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Adam Smith's Pins, Sausage Making and the Funding of College Education

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Using the language and concepts of economic markets for the purpose of describing and evaluating the function and performance of educational institutions has been a common and growing practice throughout Western industrial societies for many years. The critique of such market analysis also has a long history. Critical assessments of market theory have been made by both conservatives and radicals. It comes as no surprise, of course, to learn that criticisms have been plentiful among left-wing political theorists like Antonio Gramsci. What is less well appreciated is that even iconic classical economists like Adam Smith had serious and explicitly moral reservations about the implications of market economics, especially as applied to education. While radicals called for greater democracy in education and conservatives sought to maintain exclusive control over elite institutions, both shared a skepticism of both the ideology and the social goals of educational reform. So, conservatives have often joined radicals in generating robust objections to the primacy of vocational training, instrumental values and the subservience of postsecondary institutions to the expressed needs of corporate ideology and the labour market (Grant, 1970, Prentice, 1977).

In Ontario, the agenda for discussion about the primary purpose, organizational structure and funding of college education has been set for some time. One important document that epitomizes the market model and strikingly reveals the political and economic contradictions inherent in it is the "Road Map to Prosperity" (henceforward RMP), an economic plan for jobs in the twenty-first century published in 1999. Its emphasis upon regarding education as primarily a provider of specific training for the workplace has seldom been equaled. Its message continues to resonate with those whose commitment has been to vocational training as the main mandate of the college sector. This article will assess the economic and educational concepts contained in the RMP and their ongoing relevance for institutions of higher education, especially community colleges in Ontario. Despite the fact that electoral victories have been won in Ontario by all three major political parties over the past fifteen years, there has been remarkably little difference in the approach of the various governments to educational policy. The rhetoric sustaining educational policy, of course, has differed according to the philosophies of the parties in power with a harsh, anti-intellectualism typifying Conservative approaches, fiscal pragmatism characterizing Liberal perspectives, and progressive language carrying the message of accessibility and excellence among New Democrats. In practice, however, the relationship between the economy and education has been shaped by government policies that have remained very much

the same no matter which political party has succeeded in election polls. More specifically, the "common sense" revolution undertaken by Conservative Premier Mike Harris in the 1990s has not been seriously altered by the current Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty. As well, little structural change is likely to follow from the recently released review of postsecondary education, which was produced under the leadership of former NDP Premier Bob Rae (2005).

In order to understand the repetitive chorus that "educational institutions need to equip our students and workforce … with the skills, training and entrepreneurship to do business in the global marketplace" (RMP, 1999, p. 36), we have to put the government's commitment to market-driven educational policies into historical perspective. These policies are not simply an attempt to reduce educational funding by restructuring the delivery of educational services but are essentially an ideological attack on the concept of education itself.

Both Adam Smith, the alleged godfather of neo-conservatism, and Antonio Gramsci, the libertarian critic of Leninist Marxism were, for their own reasons, appalled by the conditions of work in capitalist society.

Adam Smith, in **The Wealth of Nations** (1776), introduced his concept of the division of labour and saw it as the key to increasing worker productivity. The traditional craft worker, according to Smith, spent too much time and effort performing a variety of simple, repetitive, physical motions or tasks. These tasks could be performed by anyone since they involved only ordinary manual dexterity. Accordingly, by determining the number of simple, repetitive physical motions involved in producing pins, for example, assigning these tasks to individual, specialized workers, and determining by experiment the logical sequence of tasks that maximized output, Smith helped establish the theoretical foundation for increasing profits through mass production. In practice, the resulting deskilling of work and workers, increases productivity, justifies lower wages, and produces higher profits.

At the same time, Smith acknowledged that the psychological and social costs of this new division of labour are enormous and publicly funded education is advocated to prevent that "drowsy stupidity" which is systematically produced in the industrial workplace:

In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man, whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise

his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind, renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgement concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging; and unless very particular pains are taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain, and adventuresome life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance, in any other employment than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great majority of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it (Smith, 1952, pp. 340-341).

That government should take such pains was patently obvious to Adam Smith (no neo-con free marketer he!). It is apparent that "dumbing down" is certainly no merely contemporary phenomenon, and Smith did not endorse it. For him, publicly funded education, even for the masses, had "to do with the ideas of civic humanism and the extent to which modern 'men' could attain something approaching the classical concept of citizenship" (Skinner, 1995, p. 87). Education is not simply for the dissemination of "skills, training and entrepreneurship to do business in the global economy," and government must make funding available in this situation where "the profit motive is likely to prove inadequate" (Skinner, p. 95).

The marketplace, for Smith, was not a magical solution for social problems, and more effective participation in the market was certainly not the only goal of education—especially higher education. Public works for the benefit of society, such as publicly funded education, were not to be left to the "invisible hand" which is said to direct production and consumption in the private, individual quest for profit. In fact, Smith was opposed to the very institution of privately owned corporations, which allowed merchants and manufacturers to dominate the economy to the detriment of society. Public works and institutions were not profitable for individual investors and were not intended to be. "The direct object of Smith's attack was not government policy but private vested interests" (Lubacz, 1995, p. 53) which distorted public initiatives for their own gain. This comes as news to business leaders and corporate gurus who invoke the name of Adam Smith, but who refrain from reading what he actually wrote. Thus, those who argue for the supremacy of the free competitive market, those who advocate the supposedly cost-efficient privatization

of public services, and those who would reduce education to vocational training and studies in entrepreneurship have made Adam Smith and **The Wealth of Nations** "part of a sales pitch" (Lubacz, p. 67), but have twisted his words and warped his meaning. Karl Marx came closer to the mark when he commented recognized that "for preventing the complete deterioration of the great mass of people which arises from the division of labour, Adam Smith recommends education of the people by the state, but in prudently homeopathic doses" (Marx, 1977, p. 484). While radicals like Marx accept Smith's analysis, they see it as limited and palliative, but do agree on the importance of formal, publicly funded education (especially in the areas of the humanities and social sciences) for the development of a critical, informed and responsible citizenry. Education, for Adam Smith, is not of economic interest but of broadly humane importance.

Unfortunately, the belief in the declining market value of the liberal arts has become a major part of the rhetoric of educational restructuring in our society. In Mike Harris' Ontario, the RMP urged the introduction of "mandatory courses on innovation and entrepreneurship, starting with primary school" (RMP, p. 76) and followed by "post-secondary education with courses in business management and intellectual property in disciplines like engineering and fine arts" (RMP, p. 28). By its lights, primary, secondary and postsecondary education will be reorganized around private sector goals and will feature courses in entrepreneurship and business; even Adam Smith's "homeopathic doses" of the humanities and social sciences do not appear vocationally relevant to the RMP. In a similar manner, Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, argued against the reduction of education of the masses to skills training. Writing in **Avanti** in December, 1917, he argued that "the proletariat needs a free school … not a school of slavery and mechanization … Professional schools must not become incubators of little monsters, who are aridly educated for a job, without general ideas and a general culture, without spirit and with only a sharp eye and a strong hand" (quoted in Welton, 1980, p. 1).

Education primarily based on job skills allows the ruling class to manufacture conformity and consent among the masses. For Gramsci, any successful challenge of the ruling capitalist class's power and ideology requires the working classes to become consciously aware of their own culture, history, and politics. This, he contends, requires knowledge of traditional culture, history and politics and of their role in dominating the masses. The danger of fascism in Italy was its introduction of vocational training under the slogan of "child-centred progressivism" for the working classes. This type of ahistorical, apolitical education effectively removed "the historical memory of the working class." Even though couched in conservative values, the traditional Italian school system, through its emphasis on history, literature and language, encouraged disciplined study and critical analysis. "Fascists," observed Gramsci, "found their allies in the schoolmasters who encouraged spontaneity and autodidacticism and not in those who functioned as agents of cultural transmission by

requiring students to learn the 'facts' of history, geography or science" (Welton, p. 9).

For Gramsci, a disciplined study of culture, history and politics is necessary for the struggle of workers against capitalism, and schooling is hard work requiring concentration, persistence and self-control. The facile vocationalizing of mass education reinforced the inequalities of the social class system; in the alternative, Gramsci argued that the comprehensive education of the ruling classes be extended to the children of the proletariat because academic work was relevant to understanding the real world of capitalist cultural, economic and political exploitation. It is worthy of note, in this regard, that the current Liberal provincial government is currently reorganizing "general education" in Ontario colleges and the single area of study that they are deleting from the curriculum (as opposed to mere condensation and reduction) is the critical study of "work and the economy," arguably the most vital part of students' non-vocational education. Like education under Mussolini, current student-centred educational practices are easily compatible with ruling class cultural and ideological hegemony. Adam Smith's informed citizen and Gramsci's educated radical are not easily suppressed or impressed by the friction-free rhetoric of advocates of vocationalism, entrepreneurship and business studies directly related to the job market. On the other hand, the logic and practice of this approach seem to be firmly entrenched in institutions of higher learning in North America and especially in community colleges, junior colleges, technical institutes and the like. As well, the politically manufactured fiscal crisis in education is being used to create a conservative, corporatist system of postsecondary education generally. In order to maintain and extend access to education (despite massive increases in tuition fees), institutions are being compelled to become more cost efficient, job oriented and committed to the corporate mentality of the "bottom line." Corporate-college "partnerships" and significant fundraising activities are encouraged to supplement public funds at the cost, of course, of surrendering public control. Adam Smith, many forget, was not a professional economist, but a professor of moral philosophy; his primary interest was not in producing propaganda for a rapacious economic elite, but in understanding how wealth was produced and distributed so that societies would learn not only how produce more quantitatively but also how to distribute goods and services more equitably. Adam Smith's commitment to the common weal, however, has been studiously ignored by those who claim him as their intellectual patriarch. As a result, no matter what price is to be paid in social civility, "the campus," in Neimark's words (1999, p. 24), "is becoming virtually indistinguishable from the marketplace, and both universities [and colleges] and their faculties are being entrepreneurs." This process has always been an essential part of the community college system in Ontario. As a result, increased tuition, larger classes, increasing numbers of cheap, part-time faculty, increased teaching loads and, generally, doing more with less has become endemic in the Ontario colleges and common across North America. The Ontario case is one of the more egregious instances

with the number of students rising in almost direct relation to the number of funding dollars falling. Colleges in Ontario received almost 40% less per full-time equivalent funding per student than a decade ago with a drop from $7,552 in 1990-91 to the current $4,800 in 2000-01 (ACAATO 2002, p. 1; Urquhart, 2004, p. A-29). During this period, enrolment increased by 34 % from 102,000 to nearly 140,000 students (ACAATO, p. 3). In addition, "the liberal arts are strikingly absent from this framework for public education" (Neimark, p. 28). The devaluing of the humanities and the social sciences as irrelevant to the careers of students is leading to the underdevelopment of critically thinking citizens who understand the role of political and economic power. It encourages only narrowly vocational knowledge and "skill sets" and, thus, the "drowsy stupidity" essential for corporate domination of higher education.

Sausage Making and the Restructuring of Higher Education

The appropriate analogy was drawn by Marx in the first volume of **Capital**: "If we may take an example from outside the sphere of material production, a schoolmaster is a productive worker, when in addition to belabouring the heads of his pupils, he works himself into the ground to enrich the owner of the school. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, makes no difference to the relation" (Marx, p. 644). Chancellor Kenneth Shaw of Syracuse University, without reference to Marx, argues honestly and openly that: in order to ensure their survival, institutions of higher learning must now devote their energies to sausage making … Even with the most carefully chosen and healthful ingredients … sausage making is an ugly process to witness. But after all the slicing, chopping, blood and gore, the end product can be delicious, nutritious and of remarkable quality. Likewise, Shaw contends that colleges and universities must now pursue "the kind of painful restructuring that is akin to sausage making and has been taken up in earnest by many U.S. corporations … Ugly in process, but if well done, healthy in outcome" (quoted in Zaidi, p. 32). Shaw's candid analysis continues: In reporting on educational restructuring, the media will be able to report truthfully that faculty and staff morale is at an all-time low, people have never been more vicious to one another, and special interests have never been more in evidence. This should be understood as an honest part of the sausage-making process (quoted in Zaidi, p. 35). Of course, the process of sausage making involves a major shift from critical thinking, cultural awareness and social understanding in the humanities and social sciences to skills training for "customer-students." As a result, cultural and social amnesia become an essential part of what is deemed relevant to the market-driven future. This stark and defiantly crude metaphor of sausage making removes (to paraphrase Marx) illusions from a situation that cries out for illusions. In this sense, the rhetorical illusions that comprise the RMP wrap a thin veil around a Canadian process of sausage making in Ontario higher education. The promise of delicious prosperity said to result from the road map may simply be camouflage for the rotting road kill that lies on the market-driven

highway as we motor along toward the corporate college and university.

The RMP report is a project of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and outlines strategies "to ensure jobs, investment and economic prosperity for Ontarians over the next five, 10 and 20 years" (p.4). While admitting that "there are no 'magic' solutions for maintaining a robust economy," the report commits politicians to "restructuring government spending to keep it within our means, reinventing the way we deliver public services … [and] improving our educational performance so students graduate with market relevant skills" (p. 3). In other words, despite the initial caveat, the general proposals are an expression of an occult faith in the competitive, for-profit market and the mechanism of privatization of public services as an efficient delivery system which maximizes access and choice (for those who can afford the rising fees). As ex-Minister of Colleges and Universities Dianne Cunningham plainly stated, the Government of Ontario was giving the "go-ahead for American-style for-profit private universities," explaining its decision as a means to "ensure our students here have choice" (Toronto Star, 2000, 29 April, p. A-10). Issues of underfunding, overcrowding, rising tuition and downsizing full-time faculty seem to have little relevance to the mantra of "student choice." In the five years since the release of the RMP, little of value has been accomplished despite fervent ministerial activity and furtive managerial cost-cutting decisions. Moreover, even with the election of a new government, no serious attempt is being made to overhaul the previous administration's priorities. The major study of postsecondary education headed by former NDP Premier Bob Rae was being treated respectfully by appropriate "stakeholders" and has reported with predictable recommendations that make much of educational excellence and student accessibility but do nothing to slow the speed, much less to reverse the direction, of government policy. This is one matter in which the political party in power appears unwilling or unable to assess postsecondary education in anything but a corporate-friendly fashion (Urquhart, 2005, p. A-1).

The Rae Report seeks to "reaffirm the mandate of colleges to focus on occupational education and labour market needs," conveniently forgetting that the original mandate of the colleges included far more than skills training and explicitly mandated a minimum of 33% and a maximum of 50% of the college curriculum to be in "avocational" fields (i.e., the humanities and social sciences). Rae's pronouncements, of course, have won high praise from college administrators (ACAATO, 2005). They were also well received by the head office of the faculty union which has rarely displayed interest in curriculum but only in issues such as wages, job security and so on (OPSEU, 2005). In both cases, support was won by guarded promises of increased funding. To address the issue of accountability that commonly attends fiscal promises, a system is in place that originated with the RMP. On what appears to be a practical level, the RMP seems obsessed by "Performance Measures". In education, this means evaluating the "market responsiveness of educational

institutions" by gathering data on the percentage of students who obtain employment directly related to their educational programs (p. 24). Ontario, it is argued, has to develop "knowledge and skills for prosperity" through a market-responsive education, training and employment system" (p. 16). In the view of the RMP (p. 18):

Achieving this goal will require a culture of active, ongoing employer partnership with government, educational institutions and others in identifying the skills needed, and developing and implementing creative approaches to equipping people with skills. Specifically, a new Charter for community colleges is to be developed to allow these institutions "to be more market-driven and more flexible" in addressing "mismatches between the skills people have and the skills employers are seeking and … current and emerging skill shortages" (RMP, p. 20). Skills matching and market-driven education seems to be a facile response to rapid technological change which, if history is relevant, is largely and precisely not predictable in either the short term or the long term. If anything is certain about a society devoted to constant technological innovation in pursuit of future goals of prosperity and profit, it is that the dissemination of specific skills (soon to become obsolete) and the resolution of skill mismatches can rarely be accomplished by a retreat into narrow vocationalism. The only problem that may be temporarily resolved is the ideological problem that comes when corporate profits come at the cost of chronic unemployment, underemployment, part-time employment and contract employment.

Promoting the fallacy of vocational relevance does not address, much less solve, the emerging structural problems of the postindustrial workplace. The problem of educating students to face a relatively unknown future and to survive a bumpy ride down the prosperity highway will not be made any easier by graduating students who have little or no critical awareness based on courses in the humanities and social sciences. There is much more to knowledge-based economies than skills training, entrepreneurship and business studies. It is the real political and economic decisions made by governments and corporations that will frame the future; sterile clichés about the free market and privatization which are now used to justify the underfunding of public services and the downsizing of public employees are simply masks for an emerging political economy that depends upon political apathy, consumer compliance and a labour market constantly under threat.

In many ways, Ontario colleges may be seen as examples of what the real consequences of the RMP encouraged on a practical level, since the March, 1999 publication of the document. Later that year, the Key Performance Indicators (henceforward KPI) project was implemented and is still part of the new managerial arsenal of monitoring and control. KPI introduced "performance-based funding" into colleges by assessing graduate employment rates, graduate satisfaction measures, employer satisfaction levels with the graduates they hire, current student satisfaction with their program and their

college, and the degree of student retention of each program and each college.

Accountability for performance based on student and expressed employer needs, with up to 10% of total college funding being based on KPI performances are at the core of this policy. Reporter Kim Goodman of the **North York Mirror** (6 January, 1999, p. 8) quoted several highly placed officials in support of the policy. Catherine Rellinger, President of Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario pointed out: "This represents an important change in approach for all Ontario colleges. College funding has traditionally been based on solely on enrolment numbers. Performance based funding raises the bar for quality and accountability." Dr. Bill Gordon of the KPI Implementation Team added: "Ultimately, the hope is to make colleges as good as they can get and look at where programs are weak and where to strengthen them. Students can do more comparative shopping." Finally, Vicki Milligan Carter, then Director of Student Development at Seneca College in Toronto, was quoted as saying: "Academic programs will use (survey results) to decide which programs need to increase enrolment, which ones need to be revamped, and those that need to be cut back … We try to be responsive to industry and the job market."

As these statements suggest, KPI scores could be used to drop programs which are not "performing". If low KPI scores are not accompanied by funding for improvement, programs within colleges that are currently underfunded may be at risk. Institutions of higher learning in Ontario are, of course, already chronically underfunded, and the predicted 30-40% increase in enrolment in the next ten years will only add to the existing financial crisis. Unless appropriate funding is provided to Ontario's community colleges, KPI results will merely provide a mechanism, if not an excuse, for indirectly and inadequately dealing with underfunding and faculty downsizing. Given the history of Ontario's colleges, competition among colleges for KPI scores will likely encourage the expansion of academically lean production techniques which will further undermine faculty control of curriculum and teaching in the classroom.

In fact, this has already occurred. When, for instance, Seneca College in Toronto fell slightly below the average provincial KPI and lost about $1.3 million in funding, a letter was sent to all faculty by the President urging faculty to do better next year. Unstated were the preferred means, but one dependable way to increase student "satisfaction" (at least in the short run) is to inflate grades. Other techniques can easily be imagined. Catering to the "customer" or the "client" may produce happy shoppers but it also removes any pretense of maintaining serious academic standards. Meanwhile, whenever "student feedback" is to be measured, an advertising campaign is launched to encourage students to show pride in their college.

Market-driven flexibility has also involved academically lean

production techniques. In the mid-1990s, for instance, Seneca rearranged production schedules (graduates being, paradoxically, both the entry-level customer and the end-product). By lopping off two weeks from the traditional two semesters, the college was able to manufacture a third semester of extra classes. Jettisoned was "professional development" time and added was an additional semester of teaching for full-time faculty in each calendar year. Thus, the college was able "to do more with less," though at a different sort of cost. In 1999, an Employee Attitude Survey carried out by Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 560 (the Academic workers union) documented a significant decline in faculty morale, dissatisfaction with the new three semester system and its "unpaid" summer teaching, indignation at the abandonment of allotted time for curriculum development, and exasperation at the compulsion to teach the same course content at the same level of quality in shortened fourteen-week semesters. Seneca College is not alone, of course. Throughout the system, various methods have been initiated to increase productivity. Professor Jerry White (1999) published data derived from a province-wide study that came to the following conclusions:

- 86% of those surveyed responded that changes in class size have negatively affected the quality of education (p. iv);
- 71% reported a decline in the quality of the curriculum due to reductions in classroom hours;
- more than 78% of faculty complained of increased levels of on-the-job stress;
- 88% of respondents across all disciplines reported increases in average weekly workloads;
- over 68% reported a decline in the overall quality of education in the colleges over the past five years.

The rigorous documentation of genuine professional concerns of college professors about the decline of morale and quality of education stands in contrast to the RMP issues reflected in the KPI measures. There is little evidence to suggest that these faculty concerns will be regarded as anything but minor speed bumps on the market-driven trip to the educational "big box" of the future. This is partly because professors, who are willing to express openly their dissatisfaction, can easily be marginalized as chronic complainers and malingerers, and dismissed (figuratively if not literally) as malcontents with neither the skill nor the will to be "team-players." It is also partly because the primary purpose of performance-based funding is ideological. It is an attempt to circumvent (especially in the universities, but in the colleges as well) the funding of and the emphasis upon the humanities and social sciences which are generally perceived as either unnecessary to a job-related program, potentially subversive of corporate values, or both. After all, an informed, critical graduate may not be "flexible" enough for many of the neo-conservative rulers of the economy; an education system that contributes to independent thinking conflicts with the vision of the ubiquitous marketplace and of for-profit educational institutions. One

interesting anomaly that has emerged since the publication of the RMP is the rush to redefine the colleges. In order to foster free market conditions, colleges have been given a measure of freedom to reinvent themselves, largely in "partnership" with universities. Reorganization of the structure and role of the Ontario colleges is taking place in a helter-skelter fashion with each college (sometimes with new names advertising their links with the senior institutions). Out of this process are coming new challenges for college administrators. Universities which have long regarded colleges as second-class institutions at best, are now being compelled to enter into "articulation agreements" which will result in some form of shared curriculum arrangements. This produces pressure on colleges that are, for example, being compelled to provide policies on such matters as "research protocols" and "academic freedom," a concept unknown to college managers in the past. The new institutional configuration, however it might evolve, at least gives the colleges the opportunity to gain some respectability by sloughing off their "trade school" image and providing a minimal amount of liberal education to balance vocational training (something they were mandated to do at their inception but which many colleges have either undermined or wholly ignored).

Any rush to optimism that these new organizational circumstances may inspire must, however, be balanced by another possibility. Instead of having colleges embrace a robust role for the humanities and social sciences, it is equally conceivable that universities will increasingly deem a liberal education peripheral to courses of study considered essential to careers in the global economy. Urged on by "professional" schools from accountancy to dentistry and from engineering to forestry, many "second-tier" universities may be transformed into "elite community colleges" for the affluent middle classes to train their offspring for practical employment in the labour market. As well, within colleges, a select number of applied degree programs may actually increase (or at least maintain) traditional levels of "general education," while the training of the drones will be relegated to diploma and certificate programs unencumbered by the liberal arts. Rising tuition, the privileging of business and entrepreneurial studies, privatization of funding and the control over curriculum that it implies (with, perhaps a thin veneer of vocationally relevant liberal arts icing such as human resource management and technical report writing on a market-driven technocratic cake) could also be part of the process. In this situation, both universities and colleges could lose their distinct identities as well as control over the means of academic production including governance, curriculum, academic standards, intellectual property, research priorities and so on. Lean production in higher education, as in any major manufacturing sector, would then result in fewer professors and more technologically mediated training combining to produce more graduates in a shorter time under the strict supervision of management performance evaluators. At best, the academic consequences of Ontario's RMP will resemble "restructuring" deck chairs on an educational Titanic.

Primitive Accumulation and the Restructuring of Higher Education

We are now entering an era in which the lean production techniques of corporations are being extended into public service institutions under the guise of "new public management" techniques which are designed to replicate private sector practices in the provision of public goods (Sears, 1999). It is an era in which there is a convergence between sausage making and higher education in the interest of global prosperity. As Marx pointed out: "So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" (1977, 874-875). The period of primitive production has forced itself into the consciousness of many educational workers in institutions of higher education (cf. Tudiver, 1999, 117-137). As Marx might have put it, the "insipid childishness" of professional autonomy and value-free scholarship preached by educational managers can no longer hide the threat of corporate and government control over higher education (cf. Marx, 1977, p. 873). The logic of the capitalist marketplace, embedded in the policies of the managers of higher education has penetrated the core curriculum of our institutions of higher learning. This has happened and will continue to happen even though many of these managers have doctoral degrees in the humanities and social sciences, and are happily immersed in the various discourses of postmodernism. In this context, the absence of a metanarrative of the academic mode of production will limit the development of a politics of resistance, and an academic without a politics of resistance in the twenty-first century is like an academic without a research grant or a book deal in the twentieth.

Morally bankrupt educational policies are not the inevitable result of market forces; they require the added force of the active encouragement of the "drowsy stupidity" of capitalist common sense which can be reinforced by the limiting and downsizing of the liberal arts in postsecondary educational institutions. Perhaps, we may say, what you don't know won't hurt you. On the other hand, it won't educate you in the politics of resistance required to confront the corporate, neo-conservative ideology advocated in documents such as RMP.

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