



Boesenberg, E. (2003). Privatizing Public Schools: Education in the Marketplace. *Workplace*, 10, 66-76.

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PRIVATIZING PUBLIC SCHOOLS: EDUCATION IN THE MARKETPLACE

Every relationship of “hegemony” is necessarily an educational relationship — A. Gramsci

1.1 The privatization of public schooling is cause for considerable concern. Students and their families increasingly face corporate, for-profit schools with unproven credentials as their only alternative to currently existing public schools. Teachers face a weakening of their labor rights when for-profit schools hire non-union teachers in order to keep their expenses to a minimum. Education researchers risk marginalization of pedagogical innovations that may adversely affect a company’s bottom line and condemnation of research that critiques private sector involvement in schooling. Social integrity and personal freedom are in jeopardy as corporations increasingly exert their influence on the curriculum and the discourse of schooling.

1.2 Privatization of schools and other public entities is a consequence of the hegemony of the market economy. Over the last twenty years the rise of the market economy has been facilitated by a convergence of neo-liberal economic power and neo-conservative socio-political power. The processes taking place have been described in terms of a *conservative restoration* (Apple, 1996) and *the rise of the rich* (Gran, 1996). The ascendancy of market economy power has resulted in many localized relationships of hegemony as well as the wide-ranging hegemony known as “globalization.” As a consequence, public life everywhere is in an increasingly precarious position.

1.3 Nevertheless, this dismal scenario offers opportunities to develop transformative educational relationships. Parents, students, teachers, and researchers can organize around issues of concern such as school privatization, and work together to improve schooling. Educators can join with other cultural workers (i.e. organic intellectuals; popular educators; environmentalists; and social justice activists) to seize these hegemonic relationships as opportunities for organizing around a multiplicity of issues. Adopting a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected forces that create and sustain hegemony brings together various constituencies that can form a broad base of mutual support and resistance. The educator’s responsibility here is two-fold: to elucidate these hegemonies as interconnected, global, and local issues; and to organize for change.

1.4 I would like to address how the rise of the neo-liberal/neo-conservative convergence of power has accelerated the trend toward school privatization. I include illustrations of resistance to privatization in order to interject a sense of agency and hopefulness that is vital for building strong counter-hegemonic

movements. The struggle against market hegemony has become especially important in education as privatization is legally sanctioned; government funded, and bankrolled by substantial private capital.

1.5 Two distinct yet mutually accommodating discourses (among others) that advance the right-wing agenda for education are neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. Coming from fundamentally different perspectives, the partners in this new alliance had to overcome certain ideological differences. Religious conservatives among the neo-conservatives are generally wary of self-indulgent monetary enrichment while economic conservatives among the neo-liberals generally distrust the discursive power of religious fundamentalism. In order to accomplish a merger between the two, a new ideology evolved based on the metaphor of the “invisible hand” (Block, 2002). The invisible hand--or the power of market forces--is able to influence behavior as it metes out rewards and punishments in a seemingly rational system. It becomes a proxy measure of success, providing an explanation for the failure of the disadvantaged while ensuring that the privileged remain so.

1.6 Concerned with issues that involve control of the body as well as the mind, neo-conservatives rely on government sanctions and legislative enforcement to fulfill their vision of a moral society. Often driven by fundamentalist religious convictions, they frame their concerns as issues of personal morality, family values, and social mores. The educational issues that most concern them involve curricular content (i.e. creationism vs. evolution, and sex education), textbook adoption policies; and practices such as school prayer. Neo-conservatism exerts ideological hegemony by shaping the discourse of schooling and influencing curriculum content.

1.7 Neo-liberals are primarily concerned about exercising their rights in a “free market” economy. Descending from the liberal tradition in economics that calls for the free reign of market forces, they desire leniency or the absence of any government regulatory intervention that might interfere with the functioning of market forces. Politically conservative governments often empower neo-liberals by enacting legislation favorable to their interests in order to gain their political support and harness their economic resources. Neo-liberalism is lately imposing its marketplace mentality on the discourse and practices of schooling as evidenced by the increasing privatization and commercialization (see Molnar, 2001) of schooling.

1.8 Just as the “invisible hand” metaphor facilitates a neo-liberal/neo-conservative ideological merger, the hegemony of accountability enables neo-liberal and neo-conservative incursions into schooling. As Mathison and Ross (2002) note, “Accountability has become the means of enforcement and control used by states and businesses.” It is a form of social control that can restrict individual opportunities while imposing the authority of official knowledge. This is accomplished through standardized curricula, proficiency tests of both students and teachers, regulation of textbooks, and undue corporate influence on the research agenda (see Giroux, 2002). The hegemony of accountability serves the corporate sector’s interests by indulging its quest for “knowledgeable,” compliant workers; manipulating research results and highlighting its largesse in the form of research endowments; not to mention increasing its bottom line through sales of tests, textbooks and curricular material.

Privatization

2.1 The private sector already plays a large role in public schooling, mostly in the form of contracts for food, transportation, and maintenance services (Saltman, 2000). But more recently privatization has insinuated itself in schooling through contracting out for school management and remedial education services; and voucher programs that turn education into a purchasable commodity in the private sector. After being deemed failures, public schools taken over by for-profit corporations are no longer completely accountable to the public yet are still paid for with taxpayers’ money. Recent legislation that employs the

language of *choice, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability* will greatly facilitate the process of publicly-funded school privatization.

2.2 For neo-liberals, having school “choice” is a reform in and of itself, based on the belief that applying market forces to education will lead to school improvement. But putting schooling within the arena of the marketplace is inappropriate for several reasons. The fundamental flaw of this logic is expressed by the political editor of SeeingBlack.com:

Considering that the only choice that matters is choosing a better school over a struggling school, the underlying problem with the “choice” movement is clear. There shouldn’t be any bad schools in the first place. The fact that the bad schools are concentrated in our communities should move us to fight the entire system--not search for a better place within it (Themba-Nixon, 2001).

2.3 Charter schools are touted by many as the answer to academic failure in public schools and educational management organizations are seen as offering the solution to school management problems and funding inadequacies. The neo-conservative political agenda fosters privatization by cutting funding to public schools and enacting legislation favorable to private sector ventures; encouraging the proliferation of charter schools and allowing educational management organizations to run public schools. Adopting a school choice program does not necessarily guarantee academic improvement, however. In fact, examining the voucher programs that have led to privatization reveals that they are fraught with problems. Privatization schemes are by no means being embraced by the communities, students, administrators, and teachers that are confronted with them.

2.4 Several school districts across the nation have already implemented voucher programs, among them: Milwaukee, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Baltimore (see Orr, 1999), Cleveland, and Boston. Looking at the voucher programs already underway offers insights on such issues as how students with disabilities have fared in private charter schools (Zollers & Ramanathan, 1998), media handling of the issues (Mitgang and Connell, 2001), policymakers attitudes (Laitsch, 2002), constitutional issues such as the separation of church and state (as in Cleveland and Milwaukee), labor issues, and curriculum issues.

2.5 I focus here on the experiences of two of the cities that have adopted voucher programs—Milwaukee and Philadelphia. The Milwaukee case reveals the workings of neo-conservative influence in attempting to create a favorable picture of voucher programs in order to garner public support. The Philadelphia case reveals the tenacity of a private sector educational management organization—Edison Schools Inc., to maintain its foothold in the school district despite widespread public rejection and its own dismal financial results.

Deep Pockets and Marketing Campaigns—Milwaukee

3.1 Initiated in 1990-91, Milwaukee has the longest running voucher program in the U.S. It started with 1,500 low-income students receiving vouchers for five secular, private schools. But by the end of four years, one-third of those students had left the private schools and the program was amended to include private religious schools. In 1997, the Wisconsin legislature expanded the program to accommodate 15,000 low income students. The inclusion of religious schools however precipitated litigation and the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the legislation for the start of the 1998-99 school year (Carnoy, 2001). This resulted in a program in which most (70 percent) of the school choices available were religious schools (Miner, 2000).

3.2 Milwaukee is also home to the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, benefactor of right wing projects to the tune of about \$40 million annually (Levine, 2002). Among the projects funded by the Bradley

Foundation are the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Manhattan Institute, Marquette University's *Institute for the Transformation of Learning*, research on voucher programs conducted by Harvard University faculty; and \$1 million that supported Charles Murray's book, *The Bell Curve*.

3.3 In addition to paying legal fees in defense of voucher programs and funding research studies and conservative think tanks, the Bradley Foundation in August 2000 created an organization called the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO). The BAEO's "public information campaign" targets African American families with its pro-voucher message through direct mailings, radio, internet, and newspaper ads as well as door to door solicitation. The Walton Family Foundation (Walmart) contributed \$900,000 toward project start-up. A federal grant of \$600,000 from the Department of Education was also given to the BAEO. *The Black Commentator* (Author, 2002) succinctly describes the scenario as follows: "A phony PRIVATIZED NATIONAL 'movement' invented by rich, racist white men in Milwaukee, is being foisted on a Black and Latino public, paid for *with the people's tax money*" [emphasis in original].

3.4 Whether out of ideological commitment or as part of a larger privatization plan the corporate sector and political sector have worked together closely to promote school "choice" programs. Richard DeVos Sr. (Amway) donated \$10 million to convince voters in a Michigan referendum to use public money for vouchers and also gave \$764,500 to Republican campaigns. In addition to other privatizing efforts such as turning a former military base into the first privatized national park, Donald G. and Doris F. Fisher (Gap Inc.) offered the state of California \$25 million if it would agree to turn management of its schools over to Edison Schools Inc. The Fishers' son owns four percent of Edison. Theodore J. Forstmann initiated the \$20 million pro-voucher "Campaign for America's Children" that spread its message through newspaper and television ads. Forstmann founded *Empower America*, a conservative group that among other issues lobbies for school vouchers and privatization of Social Security. Forstmann and John Walton each put up \$50 million to create *The Children's Scholarship Fund*, the nation's largest privately-funded school voucher program. (The Mother Jones 400, http://www.motherjones.com/web_exclusives/special_reports/mojo_400).

3.5 Privatization initiatives and voucher programs are funded by the private sector because corporations such as EMOs stand to benefit from them directly; and they are funded by the government sector because it gives the appearance that those holding political office are responsive to the needs of people who are disserved by public education. And more than occasionally these motives are interchangeable as when politicians have a personal financial stake in privatization, and when corporations wish to appear that they are concerned about social issues.

Politics and the Persistence of the Corporate Sector: Philadelphia and Edison Schools Inc.

4.1 The largest school district to have experimented with privatization is Philadelphia's—the 7th largest in the nation. With 265 schools, 205,000 students, and a \$1.7 billion annual budget, the Philadelphia school district is a potential bonanza for privateers. The events surrounding the state's takeover of Philadelphia's schools and the involvement of Edison Schools Inc. with the district reveal strong public sentiment against such moves.

4.2 The privatization process began in Philadelphia in the summer of 2001 when it was but a gleam in the eye of then Governor Tom Ridge. Ridge awarded Edison Schools Inc. a \$2.7 million, no-bid contract to study the district over a two month period and make recommendations for improving school financing and student achievement. It did not go unnoticed that a potential conflict of interest was inherent in this situation (Woodall, 2001). Right from the start, Edison did not endear itself to Philadelphians when, just days before the opening of school in September, the company hired away one of the district's primary administrators (Snyder, 2001).

4.3 Picking up where Ridge left off, Governor Schweiker proposed in late October that Edison Schools Inc. run the district's management operations. Philadelphia's mayor, John Street opposed it as did many others. As the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted,

While Mayor Street continued to give Gov. Schweiker the silent treatment yesterday, a long line of parents, union leaders, college professors and community organizers used a hearing at City Hall to pummel the governor's plan to privatize Philadelphia public schools... Most of them agreed Philadelphia schools need to improve, but they were virtually unanimous in rejecting Edison as the way to go. (O'Neill, 2001)

4.4 If the Governor and Mayor were still unable to conclude an agreement, a legal memorandum would have turned the district over to the state. But in November, the governor and the mayor reached a compromise whereby the state would establish a School Reform Commission (replacing the school board) to oversee the district's employees. Facing an estimated \$200 million budget deficit Mayor Street gave the governor this mandate, believing this to be the only way the city could compensate for the district's budget deficit (Dean, 2001).

4.5 In November, the Philadelphia Student Union rallied hundreds of students at the capitol in Harrisburg and lobbied legislators against state takeover and privatization of their schools. The City Council attacked Edison for its poor track record in improving student achievement (O'Neill, 2001) And the Council of the Great City Schools, a non-profit organization criticized Edison's report to the governor as being of poor quality and failing to make its case (Dean, 2001).

4.6 Furthermore, Edison raised suspicion when in response to a query from state Senator, Vince Fumo, it refused to disclose the amount of money it was paying to its subcontractors for carrying out the study. (Later it was uncovered that Edison had paid four politically connected subcontractors a total of \$85,000 to gain political access) (Warner & Daughen, 2002). Incredulous that the Pennsylvania State Department of Education did not require such disclosure, a December 2001 editorial in the *Philadelphia Daily News* fumed,

Well we've got a flash for the state. You just paid these guys \$2.7 million and they anticipate billing the state another \$300 million for work they expect to do here. So you might try this: Provide the information or forget about the \$300 million. (Open school books, 2001)

4.7 Amid the growing turmoil, the school district's interim chief executive officer resigned, saying that he was "disgusted with the takeover process and the role that for-profit Edison Schools Inc. is to play in the district" (Dean & Davies, 2001). Meanwhile, U.S. Representative, Chaka Fattah had been reviewing Edison's report on the district's schools. Using the same criteria Edison used to analyze the Philadelphia schools, he applied them to schools Edison was currently running. Using data obtained on state websites, Fattah describes his procedure and results as follows:

We compared the percent of students in the state achieving below a certain level to the percent of Edison students in that state achieving below a certain level. The data reveals that in nearly 90 percent of Edison schools—61 out of 69 schools—for which results are available, students perform substantially below standard levels set by the state compared to other students in the state (EducationNews.org).

4.8 In January 2002, the Federal court rejected two lawsuits filed by a coalition of parent groups and unions, that sought to declare state takeover of the district unconstitutional. In February, members of the City Council, parent groups, and local chapters of the NAACP, and NOW filed a similar lawsuit. Yet

despite overwhelming opposition, on March 26, by unanimous vote of the School Reform Commission, Edison became the lead consultant responsible for providing an assessment of the district's management capabilities. According to an AP wire report date March 27, 2002, "Parents, community activists and students who wore anti-privatization signs on their clothes, even their faces, yelled and heckled the commission members as they voted."

4.9 The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers also opposed the move. A local high school teacher, Dennis Barnebey commented, "Our schools have been drastically underfunded for years, and now our lack of success with inadequate resources is being used as an excuse to turn the public sector over to profit-making corporations, to use our tax dollars to boost a company's stock." Ever mindful of its own budgetary requirements, Edison had stipulated that without additional city and state funding, or if it were unable to borrow the \$300 million it needed to cover its deficit, the contract it had just signed could be voided.

4.10 In April, the School Reform Commission announced that it wished to turn over management of seventy-five of Philadelphia's schools to outside institutions and private management companies. As a compromise solution they decided that twenty elementary and middle schools would go to Edison rather than all of them. Twenty-two would go to other companies and non-profits including Temple University, University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel University; and twenty-eight would go to parent groups. When this proposal came up for vote, the commissioners were again met with resistance and protest. According to Associated Press Online, dated April 18, 2002, "About two dozen students spent the night before the vote camped outside the city's school administration building, then formed a human chain across its wrought-iron gate and refused to allow anyone inside."

4.11 The Commission moved its meeting to another building. Some students wore tape over their mouths symbolizing lack of community input in the decision. Other students disrupted the meeting by commandeering a microphone. "How can a private company understand the deep problems in our school? How does bringing a for-profit company change anything? It's purely political," said Derrick Smith, a 17-year old junior. Angry parents shouted at commission members as its chairman, left the meeting under police escort.

4.12 In May, after an informal investigation, the Securities and Exchange Commission charged that Edison had omitted crucial information from its filings, that made revenues from 1999 to 2002 appear almost 50 percent higher than the revenues it had actually generated. Edison had been counting teachers' salaries and other expenses as revenue even though they were paid by the school districts and were not part of Edison's funds. But since it had also entered them as expenses Edison did not actually violate accounting rules (Winters, 2002). Edison was criticized however, for not having adequate internal accounting system controls in place.

4.13 In June, Edison announced that it had secured a loan for \$40 million. The terms of the loan however revealed the extent of its financial problems—the interest rate was set at between 10% and 15%, much higher than the national average rate of just over 5% (Facts on File World News Digest, 2002). In August, the Education Department announced that it would investigate the circumstances surrounding the manner in which Edison had secured the contract to manage the twenty schools in Philadelphia. This in addition to another investigation into how it had secured the initial \$2.7 million contract to study the Philadelphia school district. Meanwhile, Edison's stock price went below \$1 per share (down from \$21 earlier in the year) and the Nasdaq threatened to drop Edison stock from its listing.

4.14 In late August, CEO of the district schools, Paul Vallas demanded that Edison provide a financial report that it should have provided on June 30, and an assurance that if the company went bankrupt that creditors would not seize school equipment and materials.

4.15 When Edison did not get the money it requested from the district (\$1,500 more per pupil than the district average), the result was a pathetic display of where its real priorities lie. This is what transpired at one of the district's middle schools:

A few days before school opened in September, while Edison and school officials fought over how much money per pupil Edison would get, the company sent two tractor-trailers to haul away all the new equipment--except some books and a handful of computers (Newsweek, 2002, October 21).

4.16 Investigations into Edison's business practices continue and its first \$3 million paycheck from Philadelphia was withheld. Yet, despite all its trials and tribulations, Edison remains optimistic, especially since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. According to the Edison Schools Inc. website, "The company believes the Act will have a significant positive impact on its business prospects." (http://www.corporate-ir.net/ireye/ir_site.zhtml)

No Child Left Behind

5.1 The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was signed into law on January 8, 2002. With the ostensible goal of improving failing schools and improving student achievement, the Act also offers students the opportunity to opt out of those same failing schools. Toward the goal of helping students in failing schools, the NCLB Act offers supplemental services such as tutoring, and remediation. But the centerpiece of the NCLB Act is the component that offers students attending failing schools the choice to attend another school. Referred to as *transferability* this option is always worded as "public school choice" but in actuality choice may not be available to all students (i.e. students with disabilities or behavioral problems and students in rural areas) and the "public schools" that it refers to might only be public in the sense that they are publicly *funded*. In fact, many of them are privately owned, for-profit, charter schools.

5.2 How does the choice program lead to privatization? First schools are deemed failures. Under Title I, there are three categories of failing schools—*school improvement*, *corrective action*, and *restructuring*. In unabashed double-speak that employs these optimistic, proactive sounding categories they are described as follows: "A school in improvement is a school that fails, for two consecutive years, to make adequate yearly progress (AYP)." Likewise, a school in *corrective action*, "...has failed to meet its AYP goals for four consecutive years..." and a school in *restructuring*, "...has failed to meet its AYP in five consecutive years." (No Child Left: Behind Public School Choice, Draft Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2001)

5.3 According to the law, it is the responsibility of the individual states to measure "adequate yearly progress" and states must enact Department of Education approved accountability plans. Apparently, the most expedient way of assessing progress is by using standardized test scores. Tests that were designed to measure individual aptitude are now used to assess the entire school. Are standardized test scores an accurate measure of school quality let alone student knowledge? Using standardized test scores in this way again reveals the high stakes nature of these tests. Speaking about the experience in the U.K. Torrance (1997) comments:

It is only much more recently that changes in assessment practices and procedures have been undertaken in order to monitor school systems *as systems*, and, furthermore, that such changes in assessment have been used to intervene directly in the operation of school systems through the underpinning of specific curriculum changes, or through the impact of accountability pressures invoked by the publication of test results, or both. (Torrance, 1997, p. 320)

5.4 The test scores are not used as an aggregate measure, rather under NCLB, each racial and demographic subgroup in the school must show improvement. This stipulation had state education

officials worried. According to the *Washington Post* (Jan. 2, 2003), “They [state officials] say federal regulations outlining how to assess the quality of schools are dangerously arbitrary and inflexible and will result in schools being treated as failures—even if they are improving by most measures.”

5.5 For example, Gonzales Elementary School in Arizona with a predominantly Mexican-American student body showed much progress in reading and math with overall percentages of students making at least a year’s growth—higher than state averages. However, at the fifth grade level the exam scores did not reflect adequate yearly progress so the school is now considered “underperforming.”

5.6 The fact that 100 transient students may have been at Gonzales Elementary just a few months when they take the tests is not a mitigating factor. It’s the school’s fault if they score low. Nor does it matter that hundreds have serious deficiencies in English. If teachers can’t get new arrivals fluent by test time, blame the school. (Winerip, 2003)

5.7 Because progress is determined by a limited assessment and extenuating circumstances are not factored in, many schools will be labeled failing even if they are serving their populations to the best of their ability and they have community support. But these schools now run the risk of having students transfer out, thus losing funding and making the task that much harder. Shouldn’t parents and students have more input than merely the choice to walk away? In effect the only choice they have is “take it or leave it.” And if students leave and go to another school and are still not successful then it is likely the student will bear the full burden for failing to make academic progress.

5.8 This is not to say that every alternative to public schooling will be negative. Charter schools run by parent organizations, non-profit organizations, or universities may have helpful, innovative approaches that meet the needs of their communities. But why couldn’t these groups have a vehicle allowing them to join forces with public schools, fostering greater participation in the educational endeavor? Why must we abandon the ideals of providing a public education to the vagaries of the marketplace? I think it’s fair to say that most people involved in public education are committed to providing students with a good education while most people involved in corporations are committed to building the corporation and carrying out its main purpose—making profit.

Conclusion

6.1 More and more of the activities that were considered public services or a responsibility of the state are being privatized or under consideration for privatization— health care, social security, postal services, parks, prisons, even auxiliary services of the army (Lee, 2002). Not even natural resources necessary to sustain life are immune from privatization. For example, access to water is no longer considered a human right. It is becoming commodified through the hegemonic influence of what has become known as the Washington consensus. According to Barlow and Clarke (2002) the Washington consensus is:

*a model of economics rooted in the belief that liberal market economics constitute the one and only economic choice for the whole world. Key to this “consensus” is the commodification of “the commons.” Everything is for sale, even those areas of life, such as social services and natural resources, that were once considered the common heritage of humanity. Governments around the world are abdicating their responsibility to protect the natural resources within their borders, giving authority away to private companies that make a business of resource exploitation.

6.2 Because the effects of this hegemony are so widespread and far-reaching it is essential that we understand it fully. Part of understanding hegemony lies in unmasking the reality behind the rhetoric. This area in particular is one that educators can have a powerful influence on. We must adopt a critical

approach and not accept the hegemonic discourse on face value. For example, we must be aware of how language can be used to obfuscate the problems but also how it can be used to clarify them:

6.3 Who can be opposed to economic “stabilization”, or “structural adjustment”? These benign terms and others like “reform,” “liberalization,” “efficiency,” and “rationalization” are nearly universally employed to describe the economic transformations envisioned by neoliberals. “Cutting public investments in housing, health, and education,” “upward redistribution of income,” “increasing inequality,” “diminishing the influence of trade unions,” “increasing the power of private capital,” and “upward redistribution of access to agricultural land” are more difficult to defend. Yet these are the common effects of the neoliberal program, at least in the short and medium run. (Beinin, 2002)

6.4 Currently the political discourse of *homeland security* and *war on terrorism* is being employed to undermine the collective bargaining rights of federal employees (Dewar, 2002) as it also overlooks popular sentiment against engaging in another war. If left unchecked, this hegemony can have far-reaching, enduring, and devastating consequences. As more aspects of public life become privatized public interest groups have an opportunity to become aware of each other’s struggles and unite to overcome them. With increasing awareness it becomes more apparent that these struggles are not isolated occurrences, rather they are part of a larger strategy to increase private control and market power. Understanding how the hegemony affects us on multiple levels is the beginning of building a movement that can expand to address many issues.

6.5 Counter-hegemonic movements are not new. Many struggles analogous to those we face today have already been encountered. Therefore, educational researchers and historians play an important role by offering critical perspectives on how struggles of the past relate to current circumstances. This knowledge can be re-appropriated to influence present-day educational discourse. School curricula must be amended to redress a crucial imbalance. Counter-balancing the corporatist, nationalist, racist, chauvinist curriculum would compel us to include the issues and struggles of workers, developing nations, people of color, women and other marginalized groups. At the same time careful attention must be paid to the practices of schooling.

6.6 As flawed as public education may be, the way to improve it is not by abandoning it to the private sector. As anyone in the corporate sector would readily agree, the primary concern of a corporation is to increase its profits. Educators must continue to work to improve schooling but must also fight against the forces that would destroy public education. Educators, community activists, parent groups, consumer advocates, and media watchdog organizations, as well as independent researchers and critical scholars need to be vigilant in exposing the interests behind proponents of voucher programs that pave the way for the privatization of public schools and other aspects of public life.

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