



Powelson, M. W. (2011). The Proletarianization of the Academy: California State University-Northridge and the California Budget Crisis. *Workplace*, 18, 10-24.

The Proletarianization of the Academy: California State University-Northridge and the California Budget Crisis¹

Michael W. Powelson

This article argues that just as manufacturing underwent a process of 'proletarianization' so too has the academic world also undergone a process of 'proletarianization.' In the academic industry wages have been cut, workers have been laid off, work loads have been increased, and class size have increased dramatically over the past three decades. Thus, the academic industry does not function outside the capitalist economy but rather is subject to the same dynamics that drive down wages and increase unemployment in the manufacturing sector. A major difference, however, is that while craft workers were replaced in manufacturing by relatively un-skilled wage workers, in the academic industry workers are expected to maintain high levels of training and skills even as their wages have declined and their work load has increased.

In 1968, Dr. Charles Macune was hired by California State University-Northridge (then known as San Fernando Valley State College) as a tenure track assistant professor in the department of history. His starting salary was \$8,676 a year, and two years later, in 1970, when Dr. Macune bought a three bedroom home in Thousand Oaks for \$29,250, his annual salary had increased to \$9,324 a year. By teaching summer school Dr. Macune was able to make the down payment of \$3,000, and went on to raise a family in that home that he still lives in today. Dr. Macune's experience was typical of newly hired faculty at California State University-Northridge in the 1960s and 1970s, when the salary of an assistant professor was sufficient to purchase a comfortable home in the middle class neighborhoods of Woodland Hills, Culver City, and the Pacific Palisades.²

Today the median price of a home in Woodland Hills is \$579,000,³ which would mean that a new hire at CSUN would need a salary of at least \$175,000 a year in order to qualify for a home loan, far more than the \$52,000 starting salary for assistant professors in the history department for the 2008-2009 academic year.⁴ The median home price in Northridge, where California State University-Northridge is located, is \$515,000, which would mean that a starting faculty member at CSUN would need a salary of at least \$150,000 in order to own a home in Northridge, a salary almost three times what a starting faculty member actually makes.⁵

Yet this is not the whole story. Since the 1970s the twenty-three campuses that make up the CSU system have relied increasingly on "adjunct" or "part-time" faculty to teach an ever greater number of classes with an ever

greater number of students in each class. The CSU system is the largest university system in the United States and employs more faculty and staff and has more students than any other university system in the nation. While in the 1960s and 1970s part timers taught very few classes, today “part-time” faculty teach well over half the classes within the CSU system.⁶ In 1970, for example, there were forty-four tenured and tenure track professors in the history department of California State University-Northridge and only two lecturers.⁷ Today, however, there are only seventeen tenured and tenure track professors and eleven adjunct faculty members in that same history department. This trend is found throughout the university, and in the English Department there are thirty-four full time faculty members and sixty-two part time faculty members. In the Sociology Department there are currently twenty-two full time faculty members and thirty-five part-time faculty members.⁸

This decline of full time faculty along with the dramatic growth in the “part time” faculty has been carried out despite the fact that student enrollment at CSUN has increased from roughly 24,000 in 1970 to over 35,000 full time students enrolled today—and increase of 32 percent.⁹ Thus, while student enrollment has increased over 30 percent since 1970, the tenured and tenure track faculty in the history department has declined by 62 percent. Since the number of course offerings since 1970 has also increased to keep up with the growing student population, the difference has been made up by relying increasingly on “adjunct” faculty to teach a greater percentage of history classes, a dynamic that is duplicated in

other disciplines such as English, Sociology, or Anthropology.

And like the 19th century factory system in the United States and England, the growth of an “adjunct” faculty has meant an overall decrease in the salary paid to faculty, while at the same time a greater number of students are taught per faculty member. Both David Montgomery’s *Fall of the House of Labor* and E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* detail the economic decline of US and English craftsmen and women in the 19th century which resulted in a long period of both increased work demands and wage decline.¹⁰ Both Montgomery and Thompson note that at the same time worker productivity increased dramatically, the combination of declining wages and increasing productivity resulted in both the proletarianization of farmers and craftsmen and also the worsening of workers’ wages relative to prices. A similar phenomenon has been going on in the academic world over the past thirty years, and academic life today, compared with life in late 19th and early 20th century industrial England and America are not so different.¹¹ In the modern academic world salaries adjusted for inflation have declined while work demands and class size have increased.¹² Tenure and tenure track faculty are expected to publish more than ever, while adjunct faculty has been saddled with increasing numbers of both classes and students.¹³ As the French sociologist Guy Debord noted, there has occurred under advanced capitalism “the extension of the logic of factory labor to a large sector of services and intellectual professions.”¹⁴

There is, however, one important difference between the proletarianization

of farmers and craftsmen in the 19th and 20th centuries and the proletarianization of today's academic; while improved technology negated many of the advanced skills of farmers and craft workers, today's academic is expected to have more skills and expertise than their counterparts of past generations. Forty years ago, for example, it was common for universities to offer tenure track positions to scholars who had not completed their terminal degree, whether a masters or Ph.D.; today's academic, however, cannot hope to secure a tenure track position without a terminal degree in hand along with considerable teaching experience, a record of conference presentations and even published articles if not a published book. In 1970, for example, of the forty-four tenured and tenure track professors in the CSUN history department, eight did not have a Ph.D. and one did not have a Masters degree. In addition, of the tenured and tenure track hires with a Ph.D., five were hired by the department on a tenure track line without a Ph.D. in hand.¹⁵ This would be impossible today, where all new hires, whether tenure track or adjunct, are expected to have a Ph.D. when they begin teaching at CSUN. Thus, while the salaries of academics have declined, the requirements for a university position have increased. This differs from the dynamics of declining wages for 19th and 20th century workers in manufacturing, where declining wages were accompanied by a decline in the skills demanded of workers in modern industries.¹⁶

This dynamic is most pronounced among adjunct faculty, many of whom have completed their terminal degree and have extensive teaching experience and publications yet cannot secure a tenure track position.¹⁷

And the numbers of adjunct faculty teaching at CSUN and throughout the CSU system has grown dramatically. Between 1972 and 1988, for example, the number of faculty hires at CSUN increased 28 percent, but less than one percent of these hires were full time positions.¹⁸ The reason for the growth in the number of "part-time" faculty is simple: money. "Part-time" faculty have the same qualifications as the tenured and tenure track faculty; they have a Ph.D. from an accredited university in the field of their expertise. But while "part time" faculty have the same qualifications, they are paid considerably less than full time faculty. At California State University-Northridge, for example, part-time faculty are paid an average of \$4,500 a class. With benefits and other charges, it costs the university around \$6,000 to hire a "part time" faculty member to teach a single class. For an entry level full time faculty, the cost to the university per class is a little more than \$10,000. Thus, it costs the university only \$48,000 to have eight classes taught in an academic year by "part time" faculty, while it costs the university at least \$84,000 to have the same eight classes taught by full time faculty.¹⁹ By comparison, the Los Angeles Fire Department recently advertised for jobs with the fire department in the "\$53,766-78,530" salary range.²⁰ Thus a fire fighter in the city of Los Angeles can make as much and even far more than an adjunct professor teaching the equivalent of a full time teaching load. The point here is not to attack the salaries of fire fighters, who should be paid even more given the high cost of living in the Los Angeles area. The point of this comparison is to illustrate how poorly paid are highly educated and highly

skilled adjunct faculty in comparison with solid blue collar jobs.

The increased reliance on low-paid adjunct faculty to teach an increasing number of students is a nationwide phenomenon, and in the past 30 years the percentage of “contingent” faculty has increased from 43 percent to over 70 percent of the faculty nationwide.²¹ This figure includes full time faculty who teach summer and winter term classes or teach an extra class in addition to their normal load; if only adjunct faculty are considered, between 1975 and 2007 the percentage of adjunct faculty in the university system went from 30 percent to over 50 percent.²² The trend is clear; while the university system relies increasingly on adjunct faculty to teach an increasing percentage of classes, the salary of adjunct faculty is far less than tenured and tenure track faculty. The result is that while greater numbers of students are enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the nation, the salary paid to instructors to teach those students has declined considerably.

Unlike full-time faculty, who enjoy a measure of job security, part time faculty have very little in the way of job protection. A full time faculty member can expect employment for at least six years when his or her appointment is subject to a tenure review, after which, if the faculty member passes the review, he or she can continue to teach and collect a steady salary until retirement. By contrast, within the CSU system “part time” faculty is divided into three groups: semester, one year, and three year appointments. While three year appointments enjoy a measure of job security, they can still be relieved of all teaching duties if the university deems it

necessary. Since full time faculty are much more difficult to dismiss due to contractual protections, it is not difficult to see why over the years the CSU system had relied increasingly on “part-time” faculty. Just as manufacturers fight all efforts by workers to protect their jobs, so too is this the case with the administrations of colleges and universities which resist all efforts by faculty to protect their positions.

The term “part time” is a misnomer, since most “part time” faculty actually teach more classes than do “full time” faculty. While most full time faculty in the CSU system are required to teach four classes a semester (eight classes a year), “part-time” faculty in the CSU system can teach up to six classes a semester (twelve classes a year)—the equivalent of teaching time and a half. Thus it is common for a “part time” faculty at CSU Northridge to also teach classes at CSU Channel Islands, CSU Los Angeles, or CSU Long Beach, as long as the “part time” faculty teaches a maximum of six classes within the CSU system. “Part-time” faculty can also teach additional classes outside the CSU system, and many “part-time” CSU faculty also teach at one of the University of California campuses, private colleges, community colleges, and online courses. In addition, both part time and full time faculty can teach summer school, so that it is not unusual for a “part time” CSU faculty member to teach fourteen classes in a given academic year, or sixteen classes if one includes classes taught outside the CSU system, while a “full time” CSU faculty member is required to teach eight classes in a given academic year. Yet the Orwellian language of the university system designates faculty that teach sixteen classes a year to be “part time,”

while those that teach eight classes a year to be “full time.”

The recent budget crisis has further eroded the standard of living of California State University faculty. All faculty members, whether full- or part-time, took a ten percent pay cut because of a mandatory furlough policy instituted by governor Schwarzenegger.²³ The 2009-2010 academic year has brought further layoffs of part time faculty, which has resulted in full time faculty now expected to teach many of the classes once taught by adjunct faculty. In the history department, for example, most of the full time faculty are now teaching an extra class in order to make up for the loss of part time faculty. Thus, while part time faculty will experience unemployment and thus cuts in their salary, full time faculty will be saddled with as much as a twenty-five percent increase in their workload. Thus, even with an end to the furlough CSU faculty will teach even more classes at their pre-furlough salary, which is the same as teaching the same number of classes at a reduced salary.

CSU chancellor Charles Reed is apparently not disturbed by salary cuts and reductions in the number of faculty teaching in the CSU system, and he recently responded to CSU faculty complaints about budget reductions this way: “you know what? There isn’t any money in Sacramento.” Recognizing that layoffs of part time faculty will not solve the budget crisis, Reed suggested that if “faculty taught one more class a semester, the efficiency of that is tremendous.”²⁴ With faculty already saddled with increased teaching and reduced salaries, Chancellor Reed believes that the surviving faculty should teach even more classes. One suspects that Chancellor Reed has been reading

over Frederick Taylor’s seminal 1911 book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which coldly rationalized work speedup and wage cuts as the best way to maximize profits in manufacturing.²⁵

Reductions in tenure track positions, salary cuts, tuition hikes, and increased class size have all been justified by the claim that the state does not have the money to continue to fund the CSU system as it once did. But each wave of tuition hikes, salary cuts, and hiring freezes stabilizes the situation for only a short time until another budget crisis begins yet another round of cuts. For example, the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 led to a wave of layoffs which was only reversed with the 1984 adoption of a state lottery in which lottery taxes were used to pay for educational needs.²⁶ With this latest budget crisis, Chancellor Reed argues that there is simply no money to keep the CSU system operating at its current levels. Reed has made a number of suggestions on how the state should adjust to decreased revenues, including a suggestion that the state eliminate 12th grade as a cost saving measure, since, according to Reed, 12th grade is “the biggest waste of time.”²⁷ While eliminating 12th grade might save money in the short term, the long term consequences can only be negative. With unemployment rates among teens already higher than the state and national average, eliminating 12th grade would only worsen unemployment among teens denied schooling and thrust into an already dismal job market.²⁸ Even in good economic times, releasing tens of thousands of 16-18 year old teenagers from school requirements would have an overall negative impact on California, especially in working class and poor

neighborhoods already plagued with high unemployment and crime.

The ripple effect of layoffs to the CSU system should be obvious to all, yet political and business leaders from Sacramento to Washington D.C. and Wall Street are apparently blind to the fact that layoffs will only worsen an already bad economic situation. The CSU system currently employs over 45,000 faculty and staff, and the 2009-2010 ten percent salary reduction will only serve to weaken consumer demand and force employers to lay off even more workers in a state already suffering from over twelve percent unemployment and an underemployment rate of over 20 percent.²⁹ The wave of faculty layoffs in 2010 has put thousands out of work which will result in yet another wave of layoffs. Despite hopes of an economic recovery, most analysts agree that housing foreclosures will peak in 2011, both in California and the nation as a whole. In addition, new unemployment numbers suggest that unemployment has only increased of late and shows no sign of declining.³⁰

Ironically, while consumer demand is down in most industries, applications to enroll in the CSU system increased by 53 percent in 2009 and went above 600,000 applications for the fall, 2011 semester.³¹ Thus, the state of California refuses to heed “customer” (student) demand, and while there is a greater-than-ever-demand for classes and teachers within the CSU system, both the state assembly in Sacramento and Chancellor Reed have decided to cut back on both classes and faculty. Reduced salaries and layoffs in the CSU system will inevitably cause a further reduction in state tax revenues. So, as bad as the economic crisis is now in the state of California, it promises to only

get worse as state tax revenues decline further in the wake of layoffs and salary cuts. In fact, days after California governor Jerry Brown took office he announced another round of layoffs and cutbacks, which he blamed on increased unemployment and declining revenues.³²

In theory, with faculty layoffs student enrollment must also be reduced and Chancellor Reed proposes to reduce CSU enrollment to its 2000 levels. But since the California legislature allocates money to the CSU system based on student enrollment, any reduction in student enrollment will be followed by a reduction in funds allocated to the CSU system by the state legislature. This spiral downward has, in theory, no bottom, since each reduction in student enrollment would be followed by a reduction in state money which in turn would lead to further reductions in enrollment and on down until there are no students left in the CSU system. One way budget shortfalls have been made up has been by increasing tuition, so much so that since 2002 tuition fees have been increased by 242 percent.³³ Yet each new tuition hike fails to provide financial stability for the CSU system, underscoring the fact that increasing tuition in the future cannot solve the longstanding budget crisis in the CSU, UC and community college systems. The great irony is that in the 1960s, when the state was not nearly as wealthy as it is now, it was virtually free to attend any of the CSU campuses.³⁴

In 1960, for example, when the per capita income, adjusted for inflation, was much lower than today, California had one of the best educational systems in the entire country, and tuition fees were minimal at both the CSU and UC campuses.³⁵ Today, budget crises plague California’s state colleges and

universities, tuition hikes are an annual occurrence, and the state's public school system now ranks at the bottom of the nation. While it is assumed that the budget crisis is a result of overspending, a 2003 study by the non-partisan *California Budget Project* showed that per capita state spending actually decreased in the 1980s and only grew by one percent in the 1990s.³⁶ Thus, the current budget crisis and the cutbacks and layoffs that followed were not the result of irresponsible spending. The same cannot be said of the tax side of the equation, where over the past three decades tax cuts have been almost an annual event, especially for the wealthiest Californians. For example, when both direct and indirect taxes are included, the poorest 20 percent of Californians now pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes, 12 percent, than do the wealthiest one percent of Californians who pay only 7 percent of their income in taxes.³⁷

If it is tax cuts that caused this current budget crisis then a tax increase would logically get the state, and the CSU system, out of its current malaise. Many proposals have been put forward, including a move to rescind or at least amend Proposition 13 (which now allows tax breaks for commercial real estate as well as private home owners), and a recently defeated proposition to tax oil drilled in California to be used solely for the CSU, UC, and community college systems. Critics also note that since California only receives back 78 cents for every dollar California pays the federal government in taxes, the budget crisis could be averted if Congress simply put back into California what it collected in taxes.³⁸ These and other proposals have merit, although they will be subject to the oft-repeated charge that

any and all taxes hurt business, which in turn hurt investments, and thus reduce jobs. This argument, while widely held, has little basis in fact. During the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, for example, the wealthiest one percent of Americans were taxed over 90 percent of their income with no ill effects on the economy.³⁹ In fact, many economic historians look to the 1950s as the peak years of US prosperity.⁴⁰

Of course finding funds to fulfill the mission of the CSU system is the responsibility of the state legislature and the CSU Board of Trustees, not the faculty, staff, and student body of the Cal State University system. The CSU mission statement is clear in its promise to provide quality, affordable, education to all, and the CSU's and state of California's failure to fulfill the CSU mission statement is a breach of its commitment to the people of California. The CSU mission statement declares that it is charged to "encourage and provide access to an excellent education to all who are prepared for and wish to participate in collegiate study." The mission statement accepts responsibility to provide quality education for all Californians regardless of obstacles, financial or otherwise. According to the mission statement, it is the goal of the CSU system to seek out

individuals with collegiate promise who face cultural, geographical, physical, educational, financial, or personal barriers to assist them in advancing to the highest educational levels they can reach.⁴¹

Thus the downsizing of faculty, increased reliance on adjunct faculty, pay cuts, reductions in enrollment, tuition hikes, and increases in class size are all violations of the CSU mission

statement. Students subject to constant tuition hikes cannot overcome the “financial barriers” that would prevent them for acquiring a quality higher education. Neither can faculty constantly subject to pay cuts, increased work load and periodic layoffs provide a quality education for students of any background, much less students who face “cultural, physical, educational, financial, or personal barriers” in the pursuit of a college education. Finally, number studies argue that increased use of adjunct faculty only hurts the quality of a student’s education.⁴²

Lack of money is the standard justification for the tuition increases, the greater reliance on adjunct teaching and faculty downsizing. Yet the fact is that there is ample money in California to keep the CSU system operating and expanding, and there is also ample money to provide CSU students with an affordable, quality education carried out by well-paid faculty and administrators. California is the wealthiest state in the wealthiest nation in the world, and, according to the CIA’s *World Factbook*, if California were an independent nation it would have the tenth richest economy in the world, ahead of Canada, Spain, and Australia.⁴³ California is both the largest manufacturing and largest agricultural state in the US. In turn, the United States is both the largest manufacturing and agricultural producing nation in the world.⁴⁴ Thus, while there is no lack of wealth in the state, it is the allocation of these vast riches over the past decades which has so decimated all public services. Once free, education now comes at a high price, and once well-paid academic positions now rival salaries of low-wage workers—this despite the fantastic

growth in the per capita wealth of the state and the nation.

While both the government and business sectors have sought to reduce costs in the state university system through salary reductions and tuition hikes, the academic world itself shares a measure of blame for the erosion of state funded colleges and universities. In a recent study done by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, many “experts” on higher education believe that too many people are going to college. Charles Murray, for example, argues that “it has been empirically demonstrated that doing well (B average or better) in a traditional college major in the arts and sciences requires levels of linguistic and logical/mathematical ability that only 10 to 15 percent of the nation’s youth possess.” In the same study, Marty Nemko laments what he considers a glut of college students while he finds it difficult to find an affordable plumber. Nemko believes that producing more college students is actually detrimental since

[i]ncreasing college-going rates may actually hurt our economy. We now send 70 percent of high-school graduates to college, up from 40 percent in 1970. At the same time, employers are accelerating their offshoring, part-timing, and temping of as many white-collar jobs as possible. That results in ever more unemployed and underemployed B.A.’s. Meanwhile, there’s a shortage of trades people to take the Obama infrastructure-rebuilding jobs. And you and I have a hard time getting a reliable plumber even if we’re willing to pay \$80 an hour—more than many professors make.⁴⁵

These views are not the views of a few, but are shared by a large section of the academic world. In fact, of the nine “higher education experts” surveyed for the *Chronicle* study, five believed that too many students are going to college.⁴⁶ Thus, while outside forces have long sought to diminish the size and importance of publicly-funded higher education, there is a strong sentiment within the academic world that downsizing, tuition hikes and enrollment reductions are actually a good thing.

It is often argued that the downsizing and declines in salaries and benefits are really the result of the iron laws of the “marketplace” in which a “surplus” of Ph.D. holders have driven down salaries and created an increasing pool of unemployed or under-employed Ph.D. holders. Over the years, so goes this argument, universities have produced far more Ph.D. holders than jobs available in the “market.” This view is widely held not only within the general population but among academics themselves. Yet if a surplus of degree holders really determined salaries, then Wall Street stock broker salaries would hover at the minimum wage scale. In his book *Liar’s Poker*, Michael Lewis notes the flaw in the “salaries are determined by supply” argument. At Salomon Brothers, where Lewis worked in the 1980s, over 6,000 applicants competed for only 127 positions during a time when “paychecks spiraled higher in spite of the willingness of others who would, no doubt, do the same job for less.” Wall Street job seekers are armed with, at most, MBAs (masters in business administration), while Ph.D.s hold, well, Ph.D.s. And while newly-hired brokers with no experience received high-end salaries, scholars with much more experience received far less in pay.

Lewis noted, for example, that a chaired professor at the London School of Economics with over twenty years experience teaching, researching and writing received half the salary that Lewis was offered his first year as a broker with Solomon Brothers. Recognizing the deep chasm between theory and practice Lewis concluded that “[t]here was something fishy about the way supply met demand at an investment bank.”⁴⁷

But as Mark Bousquet notes in his book *How the University Works*, a supposed “surplus” of Ph.D. holders in the market today is really the result of the extreme exploitation of graduate students that have *yet* to receive their Ph.D. At most research universities the majority of lower division classes are taught by graduate students rather than Ph.D. holders. Bousquet notes that if classes at research universities were taught by Ph.D. holders rather than graduate students there would be no glut of unemployed or underemployed Ph.D. holders scrounging around for work. Within the University of California system, for example, most introductory courses are taught by graduate students, not by lecturers with their doctorate completed. If the UC system were to require that only Ph.D. holders could teach classes within the UC system, the “glut” of Ph.D. holders would end immediately.⁴⁸ Out-of-work Ph.D. holders would employ the skills they worked years to develop, and graduate students would do what they were historically expected to do: study and write their thesis.

The increased pressure on graduate students both to fulfill their own graduate course demands as well as to teach undergraduate classes has resulted in an increase in the amount of time

needed to complete the Ph.D. Even worse perhaps is that because of the tremendous work expected of graduate students today, a growing number of them never do complete their Ph.D. requirements. Even for those that do acquire a Ph.D., they are thrust into a “market” in which they are now competing with the low wage graduate students they themselves once were and thus are often thrown into the ranks of the unemployed. Ironically, most graduate students will never teach a university course once they leave graduate school. As Bousquet notes, “for the majority of graduates, the Ph.D. indicates the logical conclusion of an academic career.”⁴⁹

Unlike the UC system, within the CSU system most classes are in fact taught by Ph.D. holders, yet a significant number of classes are still taught by individuals who have yet to receive their Ph.D. This is true of the English department, where a large number of classes are taught by adjunct professors who have yet to finish their Ph.D. requirements. In addition, graduate students are used to perform a myriad of tasks at a very low salary, including guest lectures, secretarial work, and research for full time faculty. If, for example, UC Los Angeles and UC Santa Barbara were to use only Ph.D. holders to teach their classes, then there would be very few Ph.D. holders left to work as part-time faculty at CSUN, Cal State LA, or Cal State Channel Islands. In sum, the belief that there is a surplus of Ph.D. holders is simply not true. What is true is that cash-strapped universities have relied increasingly on graduate students to teach classes at rock bottom salaries, which in turn has resulted in a lack of jobs for Ph.D. holders.

The increased reliance on graduate students to teach and perform other academic tasks is just another aspect of the overall agenda of lowering costs by cutting salaries, laying off qualified faculty, and denying tenure track positions to qualified Ph.D. holders. The exploitation of graduate students is particularly severe, as they are expected to perform work of a highly-skilled nature at wages that rival those in the low-wage food service industry. The result has been a deepening divide between graduate students and university administrators as well as between graduate students and full time faculty. In California, for example, UC graduate students in 2000 were finally granted the right to organize into a union, despite bitter opposition by the UC administration.⁵⁰ Most graduate students, however, continue to be without a union, and thus they are subject to ever increasing exploitation by the university system.

The divide between part-time and full time faculty has also served to erode the academy from within. While the increase in part-timers was a “tremendous money-saving device”..., [i]t was also a way... to disable the faculty, because it meant that a growing proportion of the faculty were without tenure and without job security.”⁵¹ And despite their lower salary and lack of job protections, many full time faculty embrace the second class status of the part time faculty. As one CSUN full timer, Patrick Nicholson, notes, many full timers believe that without the part timers the full time faculty would be laid off. CSUN’s former Academic Vice President Bob Suzuki pointed out that full-timers are guilty of “exploitation” of part-timers, since “there are some departments on this campus who rely on

the part-time faculty to teach the large classes and to generate the FTEs (full time equivalents) so that the senior, tenured faculty can have reduced teaching loads.”⁵² While relying on part-timers as a rampart against layoffs and to free up full-timers for more research might be effective in the short term, over the long haul full-timers are also subject to increased workloads, decreased salaries, and possible layoffs.

CSUN History lecturer Dr. Robert Cleve believes that the divide between part time and full time faculty is not “healthy academically.” Part timers enjoy little job protection and so are most easily dismissed. Lecturers are also paid considerably less than full-time faculty, which only further erodes the overall status and salaries of the faculty, both full and part time. Since part-time faculty are non-tenure track their academic right to free speech is compromised, Cleve argues, which only erodes the overall environment of academic freedom. Cleve believes that full-time faculty support for the increased use of non tenure, low paid, part-time faculty is in fact an “astoundingly successful attack on tenure” itself, and should be resisted by full-time faculty.⁵³ Cleve’s solution is simple: “lecturers positions... should be... converted to full time positions.” “If I’m good enough to teach these students for the History Department since 1984,” Cleve argues, “I’m good enough to teach them as a tenured professor.”⁵⁴

In sum, the crisis in the CSU system mirrors the crisis in the rest of the academic world in which a “proletarianization” of faculty has been carried out over the past thirty years. Faculty salaries have not kept up with inflation, junior faculty salaries are

lower than entry level salaries of earlier generations, and tenure track positions are increasingly replaced by per-class adjunct instructors, whose salaries are lower than full-time faculty (even if they have taught at an individual institution longer), and who have little job security. The overall result has been that faculty wages, benefits and job security have all declined demonstrably over the past thirty years. Tuition hikes have not alleviated this crisis, and despite considerable tuition increases in the past few years the CSU system faces yet another round of layoffs, reductions in course offerings and forced cut backs in student enrollment. If this trend continues, an increasingly large number of highly-trained scholars will find themselves either unemployed or competing for low-paying positions with no job security while qualified high school graduates will not be able to attend college. The overall effect of this on the economy and society of California is all-too predictable.

Repeated federal and state budget crises have created the rationale for cut backs in salaries along with the growth of adjunct teaching and the relative decline of classes taught by full time professors. Each new crisis results in a lowering of salaries which in turn reduces federal and state revenues and creates the conditions for further government cutbacks in funding for colleges and universities. As in agriculture and manufacturing, the education industry has increasingly followed a business model in which the goal is to reduce the salaries and benefits of all employees while at the same time increase class size and tuition, and to rely increasingly on low paid adjunct faculty to teach more and more classes to larger numbers of students. Unless

there is concerted action taken by faculty at all levels, tenured, tenure track, full time lecturers and part time adjuncts, there is no reason for the chancellor's office or the state assembly to halt the annual cuts in funds for California's colleges and universities. Just as was the case with the American and English working classes in the 19th and 20th centuries, academics must also organize to resist the erosion of their profession. While there are many differences between the working classes of the 19th and 20th centuries and the academics of the 21st century, the erosion of salaries, benefits and job security of both groups

is strikingly similar. Just as laboring peoples earlier organized and successfully resisted their impoverishment so too must academics today attempt to learn from the actions of their working class brothers and sisters of generations past.

In the fall of 2009, Dr. Charles Macune, first mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article, retired from the history department at California State University-Northridge after forty years as a full-time tenured faculty member. Due to the budget crisis there are no plans to hire a full time historian to fill Dr. Macune's vacant position.

Endnotes

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Harry Hellenbrand, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, California State University-Northridge, for both his encouragement and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to Dr. Hellenbrand and Dr. Stella Theodoulou, Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, CSUN, for their generous financial support. I would also like to thank Dr. Charles Macune, CSUN history professor, for encouraging me in this project and also providing crucial data and insights used in this paper. Thanks to Dr. David Klein, Department of Mathematics, CSUN, and Dr. Nan Yamane, Department of History, CSUN, for their critical comments and ongoing support. Also thanks to Dr. David Horowitz, chair of the Department of History, CSUN, for his critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Thanks again to Dr. Charles Macune for providing me with information concerning his salary and home prices when he was first hired at CSUN.

³ See www.zillow.com for median home prices. For salary requirements see <http://www.financialcalculators.com/>

⁴ According to the *The Chronicle of Higher Education* the American Association of University Professors reports the starting salary for CSU-Northridge professors is \$67,000. In the history department, however, the last full time hire received a salary of \$51,890, <http://www.sacbee.com/statepay/> provides salaries of individuals in all CSU departments. <http://chronicle.com/stats/aaup/index.php?action=detail&id=247>

⁵ A general range of housing prices for the Los Angeles area can be found at: <http://www.homes.com>.

⁶ This is part of a national trend as noted in the *AAUP Report "Tenure and Teaching Intensive Appointments, 2010,"* which notes that by 2007 over 70 percent of college and university faculty members were not in tenured or tenure track positions; <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/teachertenure.htm#b7>

⁷ *California State Colleges, San Fernando Valley State College Catalog, 1970-1971*, CSUN Oviatt Library, call number LD729.6.N6 U77 1970-1971

⁸ These figures can be found on the CSUN web pages for the various departments, <http://www.csun.edu/>

⁹ For 1970 CSUN enrollment figures see John Broesamle, *Suddenly a Giant: A History of California State University, Northridge*. Santa Susana Press, 1993, 72.

¹⁰ David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1-8; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin Books, 1968, 208-232.

¹¹ According to one recent study, adjunct annual salaries are \$20,000 or less; “Love of Teaching Draws Adjuncts to the Classroom Despite Low Pay,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 18, 2009, <http://chronicle.com/article/Love-of-Teaching-Draws/48845>

¹² See for example “2009-10 Report on the Economic Status of the Profession,” *American Association of University Professors*, <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/Z/ecstatreport09-10/> and “Salaries Fell for 32.6% of Faculty,” *Inside Higher Ed*, January 11, 2011; <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/03/08/facsalaries>

¹³ In 1969, for example, one-third of all faculty reported that they had never published, but by 1998 only one-fifth reported never having published, Jack Schuster and Martin Finkelstein, *The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic Work and Careers*, Johns Hopkins Press, 2006, 102.

¹⁴ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Zone Books, 1995, chapter 4, thesis 14.

¹⁵ *San Fernando Valley State College Catalog, 1970-1971*. There were also two “lecturers” in the department in 1970, one of which held a Ph.D. and one that held a Masters degree.

¹⁶ Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor*, 215, notes the early 20th century decline of the use of skilled craftsmen and women and the parallel growth of “unskilled” labor in manufacturing.

¹⁷ Alan Finder, “Decline of the tenure track raises concerns,” *New York Times*, November 20, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/20/education/20adjunct.html>

¹⁸ Broesamle, *Suddenly a Giant*, 105.

¹⁹ Starting salary for full time faculty at CSUN is \$67,000, and with an additional 25 percent cost for benefits, the cost to the CSUN history department for a full time faculty member is \$84,000 a year. Of course this is the minimum cost for a full time faculty member, and most full time faculty make well more than the \$84,000 a year that is needed for a new hire.

²⁰ *Los Angeles Watts Times*, January 14, 2010, 15.

²¹ Gabriel Arana, “Higher education takes a hit,” *The Nation* (March 31, 2009).

²² Audrey Williams June, “Professors’ pay raises beat inflation; so much for the good news,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 55:32 (April 17, 2009).

²³ Gale Holland, “Cal State faculty votes to take furloughs,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 2009, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/07/cal-state-faculty-votes-to-take-furloughs.html>.

Both CSU chancellor Charles Reed and then-governor Arnold Schwarzenegger claimed that the mandatory furlough was agreed upon by a vote of the CSU faculty held in July, 2009. This vote, however, was held online at the height of the summer break when CSU campuses were empty, faculty scattered throughout the nation and the world, and was conducted with very little discussion.

²⁴ Goldie Blumenstyk, “College leaders offer blunt advice for campuses hit by hard times,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 5, 2009. <http://chronicle.com/article/College-Leaders-Offer-Blunt/49075/>

²⁵ Frederick Taylor, *The Principals of Scientific Management*, Harper & Row, originally published in 1911.

- ²⁶ John Broesamle, *Suddenly a Giant: A History of California State University Northridge*. Santa Susana Press, 1993, 99.
- ²⁷ Blumenstyk, “Blunt advice.”
- ²⁸ Joanna Lin, “One in three Californians can’t get a job,” *California Watch*, July 20, 2010, <http://californiawatch.org/dailyreport/one-three-california-teens-cant-get-job-3424>
- ²⁹ “Gallup finds unemployment at 6.9% in December,” *Gallup* January 6, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/145478/Gallup-Finds-Unemployment-December.aspx>
- ³⁰ “Realty Trac: no foreclosure peak until 2011,” *Market Watch Newsbreak*, August 12, 2010, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/realtytrac-no-foreclosure-peak-until-2011-2010-08-12>; Janna Heron, “Over 1 million Americans seen losing their homes in 2011,” *Associated Press*, January 13, 2011, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Over-1-million-Americans-seen-apf-1937862554.html?x=0>; Chip Cutter and David Randall, “Stocks dip after unemployment applications rise,” *Associated Press*, January 13, 2011, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Stocks-dip-after-unemployment-apf-2162034521.html?x=0>
- ³¹ Micah Stevenson, “Sac state, CSU application pools continue to grow,” *The State Hornet*, January 4, 2011 <http://www.statehornet.com/news/sac-state-csu-application-pools-continue-to-grow-1.1834132>; Gina Jacobs, “60,000 plus applications received for fall, 2011,” *SDSU News*, December 3, 2010 http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news.aspx?s=72631
- ³² Jim Christie, “California’s Brown proposes painful budget cuts,” *Reuters*, January 10, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE7095FB20110110>
- ³³ “Students tell trustees: stop clowning around with our education,” *California Faculty Association Newsletter*, November 9, 2010, <http://www.calfac.org/headline/students-tell-trustees-stop-clowning-around-our-education>
- ³⁴ In 1960 the state of California drew up its “Master Plan for Higher Education,” which called for the establishment of a network of colleges and universities in the state that would provide education free of charge to qualifying students. *Legislative Analyst’s Office*, “The Master Plan at 50: Assessing California’s vision for higher education,” November 12, 2009; http://www.lao.ca.gov/2009/edu/master_plan_intro/master_plan_intro_111209.aspx
- ³⁵ For data on California per capita income adjusted for inflation see *California Department of Finance*, “California Statistical Abstract, Section D,” http://www.dof.ca.gov/html/fs_data/stat-abs/sec_D.htm
- ³⁶ “Did California spend its way into the current fiscal crisis?” *California Budget Project*, May, 2003. <http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2003/030519spending.pdf>
- ³⁷ George Avalos, “Report: rich pay lower taxes.” *Oakland Tribune*, April 13, 2007.
- ³⁸ Ezra Klein, “Is California getting a raw deal?” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2009.
- ³⁹ “Personal Exemptions and Individual Income Tax Rates, 1913-2002.” *Internal Revenue Service*, <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/02inpetr.pdf>
- ⁴⁰ [Robert Skidelsky](#), *Keynes: The Return of the Master*, Allen Lane Books, 2009; Stephen Marglin and Juliet B. Schor, *The Golden Age of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, 1990.
- ⁴¹ The California State University Mission Statement, *Office of Public Affairs*, <http://www.calstate.edu/PA/info/mission.shtml>
- ⁴² See for example, Paul Umbach, “How effective are they? Exploring the impact of contingent faculty on undergraduate education,” *Review of Higher Education* 30:2 (2007), 91-123, or Audrey Jaeger, “Contingent faculty and student outcomes,” *Academe* 94:6 (November/December, 2008), 42-43.
- ⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html>. Other studies rank California as high as the seventh largest economy in the world.
- ⁴⁴ “SoCal Ranks as nation’s largest “Manufacturing” State.” *The CalTrade Report*, December 6, 2009, <http://www.caltradereport.com/eWebPages/front-page-1144333053.html>; *United States*

Department of Agriculture, "Trade and Agriculture: What's at Stake for California?" September, 2009, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/factsheets/WTO/states/ca.pdf>. For US manufacturing see *US Bureau of Labor Statistics*; "Manufacturing output as a percent of world manufacturing output, 2007." <http://www.bls.gov/fls/chartbook2009/chart5.9.pdf>. For US agriculture see *United States Department of Agriculture*, Foreign Agricultural Services, "Frequently Asked Questions." <http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/Policy/tradeFAQ.asp#2>

⁴⁵ *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "The Chronicle Review: Are Too Many Students Going to College?" December 7, 2009; <http://chronicle.com/article/Are-Too-Many-Students-Going/49039/>

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Michael Lewis, *Liar's Poker: Rising Through the Wreckage of Wall Street*. Penguin Books, 1989, 32-33; 49.

⁴⁸ Mark Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*. New York University Press, 2008, 21-27.

⁴⁹ Bousquet, *How the University Works*, 23, (Bousquet's italics).

⁵⁰ Bousquet, *How the University Works*, 33.

⁵¹ Statement made by CSUN's Patrick Nicholson in Broesamle, *Suddenly a Giant*, 105.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Suddenly a Giant*, 107.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* For the drawbacks of part time teaching, see M.K. Eagan and A.J. Jaeger, "Part-Time Faculty at Community Colleges: Implications for student Persistence and Transfer," *Research in Higher Education* 50:2 (2009), 168-88; David Moltz, "The part time impact," *Inside Higher Ed* November 16, 2009; Karin Fischer, "Speaker says adjuncts may harm students," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 18, 2005.