

# THE WAR AND EDUCATION PART II

The war in Southeast Asia calls the role of education in our society into question. The anti-war movement in attacking "university complicity in the war" implicitly (or in some cases, explicitly) attacks the destructiveness or social uselessness of much "mental labor" in our universities. This point of view is shared by those concerned about domestic social problems and who have come to realize how irrelevant to these problems college education is. The severest critics of college education, the students themselves, add to the above charge the education is "alienating".

If in opposing the war, we hope to use the resources, now going to waste in Indochina, to improve and change education to eliminate these problems we must correctly analyze the causes.

The quantification of intellectuality that grading represents is one of the most alienating factors in all levels of education. But grading is itself, determined by the content and function of education. On the one hand, it is the rating the school affixes to the student as a sort of index of his eligibility for the limited number of job opportunities in the society. On the other hand, it is but a reflection of the attempt to compartmentalize and fragment the educational experience into self-contained courses having very little to do with each other. Instead of developing our creative faculties by posing problems in new and different aspects, so that our previous knowledge alone no longer suffices to settle that question, we are trained to fit any problem into a previously-established categorical framework.

Ignoring the crucial interrelationship and interdependence of all disciplines, our education is designed to "zero in" on a problem cutting to shreds the very setting in which that problem must be viewed if we are to understand it at all. For example, the dominant intellectual tendencies in the current ecological brouhaha blame pollution on industrialization and our current technological level. (This, despite the fact that non-industrial societies such as ancient Mesopotamia ecologically destroyed their basis for existence by depleting their most important resource, the soil). If pollution is viewed as an isolated problem then the intellectual garbage about cutting back production and GNP becomes an acceptable solution--except that in a world at least half of which is characterized by extreme poverty and hunger this is hardly a suitable answer. Similarly all efforts to deal with the problems of the ghettos piecemeal are doomed to failure. One simply cannot educate ghetto youths who are not housed or clothed or fed properly and who know that their education is irrelevant to their future. They are, in any case, consigned to the human scrapheap: a job in the armed forces, a minimum-wage job sweeping floors, or picking up a welfare check.

Education, if it is to be meaningful at all, must proceed from the needs of worldwide society. It must view the aggregate productive forces as the basic means by which those needs can be met and the society itself reproduce materially and culturally on a higher level (with the restoration of the equipotential of nature as one aspect of that social reproduction).

But demands to restructure the university to permit such courses cannot in any way solve the problem of miseducation. Such courses in the present isolated setting of university life would be sterile. For such study to be at all significant or meaningful, it must take place in the context of a live political movement which

self consciously deals with the tasks posed by the needs of world-wide society. It is obvious that a crucial aspect of our irrelevance and our alienation as students is our estrangement from the world-wide network of productive forces and, like just about everyone else in the world today, our lack of any sort of collective control over these productive forces.

It is clear then that if we are going to begin to deal with the questions of education, we are going to have to address ourselves to all socio-economic problems (as opposed to isolating ourselves in "self-contained" communes of some sort). To the extent that increased tuition and the cut-back of scholarship and fellowship funds exclude working-class and poor youths from the university, to the extent they contribute to our isolation and our irrelevance, as well as threaten our own right to an education. We must counter to these cut-backs, not only an end to the war but also the demands for open admissions, free higher education for all high school graduates who want to go to college, guaranteed productive jobs at \$6000 minimum salary for those who don't, as well as the demand for restoration of all services and programs and sholership and fellowship funds recently but back.

Moreover, it is in the context of a political movement for open admissions and free higher education that meaningful discussions can take place on the nature of real education and the role education can play in the solution of the critical problems of our society.

An Anti-War Movement which concerns itself with the concrete programmatic answers to the reconstruction of our society has the potential to mobilize new social layers--in particular, the working-class. We can make a first approximation to the question of reconversion in the field of education with the following program:

- (1) Immediate Withdrawal From Southeast Asia
- (2) Open Admission and Free Higher Education For All High School Graduates and Returning Veterans Who Want To Go To College-- Guaranteed Productive Jobs At \$6000 Minimum Salary For Those Who Don't Want To Go To College
- (3) Construction of Necessary New Educational Facilities--- Restoration of All Programs That Have Been Cutback, Improvement of Curricula
- (4) All To Be Financed By Taxing The Misinvestment of Funds in Military-Defense Industry, Real Estate Speculation and Cther Institutional ized Financial "Pollution".

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