrial order. Of course such radical economic changes have very definite implications for education.

In considering what form of education might be apposite to the notion of economic democracy it is clear that a greater integration of human tasks necessitates something broader than the goal of

* Of course, much of the elite education in the U.S. still promises an 'all-round development', and a literate, cultured intelligence (supplemented now, more often than not, by one or two courses in computers).

specialized technical training outlined above. While specialized training will certainly have its place it might be expected that more attention be given to 'training' in democratic processes, the capacity to critically evaluate social needs, and the human and environmental consequences of economic decisions. Such an education will undoubtedly have to be oriented to a set of concerns wider than the ability to operate an instrument of production. It will have to take seriously the functioning of institutional democracy, the politics of control, the assumption of collective responsibility, the negotiation of priorities, the elaboration of procedures and the resolution of conflicts — all of which need to be learned through opportunities for genuine democratic participation and governance in our educational institutions. It goes without saying that given the hierarchical-authoritarian character of most schools in America such change will be every bit as radical as the changes proposed for the control of industry itself. In addition to this democratic restructuring of educational institutions, education will have to renew its commitment to the notion of a broader 'cultural' education. While a human capital focus implies only the need for an appropriate specialized education, the social restructuring of industry so as to unite the concern for both the execution and conception of tasks requires an education that allows individuals an understanding of the broader purposes and ends of production and other activities in that society — an understanding that critically examines both existing purposes as well as possible alternatives. Popular participation in the fundamental industrial planning and investment decisions implies awareness of and insight into the interrelatedness of such decisions with matters of social, human and cultural significance, the effects of the allocation of human and material resources, the consequences of industrial development on the environment, the issue of human needs and appropriate or necessary levels of consumption, productivity and the relation between work and leisure time, the relationship between forms of technology and human experience, and interrelationship of the world economy.

The kinds of questions that are integral to an education for economic democracy transcend answers that may be arrived at through the simple utilization of technical criteria. Issues of allocating resources, environmental effects, technology and worker experience, work and leisure, etc. cannot be dealt with through an instrumental rationality in which ends are already presumed. Such issues are indissolubly connected to wider considerations — aesthetic, ethical, and existential. These can only be decided through an examination of the purposes of production in our society and culture. While the technical education of human capital embodies a rationality in which ends, purposes and effects of economic activity are, to a large extent, presupposed,* 'economic democracy' contains the implication of choice regarding the possible goals to be sought through our productive energies. Of course, only an education that focuses on a critical examination of our culture will allow individuals to transcend the reified and 'taken-for-granted' nature of ideological presuppositions in which goals are embedded. Such an exploration will likely question the wisdom or necessity of centralization and concentration on industrial development, the possibility of forms of technology that enhance rather than reduce craftsmanship and creativity, the development of labor-saving technologies vs. full-employment, and the social need or usefulness of current industrial priorities (e.g., the emphasis on private modes of transportation). Such questions, it is evident, are inextricably linked to issues of human values, social priorities, and ideological commitments.

* The 'bottom line' is always efficiency, the minimization of costs and the maximization of profits.

Democratic management of economic institutions requires moving from an education in which knowledge of a highly circumscribed set of concerns is emphasized to one embracing the totality of social concerns and relationships. Specialized training gives way to an education concerned with broad human comprehension concerning the meaning and purpose of our productive life. In an important sense education for economic democracy implies a renewed commitment to cultural education — one in which human life, its meaning, purpose, and the social order in which these are shared are central concerns. It is clear, however, that culture is used here in a sense quite different from that frequently employed in elitist versions of the liberal arts in which culture refers to a highly select body of traditions, knowledge, and experience. It refers to one in which culture, in Paolo Freire's words,²³ exists wherever man makes the world the object of his knowledge, submitting it to a process of transformation, altering reality. In other words culture and cultural education become concerned with the structuration of everyday life, the consequences of work and production, and the 'round of daily existence.' In this sense education becomes concerned with the unification of 'culture' and 'civilization' where the former represents a concern with aesthetic, critical and intellectual considerations, and the latter embodies the material life of the everyday world.

Unquestionably it is in the socialist educational tradition that one finds the best examples of such educational concerns. This tradition, from the ideas of William Morris, and the practical experiments of William Owen in 19th century England, to the Chinese experience of recent times, has consistently emphasized the need to overcome the 'idiocy' of industrial life with its narrow focus and its overly specialized realm of experiences. In order to transcend these, education has been viewed, preeminently, as a part of the process whereby the great mass of people engage, not only in the execution of the necessary social and productive activities, but also participate in the general conceptualization of the purposes, goals, and priorities of their society. Socialist pedagogy has, in a wide variety of forms and experiences, sought to integrate the traditional mental-manual work distinctions which have historically excluded the great mass of individuals from any general comprehension of their narrow technical endeavors — excluded them from seeing its interrelatedness and connectedness with others' work, and the overall purpose and direction of all of their activity. It has sought to obliterate the traditional distinction (underlying education) between 'culture' and 'civilization' by bringing the aesthetic, intellectual, critical and ethical concerns of 'culture' to bear on a radically expanded realm which includes *all* forms of human activity, productivity and creativity — from the factory to the museum, and from the union hall to the university. The idea of a socialist pedagogy and its connection to the educational concerns of an economic democracy are made clear by Stephen Castles and Weibke Wustenberg:

One of the major tasks of transitional society [i.e., a socialist society] is to create the conditions for overcoming the distinction between mental and manual work. Obviously education has a major role to play in this. It must help to make all citizens capable not only of doing productive work, but also of planning and organizing the work — not individually, but collectively with their workmates. However, the workers' horizon must not be restricted to the place of work. They can only control production in their own interest and in the interest of society in general if they all have a full grasp of the technological, economic and political relationship between their own workplace and the whole system of social production.²⁴

They continue:

Its aim is to produce 'fully developed human beings,' which means people who are capable not only of doing productive work, but also of controlling production and running society. Every person must be capable of mastering the aims, technology and concrete method of production processes, and understanding their relationship with society in general.²⁵

Conclusions: Ideology As Usual, or a New Social and Educational Vision?

It is clear that the alternative ideas currently being proposed by those on the left side of the political spectrum in America today represent quite distinct, indeed conflicting, views of social, economic and, ultimately, educational possibilities. On the one hand are those who propose an intensification of the corporate mode of social relations where education centers on the attempt to 'fit' one more precisely into his or her niche in the technical division of labor. Its overriding concern is that each individual possesses sufficient skill capabilities to ensure a maximum degree of industrial or economic productivity. In contrast to this liberal-corporate vision where the state, through its educational agencies, seeks to more effectively augment the labor power employed in the private sector, the thinking of economic democracy seeks to enhance the general understanding of individuals and the social groups to which they belong so that they may comprehend and control the economic process in which they participate. It implies the need for a broad critical social education and the development of the capability for self-governance and self-determining behavior. Such an alternative vision, I believe, implies radically different views not only of our institutional structures and the social relations that are crystallized there but, even more fundamentally, differences in our view of human nature itself. Such differences mark out, I believe, the limits and limitations of the liberal-democratic vision of society and humankind. Beneath the contrasting views of policy discussed here — both economic and educational — runs a deeper vein of ideological thinking. This vein structures and shapes our view of human capabilities and human needs. Neo-liberal corporate thinking of the type described in this paper and which appears already to be an important element of the emerging economic wisdom in the Democratic Party (and elsewhere), does little more than reproduce those images of humanity which are already firmly rooted in liberal thinking (and in the ideologies of societies which are both capitalist and maintain democratic political values). At the core of this thinking is a schizophrenic view of human nature; ²⁶ on its democratic side is inscribed the vision of man noble in his ability to be self-governing and autonomous, and possessing a wisdom broad enough to direct the institutions of the society in which he is a member. Whatever its deficiencies in the realities of present-day, interest-group politics it is still, fundamentally, this vision that provides the energy for radical democratic movements of enfranchisement. Coterminous with this, however, is that impoverished view of man inhabiting a bureaucratic-industrial world in which his responsibilities are minutely circumscribed, his capacities restricted and narrowly defined, and his ability to govern replaced by hierarchical lines of authority. It is, as we have seen, precisely this subordination of the individual to hierarchical domination and the imperatives of the accumulation process that are crystallized in neo-liberal industrial and educational policies. Such policies are only the most recent in a long line of attempts to produce what David Noble calls an 'America by design'; ²⁷ Noble refers to an industrial system in which, historically, concerns of management with social control, and profitability have supported an attitude in which employees are to be engineered into an acceptance of their appendage-like relationship to the technology of production.

It is clear that it is the latter view and not the democratic vision that overwhelmingly informs the emerging Democratic Party and liberal platform in regard to educational and economic policy. It is the latter view of man and his capabilities that underpins the preponderant emphasis on math and science education, computer literacy, industrial training and technological adaptability. And, in this sense, it must be said that, despite the ballyhoo, the emphasis implies little more than business (i.e., liberal-capitalism) as usual. While the technology of micro-electronics certainly implies important differences from that of the older 'smoke-stack industries, for many of those formulating

social and industrial policies these do not imply any fundamental disturbance of the basic ethical, organizational or social structures of contemporary society. It is likely that the renewal of a left in politics in this country as it emerges to counter the debacle of Reaganism will again be dominated by an ideology little concerned with an extension of democratic values into areas outside of the traditional political arena. It will, in all probability, offer only the possibility of a revitalized American corporatism in which the state, through its educational and other agencies, will husband more effectively and efficiently the manpower and other resources needed to ensure the increased profitability of the private sector. In such politics little will distinguish the human, social, and educational vision informing the major political alternatives — only the instrumentalities for attaining them will be matters of debate.

NOTES

¹ One of the best accounts of this process is found in Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward. *The New Class War*. (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

² 'The New Liberal Economists.' *Newsweek*. Nov. 8, 1982, p. 64.

³ Lester Thurow. 'How to Rescue a Drowning Economy.' In *New York Review of Books*. Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (April 1, 1982), p. 3.

⁴ Ira C. Magaziner and Robert B. Reich. *Minding America's Business*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982).

⁵ Felix G. Rohatyn. 'New York and the Nation.' In *The New York Review of Books*. Vol. XXVIII, Nos. 21 and 22 (Jan. 21, 1982), p. 28.

⁶ David A. Smith, quoted in *Newsweek*. Nov. 8, 1982, p. 64.

⁷ Magaziner and Reich. *Minding America's Business*. p. 99.

⁸ *Newsweek*. Oct. 18, 1982, p. 91.

⁹ Associated Press *Report*. March 3, 1983.

¹⁰ Fred L. Pincus. 'The False Promises of Community Colleges: Class Conflict and Vocational Education.' In *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 50, No. 3, (August, 1980).

¹¹ Joel Spring. *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), Ch. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹³ Pincus. 'The False Promises of Community Colleges.' p. 338.

¹⁴ Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer. *Economic Democracy*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1980). This book also contains a resource guide on the movement for economic democracy in the U.S. and also, to some extent, in the United Kingdom. In the U.K. the Institute for Workers' Control, based in Nottingham, is one of the best sources of information on economic democracy efforts in Europe.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁹ For an excellent discussion of the confusions arising out of these distinctions see Pat Walker (ed.). *Between Labor and Capital*. (Boston: South End Press, 1979).

²⁰ See, for example, H. Svi Shapiro. 'Schools, Society, and the Crisis of Legitimation: The Sociology of the Declining Faith in Education.' *Interchange*. Vol. 15, No. 4 (1984).

²¹ Probably the best discussion of industrial work conditions in the U.S. is found in Harry Braverman. *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. (Monthly Review Press, 1974).

²² 'Workers' Technology Bill of Rights.' In *Democracy*. Spring, 1983.

²³ Paolo Freire. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. (New York: Seabury, 1973).

²⁴ Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wustenberg. *The Education of the Future*. (London: Pluto Press, 1979), pp. 5-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶ For an excellent discussion of this division see Shlomo Avineri. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968); also S. Bowles and H. Gintis. *Schooling in Capitalist America*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

²⁷ David F. Noble. *America by Design*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).