Chomsky on MisEducation

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DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

The topic that was suggested, which I'm very happy to talk about, is "Democracy and Education." The phrase *democracy and education* immediately brings to mind the life and work and thought of one of the outstanding thinkers of the past century, John Dewey, who devoted the greater part of his life and his thought to this array of issues. I guess I should confess a special interest. His thought was a strong influence on me in my formative years—in fact, from about age two on, for a variety of reasons that I won't go into but are real. For much of his life—later he was more skeptical—Dewey seems to have felt that reforms in early education could be in themselves a major lever of social change. They could lead the way to a more just and free society, a society in which, in his words, "the ultimate aim of production is not production of goods, but the production of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality." This basic commitment, which runs through all of Dewey's work and thought, is profoundly at odds with the two leading currents of modern social intellectual life; one, strong in his day—he was writing in the 1920s and 1930s about these things—is associated with the command economies in Eastern Europe, the systems created by Lenin and Trotsky and turned into an even greater monstrosity by Stalin. The other, the state capitalist industrial society being constructed in the U.S. and much of the West, with the effective rule of private power. These two systems are similar in some fundamental ways, including ideologically. Both were, and one of them remains, deeply authoritarian in fundamental commitment, and both were very sharply and dramatically

opposed to another tradition, the Left libertarian tradition, with roots in Enlightenment values, a tradition that included progressive liberals of the John Dewey variety, independent socialists like Bertrand Russell, leading elements of the Marxist mainstream, mostly anti-Bolshevik, and of course libertarian socialists and various anarchist movements, not to speak of major parts of the labor movement and other popular sectors.

This independent Left, of which Dewey was a part, has strong roots in classical liberalism. It grows right out of it, in my opinion, and it stands in sharp opposition to the absolutist currents of state capitalist and state socialist institutions and thought, including the rather extreme form of absolutism that's now called conservative in the U.S., terminology that would have amused Orwell and would have caused any genuine conservative to turn over in his grave, if you could find one.

I need not stress that this picture is not the conventional one, to put it rather mildly, but I think it does have one merit, at least—namely, the merit of accuracy. I'll try to explain why.

Let me return to one of Dewey's central themes, that the ultimate aim of production is not production of goods but the production of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality. That includes, of course, education, which was a prime concern of his. The goal of education, to shift over to Bertrand Russell, is "to give a sense of the value of things other than domination," to help create "wise citizens of a free community," to encourage a combination of citizenship with liberty and individual creativeness, which means that we regard "a child as a gardener regards a young tree, as something with a certain intrinsic nature, which will develop into an admirable form, given proper soil and air and light." In fact, much as they disagreed on many other things, as they did, Dewey and Russell did agree on what Russell called this "humanistic conception," with its roots in the Enlightenment, the idea that education is not to be viewed as something like filling a vessel with water but, rather, assisting a flower to grow in its own way—an eighteenth-century view that they revived. In other words, providing the circumstances in which the normal creative patterns will flourish.

Dewey and Russell also shared the understanding that these leading ideas of the Enlightenment and classical liberalism had a revolutionary character, and retained it right at the time they were writing, in the early half of this century. If implemented, these ideas could produce free

human beings whose values were not accumulation and domination but, rather, free association on terms of equality and sharing and cooperation, participating on equal terms to achieve common goals that were democratically conceived. There was only contempt for what Adam Smith called the "vile maxim of the masters of mankind, all for ourselves, and nothing for other people," the guiding principle that nowadays we're taught to admire and revere, as traditional values have eroded under unremitting attack, the so-called conservatives leading the onslaught in recent decades.

It's worth taking time to notice how sharp and dramatic is the clash of values between, on the one hand, the humanistic conception that runs from the Enlightenment up to leading twentieth-century figures like Russell and Dewey and, on the other hand, the prevailing doctrines of today, the doctrines that were denounced by Adam Smith as the "vile maxim" and also denounced by the lively and vibrant working-class press of over a century ago, which condemned what it called the "new spirit of the age, gain wealth, forgetting all but self"—Smith's vile maxim. It's quite remarkable to trace the evolution of values from a precapitalist thinker like Adam Smith, with his stress on sympathy and the goal of perfect equality and the basic human right to creative work, and contrast that and move on to the present to those who laud the "new spirit of the age," sometimes rather shamelessly invoking Adam Smith's name. For example, Nobel Prize–winning economist James Buchanan, who writes that what each person seeks in an "ideal situation" is "mastery over a world of slaves." That's what you seek, in case you hadn't noticed, something that Adam Smith would have regarded as simply pathological.

The best book I know of on Adam Smith's actual thought *(Adam Smith and His Legacy for Modern Capitalism)* is written by a professor here at Loyola, Patricia Werhane. Of course, it's always best to read the original.

One of the most dramatic illustrations of the "new spirit of the age" and its values is the commentary that's now in the press on the difficulties we face in uplifting the people of Eastern Europe. As you know, we're now extending to them, our new beneficiaries, the loving care that we've lavished on our wards elsewhere in Latin America and the Philippines and so on, with consequences that are dramatically clear and consistent in these horror chambers but also are miraculously free of any lessons

about who we are and what we do. One might ask why. In any event, we are now proceeding to uplift the people liberated from communism as we've in the past liberated Haitians and Brazilians and Guatemalans and Filipinos and Native Americans and African slaves and so on. The *New York Times* is currently running an interesting series of articles on these different problems. They give some interesting insight into the prevailing values. There was an article on East Germany, for example, written by Steven Kinzer. It opens by quoting a priest who was one of the leaders of the popular protests against the communist regime in East Germany. He describes the growing concerns there about what's happening to the society. He says, "Brutal competition and the lust for money are destroying our sense of community, and almost everyone feels a level of fear or depression or insecurity" as they master the new spirit of the age in which we instruct the backward peoples of the world.

The next article turned to what we regard as the showplace, the real success story, Poland, written by Jane Perlez. The headline reads, "Fast and Slow Lanes on the Capitalist Road." The structure of the story is that some are getting the point but there are also some who are still backwards. She gives one example of a good student and one example of a slow learner. The good student is the owner of a small factory that is a "thriving example" of the best in modern capitalist Poland. It produces intricately designed wedding gowns sold mostly to rich Germans and to that tiny sector of superrich Poles. This is in a country where poverty has more than doubled since the reforms were instituted, according to a World Bank study last July, and incomes have dropped about 30 percent. However, the people who are hungry and jobless can look at the intricately designed wedding gowns in the store windows, appreciating the new spirit of the age, so it's understandable that Poland is hailed as the great success story for our achievements.

A good student explains that "people have to be taught to understand they must fight for themselves and can't rely on others." She is describing a training course she's running that's trying to instill American values among people who are still brainwashed with slogans like "I'm a miner. Who else is better?" They have got to get that out of their heads. A lot of people are better, including people who can design wedding gowns for rich Germans. That's the chosen illustration of the success story of American values. Then there are the failures, still on the slow

lane on the capitalist road. Here she picks one as her example, a forty-year-old coal miner who "sits in his wood-paneled living room admiring the fruits of his labor under communism—a television set, comfortable furniture, a shiny, modern kitchen," and he wonders "why he's at home, jobless and dependent on welfare payments," having not yet absorbed the new spirit of the age, gain wealth, forgetting all but self, and not "I'm a miner. Who else is better?" The series goes on like that. It's interesting to read and to see what's taken for granted.

What's happening in Eastern Europe recapitulates what's gone on in our Third World domains for a long time and falls into place in a much longer story. It's very familiar from our own history and the history of England before us. There's a recent book, by a distinguished Yale University labor historian, David Montgomery, in which he points out that modern America was created over the protests of its working people. He's quite right. Those protests were vigorous and outspoken, particularly in the working-class and community press that flourished in the U.S. from the early nineteenth century up until the 1950s, when it was finally destroyed by private power, as its counterpart in England was about ten years later. The first major study of this topic was in 1924 by Norman Ware. It still makes very illuminating reading. It was published here in Chicago and reprinted very recently by Ivan Dee, a local publisher. It's very much worth reading. It's a work that set off very substantial study in social history.

What Ware describes, looking mostly at the labor press, is how the value system that was advocated by private power had to be beaten into the heads of ordinary people, who had to be taught to abandon normal human sentiments and to replace them with the new spirit of the age, as they called it. He reviews the mainly mid–nineteenth century working-class press, often, incidentally, run by working-class women. The themes that run through it are constant for a long period. They are concerned with what they call "degradation" and loss of dignity and independence, loss of self-respect, the decline of the worker as a person, the sharp decline in cultural level and cultural attainments as workers were subjected to what they called "wage slavery," which they regarded as not very different from the chattel slavery they had fought to uproot during the Civil War. Particularly dramatic and quite relevant to today's problems was the sharp decline in what we call "high culture," reading of classics and

contemporary literature by the people who were called the factory girls in Lowell and by craftsmen and other workers. Craftsmen would hire somebody to read to them while they were working because they were interested and had libraries. All that had to go.

What they described, paraphrasing the labor press, is that when you sell your product, you retain your person. But when you sell your labor, you sell yourself, losing the rights of free men and becoming vassals of mammoth establishments of a "moneyed aristocracy" that "threatens annihilation to every man who dares to question their right to enslave and oppress." "Those who work in the mills ought to own them," not have the status of machines ruled by private "despots" who are entrenching "monarchic principles on democratic soil" as they drive downward freedom and rights, civilization, health, morals, and intellectuality in the new commercial feudalism.

Just in case you are confused, this is long before any influence of Marxism. This is American workers talking about their experiences in the 1840s. The labor press also condemned what they called the "bought priesthood," referring to the media and the universities and the intellectual class, that is, the apologists who sought to justify the absolute despotism that was the new spirit of the age and to instill its sordid and demeaning values. One of the early leaders of the AFL, Henry Demarest Lloyd, about a century ago, late nineteenth century, expressed the standard view when he described the mission of the labor movement as to overcome "the sins and superstitions of the market" and to defend democracy by extending it to control over industry by working people.

All of this would have been completely intelligible to the founders of classical liberalism, people like Wilhelm von Humboldt, for example, who inspired John Stuart Mill and who, very much like his contemporary Adam Smith, regarded creative work freely undertaken in association with others as the core value of a human life. So if a person produces an object on command, Humboldt wrote, we may admire what he did but we will despise what he is, not a true human being who acts on his own impulses and desires. The bought priesthood has the task of undermining these values and destroying them among people who sell themselves on the labor market. For similar reasons, Adam Smith warned that in any civilized society governments would have to intervene to prevent the division of labor from making people "as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to be." He based his rather nuanced advocacy of markets on the thesis that if conditions were truly free, markets would lead to perfect equality. That was their moral justification. All of this has been forgotten by the bought priesthood, who has a rather different tale to tell.

Dewey and Russell are two of the leading twentieth-century inheritors of this tradition, with its roots in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism. Even more interesting is the inspiring record of struggle and organization and protest by working men and women since the early nineteenth century as they sought to win freedom and justice and to retain the rights that they had once had as the new despotism of state-supported private power extended its sway.

The basic issue was formulated with a good deal of clarity by Thomas Jefferson around 1816. This was before the Industrial Revolution had really taken root in the former colonies, but you could begin to see the developments. In his later years, observing what was happening, Jefferson had rather serious concerns about the fate of the democratic experiment. He feared the rise of a new form of absolutism that was more ominous than what had been overthrown in the American Revolution, in which he was of course a leader. Jefferson distinguished in his later years between what he called "aristocrats" and "democrats." The aristocrats are "those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes." The democrats, in contrast, "identify with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the honest and safe depository of the public interest," if not always "the most wise." The aristocrats of his day were the advocates of the rising capitalist state, which Jefferson regarded with much disdain, clearly recognizing the quite obvious contradiction between democracy and capitalism, or more accurately what we might call really existing capitalism, that is, guided and subsidized by powerful developmental states, as it was in England and the U.S. and indeed everywhere else.

This fundamental contradiction was enhanced as new corporate structures were granted increasing powers, not by democratic procedures but mainly by courts and lawyers who converted what Jefferson called the "banking institutions and monied incorporations," which he said would destroy freedom and which he could barely see the beginnings of

in his day. They were converted, mainly through courts and lawyers, into "immortal persons" with powers and rights beyond the worst nightmares of precapitalist thinkers like Adam Smith or Thomas Jefferson. Half a century earlier, Adam Smith already warned against this, though he could barely see the beginnings of it.

Jefferson's distinction between aristocrats and democrats was developed about a half a century later by Bakunin, the anarchist thinker and activist. It was actually one of the few predictions of the social sciences ever to have come true. It ought to have a place of honor in any serious academic curriculum in the social sciences and the humanities for this reason alone. Back in the nineteenth century, Bakunin predicted that the rising intelligentsia of the nineteenth century would follow one of two parallel paths. One path would be to exploit popular struggles to take state power, becoming what he called a "Red bureaucracy" that will impose the most cruel and vicious regime in history. That's one strain. The other strain, he said, will be those who discover that real power lies elsewhere, and they will become its "bought priesthood," in the words of the labor press, serving the real masters in the state-supported private system of power, either as managers or apologists "who beat the people with the people's stick," as he put it, in the state capitalist democracies. The similarities are pretty striking, and they run right up to the present. They help account for the rapid transitions that people make from one to the other position. It looks like a funny transition, but in fact it's a common ideology. We're seeing it right now in Eastern Europe with the group that's sometimes called the Nomenklatura capitalists, the old communist ruling class, now the biggest enthusiasts for the market, enriching themselves as the societies become standard Third World societies. The move is very easy because it's basically the same ideology. A similar move from Stalinist apologist to "celebration of America" is quite standard in modern history, and it doesn't require much of a shift in values, just a shift in judgment as to where power lies.

Fear of democracy is deeply entrenched. Alexander Hamilton put it clearly when he described the people as a "great beast" from which governing elites have to be protected. These ideas have become ever more entrenched in educated circles as Jefferson's fears and Bakunin's predictions were increasingly realized. The basic attitudes coming into this century were expressed very clearly by Woodrow Wilson's secretary of state,

Robert Lansing—attitudes that led to Wilson's Red Scare, as it was called, which destroyed labor and independent thought for a decade. Lansing warned of the danger of allowing the "ignorant and incapable mass of humanity" to become "dominant in the earth" or even influential, as he believed the Bolsheviks intended. That's the hysterical and utterly erroneous reaction that's pretty standard among people who feel that their power is threatened.

Those concerns were articulated very clearly by progressive intellectuals of the period, maybe the leading one being Walter Lippmann in his essays on democracy, mainly in the 1920s. Lippmann was also the dean of American journalism and one of the most distinguished commentators on public affairs for many years. He advised that "the public must be put in its place" so that the "responsible men" may "live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd," Hamilton's beast. In a democracy, Lippmann held, these "ignorant and meddlesome outsiders" do have a "function." Their function is to be "interested spectators of action" but not "participants." They are to lend their weight periodically to some member of the leadership class, that's called elections, and then they are supposed to return to their private concerns. In fact, similar notions became part of mainstream academic theory at about the same time.

In the presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1934 William Shepard argued that government should be in the hands of "an aristocracy of intellect and power," while the "ignorant, the uninformed and the antisocial elements" must not be permitted to control elections, as he mistakenly believed they had done in the past. One of the founders of modern political science, Harold Lasswell, one of the founders of the field of communications, in fact, wrote in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* in 1933 or 1934 that modern techniques of propaganda, which had been impressively refined by Wilsonian liberals, provided the way to keep the public in line.

Wilson's World War I achievements in propaganda impressed others, including Adolf Hitler. But crucially they impressed the American business community. That led to a huge expansion of the public-relations industry which was dedicated to controlling the public mind, as advocates used to put it in more honest days, just as, writing in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* in 1933, Lasswell described what he was talking about as propaganda. We don't use that term. We're more sophisticated.

As a political scientist, Lasswell advocated more sophisticated use of this new technique of control of the general public that was provided by modern propaganda. That would, he said, enable the intelligent men of the community, the natural rulers, to overcome the threat of the great beast who may undermine order because of, in Lasswell's terms, "the ignorance and stupidity of the masses." We should not succumb to "democratic dogmatisms about men being the best judges of their own interests." The best judges are the elites, who must be ensured the means to impose their will for the common good. Jefferson's aristocrats, in other words.

Lippmann and Lasswell represent the more liberal, progressive fringe of opinion, which grants the beast at least a spectator role. At the reactionary end you get those who are mislabeled conservatives in contemporary newspeak. So the Reaganite statist reactionaries thought that the public, the beast, shouldn't even have the spectator role. That explains their fascination with clandestine terror operations, which were not secret to anybody except the American public, certainly not to their victims. Clandestine terror operations were designed to leave the domestic population ignorant. They also advocated absolutely unprecedented measures of censorship and agitprop and other measures to ensure that the powerful and interventionist state that they fostered would serve as a welfare state for the rich and not troubled by the rabble. The huge increase in business propaganda in recent years, the recent assault on the universities by right-wing foundations, and other tendencies of the current period are other manifestations of the same concerns. These concerns were awakened by what liberal elites had called the "crisis of democracy" that developed in the 1960s, when previously marginalized and apathetic sectors of the population, like women and young people and old people and working people and so on, sought to enter the public arena, where they have no right to be, as all right-thinking aristocrats understand.

John Dewey was one of the relics of the Enlightenment classical liberal tradition who opposed the rule of the wise, the onslaught of the Jeffersonian aristocrats, whether they found their place on the reactionary or the liberal part of this very narrow ideological spectrum. Dewey understood clearly that "politics is the shadow cast on society by big business," and as long as this is so, "attenuation of the shadow will not change the substance." Meaning, reforms are of limited utility. Democracy requires that the source of the shadow be removed not only because of its domination of the political arena but because the very institutions of private power undermine democracy and freedom. Dewey was very explicit about the antidemocratic power that he had in mind. To quote him, "Power today"—this is the 1920s—"resides in control of the means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation and communication. Whoever owns them rules the life of the country," even if democratic forms remain. "Business for private profit through private control of banking, land, industry reinforced by command of the press, press agents and other means of publicity and propaganda," that is the system of actual power, the source of coercion and control, and until it's unraveled we can't talk seriously about democracy and freedom. Education, he hoped, of the kind he was talking about, the production of free human beings, would be one of the means of undermining this absolutist monstrosity.

In a free and democratic society, Dewey held, workers should be "the masters of their own industrial fate," not tools rented by employers. He agreed on fundamental issues with the founders of classical liberalism and with the democratic and libertarian sentiments that animated the popular working-class movements from the early Industrial Revolution, until they were finally beaten down by a combination of violence and propaganda. In the field of education, therefore, Dewey held that it is "illiberal and immoral" to train children to work "not freely and intelligently, but for the sake of the work earned," in which case their activity is "not free because not freely participated in." Again the conception of classical liberalism and the workers' movements. Therefore, Dewey held, industry must also change "from a feudalistic to a democratic social order" based on control by working people and free association, again, traditional anarchist ideals with their source in classical liberalism and the Enlightenment.

As the doctrinal system has narrowed under the assault of private power, particularly in the past few decades, these fundamental libertarian values and principles now sound exotic and extreme, perhaps even anti-American, to borrow one of the terms of contemporary totalitarian thought in the West. Given these changes, it's useful to remember that the kinds of ideas that Dewey was expressing are as American as apple

pie. They have origins in straight American traditions, right in the mainstream; not influenced by any dangerous foreign ideologies; in a worthy tradition that's ritually lauded, though it's commonly distorted and forgotten. And all of that is part of the deterioration of functioning democracy in the current age, both at the institutional and at the ideological level, in my opinion.

Education is, of course, in part a matter of schools and colleges and the formal information systems. That's true whether the goal of education is education for freedom and democracy, as Dewey advocated, or education for obedience and subordination and marginalization, as the dominant institutions require. The University of Chicago sociologist James Coleman, one of the main students of education and effects of experience on children's lives, concludes from many studies that the total effect of home background is considerably greater than the total effect of school variables in determining student achievement. So it's therefore important to have a look at how social policy and the dominant culture are shaping these factors, home influences and so on.

That's a very interesting topic. The inquiry is much facilitated by a UNICEF study published a year ago called *Child Neglect in Rich Societies,* written by a well-known American economist, Sylvia Ann Hewlett. She studies the preceding fifteen years, the late 1970s up through the early 1990s, in the rich nations. She's not talking about the Third World but about the rich countries. She finds a sharp split between the Anglo-American societies on the one hand and continental Europe and Japan on the other hand. The Anglo-American model, spearheaded by the Reaganites and Thatcher, has been a disaster for children and families, she says. The European-Japanese model, in contrast, has improved their situation considerably, from a starting point that was already considerably higher, despite the fact that these societies lack the huge advantages of the Anglo-American societies. The U.S. has unparalleled wealth and advantages, and while the United Kingdom, Britain, has severely declined, particularly under Thatcher, it has the economic advantage, at least, of being a U.S. client as well as being a major oil exporter in the Thatcher years. That's something that makes the economic failure of Thatcherism even more dramatic, as authentic British conservatives like Lord Ian Gilmour have shown.

Hewlett describes the Anglo-American disaster for children and families as attributable "to the ideological preference for free markets." Here she's only half right, in my opinion. Reaganite conservatism opposed free markets. It did advocate markets for the poor, but it went well beyond even its statist predecessors in demanding and winning a very high level of public subsidy and state protection for the rich. Whatever you choose to call this guiding ideology, it's unfair to tarnish the good name of conservatism by applying it to this particular form of violent and lawless and reactionary statism. Call it what you like, but it's not conservatism. It's not the free market. However, Hewlett is quite right in identifying the free market for the poor as the source of the disaster for families and children. And there isn't much doubt of the effects of what Hewlett calls the "anti-child spirit that is loose in these lands," in the Anglo-American lands, most dramatically in the U.S., but also Britain. This "neglect-filled Anglo-American model" based on market discipline for the poor has largely privatized child rearing while making it effectively impossible for most of the population to rear children. That's been the combined goal and policy of Reaganite conservatism and the Thatcherite analogue. The result is, of course, a disaster for children and families.

Continuing, Hewlett points out, "in the much more supportive European model," social policy has strengthened rather than weakened support systems for families and children. It's no secret, except as usual to readers of the press. As far as I'm aware, this 1993 study, rather critically relevant to our current concerns, has yet to be reviewed anywhere. It's not been, say, featured in the *New York Times,* although the *Times* did devote last Sunday's book review section largely to this topic, with somber forebodings about the fall of IQs, the decline of SAT scores, and so on and what might be causing it. Say, in the city of New York, where the social policies that have been pursued and backed by the *Times* have driven about 40 percent of the children below the poverty level, so that they're suffering malnutrition, disease, and so on. But it turns out that that is irrelevant to the decline in IQs, as is anything that Hewlett discusses in this Anglo-American neglect-filled model. What's relevant, it turns out, is bad genes. Somehow people are getting bad genes, and then there are various speculations about why this is. For example, maybe it's because black mothers don't nurture their children, and the reason is

maybe they evolved in Africa, where the climate was hostile. So those are maybe the reasons, and this is really serious, hardheaded science, and a democratic society will ignore all this at its peril, the reviewer says. Well-disciplined commissars know well enough to steer away from the obvious factors, the ones rooted in very plain and clear social policy. They are perfectly evident to anybody with their head screwed on and happen to be discussed in considerable detail by a well-known economist in a UNICEF study that's not likely to see the light of day around here.

The facts are no secret. A blue-ribbon commission of the State Boards of Education and the American Medical Association reported, "Never before has one generation of children been less healthy, less cared for or less prepared for life than their parents were at the same age." That's a big shift in an industrial society. It's only in the Anglo-American societies where this antichild, antifamily spirit has reigned for fifteen years under the guise of conservatism and family values. That's a real triumph for propaganda.

A symbolic expression of this disaster is that when Hewlett wrote her book a year ago, 146 countries had ratified the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, but one had not: the U.S. That's a standard pattern for international conventions on human rights. However, just for fairness, it's only proper to add that Reaganite conservatism is catholic in its antichild, antifamily spirit. The World Health Organization voted to condemn the Nestle Corporation for aggressive marketing of infant formula, which kills plenty of children. The vote was 118 to 1. I'll leave you to guess the one. However, this is quite minor compared with what the World Health Organization calls the "silent genocide" that's killing millions of children every year as a result of the free-market policies for the poor and the refusal of the rich to give aid. Again, the U.S. has one of the worst and most miserly records among the rich societies.

Another symbolic expression of this disaster is a new line of greeting cards by the Hallmark Corporation. One of them says, "Have a super day at school." That one, they tell you, is to be put under a box of cereal in the morning, so that when the children go off to school they'll have a warm and caring message. Another one says, "I wish I had more time to tuck you in." That's one that you stick under the pillow at night when the kid goes to sleep alone. [Laughter] There are other such

examples. In part this disaster for children and families is the result simply of falling wages. State corporate policy has been designed for the last years, especially under the Reaganites and Thatcher, to enrich small sectors and to impoverish the majority, and it succeeded. It's had exactly the intended effect. That means that people have to work much longer hours to survive. For much of the population both parents have to work maybe fifty hours merely to provide necessities. Meanwhile, incidentally, corporate profits are zooming. *Fortune* magazine talks about the "dazzling" profits reaching new heights for the Fortune 500 even though sales are stagnating.

Another factor is job insecurity, what economists like to call "flexibility in the labor markets," which is a good thing under the reigning academic theology but a pretty rotten thing for human beings, whose fate doesn't enter into the calculations of sober thinking. Flexibility means you better work extra hours, without knowing whether you have a job tomorrow, or else. There are no contracts and no rights. That's flexibility. We've got to get rid of market rigidities. Economists can explain it. When both parents are working extra hours, and for many on falling incomes, it doesn't take a great genius to predict the outcome. The statistics show them. You can read them in Hewlett's UNICEF study if you like. It's perfectly obvious without reading them what's going to happen. She reports that contact time, that is, actual time spent by parents with children, has declined sharply in the last twenty-five years in the Anglo-American societies, mostly in recent years. That's actually ten to twelve hours a week. What they call "high-quality time," time when you're not just doing something else, is declining. That leads to the destruction of family identity and values. It leads to sharply increased reliance on television for child supervision. It leads to what are called "latchkey children," kids who are alone, a factor in rising child alcoholism and drug use and in criminal violence against children by children and other obvious effects in health, education, ability to participate in a democratic society, even survival, and decline in SATs and IQs, but you're not supposed to notice that. That's bad genes, remember.

None of these things is a law of nature. These are consciously selected social policies designed for particular goals, namely, enrich the Fortune 500 but impoverish others. In Europe, where conditions are more stringent but policy is not guided by the same antifamily, antichild

spirit, the tendencies are in the opposite direction, and the standards for children and families are much better.

It's worth mentioning, and let me stress, that this is not just true in the Anglo-American societies themselves. We're a big, powerful state. We have influence. It's very striking to notice what happens when other countries within the range of our influence try to undertake policies that benefit families and children. There are several striking examples.

The region that we control most completely is the Caribbean and Central America. There are two countries there that did undertake such policies—Cuba and Nicaragua—and with considerable success, in fact. Something which should surprise no one is that those are the two countries that were primarily targeted for U.S. assault. And it succeeded. So in Nicaragua, the rising health standards and the improvement in literacy and the reduction in child malnutrition have been reversed thanks to the terrorist war that we fought in Nicaragua, and now it's proceeding to the level of Haiti. In the case of Cuba, of course, the terrorist war has been going on a lot longer. It was launched by John F. Kennedy. It had nothing to do with communism. There weren't any Russians around. It had to do with things like the fact that these people were devoting resources to the wrong sectors of the population. They were improving health standards. They were concerned with children, with malnutrition. Therefore we launched a huge terrorist war. A bunch of CIA documents were just released recently filling in some of the details of the Kennedy period, which was bad enough. It continues up to the present. Actually, there was another assault just a couple of days ago. On top of that there's an embargo to try to ensure that they'll really suffer. For years the pretext was that this had to do with the Russians, which is completely fraudulent, as you can see by what was going on when the policies were instituted and as is demonstrated conclusively by what happened after the Russians disappeared. Here was a real job for the bought priesthood. They have to not notice that after the Russians disappeared we harshened the attack against Cuba. Kind of odd if the reason for the attack was that they were an outpost of communism and the Russian Empire. But we can handle that.

So after the Russians disappeared from the scene and it really became possible to strangle them, the conditions got harsher. A proposal was sent through Congress by a liberal Democrat, Representative

[Robert] Torricelli, calling for a cutoff of any trade with Cuba by any subsidiary of any American corporation or any foreign corporation that used any parts produced in the U.S. That is so obviously in violation of international law that George Bush vetoed it. However, he was forced to accept it when he was outflanked from the right by the Clintonites in the last election, so he did then allow it to go through. That went right to the United Nations, where the U.S. position was denounced by just about everybody. In the final vote, the U.S. could pick up only Israel, which is automatic, and they got Rumania for some reason. Everyone else voted against it. The U.S. position was defended by no one. It is an obvious violation of international law, as even Britain and others pointed out. But it doesn't matter. It's extremely important to carry out our antichild, antifamily spirit and our insistence on highly polarized societies everywhere we can go. If a foreign country under our control tries to go a different way, we'll take care of them, too.

That's now continuing. It's the kind of thing you can actually do something about if you like. In Chicago there are the Pastors for Peace and the Chicago–Cuba Coalition, which have another caravan going to Cuba to try to undermine the embargo and bring humanitarian aid, medicines, medical books, powdered milk for infants, and other assistance. They're in the phone book under Chicago–Cuba Coalition. You can look them up. Anyone who is interested in countering the antichild, antifamily spirit that reigns here and that we're exporting by violence elsewhere can do that, just as they can do plenty of things at home.

I should say that the effects of this latest Democratic proposal, which went through, to strangle Cuba have recently been reviewed in this month's issues, October, of two leading American medical journals, *Neurology* and the *Florida Journal of Medicine,* which simply review the effects. They point out the obvious thing. It turns out that about 90 percent of the trade that was cut off by the Clinton–Torricelli bill was food and humanitarian aid, medicine, and things like that. For example, one Swedish company that was trying to export a water filtration device to create vaccines was blocked by the U.S. because there's some part in it that's American made. We really have to strangle them badly. We have to make sure that plenty of children die. One effect is a very sharp rise in infant mortality and child malnutrition. Another is a rare neurological disease that's spread over Cuba that everyone pretended they didn't

know the reasons for. It's a result of malnutrition, a disease which hasn't been seen since Japanese prison camps in World War II. So we're succeeding in that one. The antichild, antifamily spirit is not just directed against kids in New York, but much more broadly.

I stress again that it is different in Europe, and there are reasons for it. One of the differences is the existence of a strong trade union movement. That's one aspect of a more fundamental difference—namely, the U.S. is a business-run society to quite an unparalleled degree, and as a result the vile maxim of the masters prevails to an unprecedented extent, pretty much as you'd expect. These are among the means that allow democracy to function formally, although by now most of the population is consumed by what the press calls "antipolitics," meaning hatred of government, disdain for political parties and the whole democratic process. That, too, is a great victory for the aristocrats in Jefferson's sense, that is, those who fear and distrust the people and wish to draw all power from them into the hands of the higher classes. By now that means into the hands of transnational corporations and the states and quasi-governmental institutions that serve their interests.

Another victory is the fact that the disillusionment, which is rampant, is antipolitics. A *New York Times* headline on this reads, "Anger and Cynicism Well Up in Voters as Hope Gives Way. Mood Turns Ugly as More People Become Disillusioned with Politics." Last Sunday's magazine section was devoted to antipolitics. Notice, not devoted to opposition to power and authority, to the easily identifiable forces that have their hands on the lever of decision making and that cast their shadow on society as politics, as Dewey put it. They have to be invisible. The *Times* has a story today again about this topic where they quote some uneducated person who doesn't get the point. He says, "Yeah, Congress is rotten, but that's because Congress is big business, so of course it's rotten." That's the story you're not supposed to see. You're supposed to be antipolitics. The reason is that whatever you think about government, it's the one part of the system of institutions that you can participate in and modify and do something about. By law and principle you can't do anything about investment firms or transnational corporations. Therefore nobody better see that. You've got to be antipolitics. That's another victory.

Dewey's observation that politics is the shadow cast on society by big business, which was incidentally also a truism to Adam Smith, has now become almost invisible. The force that casts the shadow has been pretty much removed by the ideological institutions and is so remote from consciousness that we're left with antipolitics. That's another severe blow to democracy and a grand gift to the absolutist and unaccountable systems of power that have reached levels that a Thomas Jefferson or John Dewey could scarcely imagine.

We have the usual choices. We can choose to be democrats in Thomas Jefferson's sense. We can choose to be aristocrats. The latter path is the easy one. That's the one that the institutions are designed to reward. It can bring rich rewards, given the locus of wealth and privilege and power and the ends that they very naturally seek. The other path, the path of the Jeffersonian democrats, is one of struggle, often defeat, but also rewards of a kind that can't even be imagined by those who succumb to the new spirit of the age, gain wealth, forgetting all but self. It's the same now as it was 150 years ago when there was an attempt to drive it into the heads of the factory girls in Lowell and the craftsmen in Lawrence and so on. Today's world is very far from Thomas Jefferson's. The choices it offers, however, have not changed in any fundamental way.

NOTE

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