

Strategy Stream #3
 COCAL VI
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Campus Democracy, Community, and Academic Citizenship

The ascendancy of managerial authority and modes of thinking influenced by the business world, the so-called corporatization of higher education, has led to a crisis of meaning for the contemporary university and a strategic crisis for the academic labor movement.¹ That crisis is most starkly seen in the conflicts over who shall govern higher education and to what ends. Will the democratic traditions of faculty autonomy, unionization, and shared campus governance be preserved or will the campus yield to managerial authority?

This essay argues that campus democracy is possible but will require the rethinking and recasting of our traditional conceptions of the campus community, faculty rights and roles, and unionism. A constructive program could begin with strong faculty organizations that go beyond conventional trade unionism to help organize the entire campus community, build coalitions and articulate a new vision of the democratic

¹ It seems that earlier conceptions of the higher education were better able to manage and contain diverse understanding and expressions of campus life. See Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1982). There is a growing body of literature on the corporatization of higher education. see Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1997); Rikard Stankiewicz, Academics and Entrepreneurs: Developing University-Industry Relations (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc, 1986) Randy Martin, Chalk Lines: the Politics of Work the Managed University (Duke University Press Durham NC 1998) Neil Tudiver, Universities for Sale (James Lorimer and Company; Toronto 1999) Soley, Lawrence Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of Academia (South End Press, Boston, 1995); Seth Shulman, Owning the Future (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999) See also Richard Ohmann "Historical Reflections of Accountability" in Academe Jan-Feb 2000; Eyal and Jennifer Washburn "The Kept University" The Atlantic Monthly, March 2000, p.39 and Severyn T. Bruyn, "Universities and Markets: Potential for Civil Decline" The Good Society, Vol. 10 No. 1 2001 p.35-43.

community. The goal of this paper is to discuss the rhetorical strategies, forms of consciousness, and identity most conducive to that project.

Corporate actors win people's support, in part, because they posit a compelling utopian vision: the vision of a magical free market and a coming techno-utopia capable of relieving all social problems by creating material abundance. Despite its profound practical shortcomings and the intellectual deconstruction of its assumptions, this modern mythology will, in the absence of a competing social vision, continue to dominate campus life.

As students, faculty and campus workers make common cause to secure workplace rights and basic economic security; we must also articulate new ideals and mobilize alternative forms of community. We could organize such a project under the rubric of "campus democracy, community and academic citizenship." As I argue below, campus democracy, community, and academic citizenship are ideals of service that revisit classical conceptions of the university, are grounded in existing economic and political conditions, rooted in democratic traditions of freedom, and already legible in the many struggles for justice on today's campuses.

Academic Labor Needs a Constructive Program

Like all movements for change we face two related but somewhat contradictory tasks. We must critique and affirm, deconstruct and reconstruct. We raise consciousness of the issues by using critical thinking, analyzing managerial authority and administrative policy and exploring the ways in which we are all complicit with the new system. Our training as scholars prepares us well for criticism and analysis.

Organizing and movement building however require a different task, one that is constructive and affirmative. Movements are created when people stress common interests and the long-term view. Movements succeed when they tap the power of high ideals and convincingly connect those ideals to interests. We are attracted to organizing

efforts that have a positive vision because we overcome fear and isolation by the act of placing ourselves within the larger contours of history.

Corporatization is reordering existing professional identities by emphasizing the campus as a free market, promoting individual careers as primarily competitive and entrepreneurial, and accentuating rewards expectations based on merit and status. This paper argues that alternative identities emerging from the academic labor movement are best understood as the academic citizen. The academic citizen belongs to a new campus community taking shape in the concerted action of faculty associations and unions, campus coalitions, and student movements. Individuals see themselves working for the public interest and their activity as an expression of ethical codes, historical traditions or social movements such as the community of scholars, the liberal arts tradition, or class-consciousness.²

The Campus Community and the Academic Citizen

The “community of scholars” is perhaps the most promising source of ideals and beliefs from which to fashion alternative visions for higher education. This tradition was born in the 12th century when teachers and students made claims for reason, objectivity, and autonomy from the world of commerce and politics. The primary values were academic freedom protected by the unique safeguards of tenure and self-government.³ The community of scholars and liberal arts tradition provided spiritual motivation for generations of scholars and continues to be one aspect of the lived experience of teachers and students.

² For an exploration of worker identity among faculty see Deborah Herman and Julie Schmid eds. *Cogs in the Classroom Factory: The Changing identity of Academic Labor*, Praeger 2003.

³ Hastings Rashdall, *The University of Europe in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936). See also Robert Nisbet, *The Degradation of the Academic Dogma: The University in America, 1945-1970* (Basic Books New York 1971) Chapter 1-4; Robert Paul Wolf, *The Ideal of the University* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) Chapter 1.

Although ancient versions of the community of scholars had sought to produce leaders, the age of democratic revolutions politicized education. In the US for example, Jefferson reasoned that the new republic could not afford to waste its human potential so he argued to make education available at public expense. The problem in simply returning to our venerable traditions is that the rise of corporate power has, to some degree, delegitimized preexisting conceptions of higher education as forms of political consciousness. The growing use of contingent faculty cast a majority of all faculty on the very margins of any community at all. An unexamined faith in meritocracy invited elitism and rationalized the abuse of adjuncts by too often presuming that the academy or world really was a true and transparent reflection of merit.⁴ To the degree that tenure and due process have been converted from universal professional rights into privileges reserved for special classes, or seen only as a reward for individual efforts, the political base of the community of scholars has narrowed. The women, minority and working-class professors that now constitute a majority of junior faculty members fought for entrance into the academy, but have struggled thereafter with the male, middle class, and racial overtones of traditional campus community.⁵

Perhaps more important, the old community of scholars ideal depended in large measure on the campus as enclave, separate from--even if in service to--the larger society. In the U.S., however, the campus has long had direct links to commerce, government and society. The rapid expansion of higher education following WWII and the social movements of the mid-century undermined the economic and social borderlines that distinguished the campus from the "real" world.⁶

⁴ Berube, *The Urban University in America* Chp. 2.

⁵ For the demographic data see Martin J. Finkelstein and Jack H. Schuster, "Assessing the Silent Revolution" *AAHE Bulletin* October 2001, p.3.

⁶ Jacques Brazen, *The American University: How it Runs, Where its is Going* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968)

The concept of campus democracy implies that the campus is a distinctive but integral part of the broader society serving the public good. If we take a step further and define the public interest as the defense of core values, then the campus should become an exemplar of freedom, democracy, equality and justice. The constitution of the campus could be considered its most important pedagogy and the efforts to shape that constitution our best classroom. A community approach would change the context for both teaching and research.

The scientific and technical products of the campus should not be the entitlement of the corporate sector but applied to the general welfare and the common good. The Living Wage movement points the way toward a gradual reclamation of the products created by educational institutions by using a simple and compelling logic: corporations that receive subsidies or contracts from the public owe allegiance to the public in return.

The heart of a democratic campus is the teacher- student relationship and that relationship should be the practical and moral center of campus activities. A renewed focus on teaching could restore coherence and continuity to the campus and balance the research-driven reward structure of business and government. The academic labor movement reasserts education as our primary mission in that it fights for the idea that teaching must be worthy of decent compensation and tenure. Student governments and movements are also predisposed to revitalize the student-teacher relation. By fighting for resources for instruction, insuring access through low tuition, and promoting diverse student populations as essential learning experiences, students and faculty can reposition learning as central to the campus community.

Teaching is also our most effective means of conserving and promoting the connection between learning and democracy. Speaking in defense of the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, renowned educator Robert M. Hutchins claimed, "The essence of a community is learning together. And a political community

arises when the citizens are learning together how to achieve the good of the community and how to govern themselves. A democratic political community arises when all the people are citizens. A democratic community has as its constitution a charter of learning.⁷

If we are to gain campus democracy and enjoy a “charter of learning,” the citizens of all campus constituencies, including students, workers and administrators must bear the rights and responsibilities of the community. And the first responsibility is to ensure that the campus set an example of freedom, fairness and engagement for all of those who work and study.

The academic citizen is taking shape in an array of identities emerging from the campus labor movement and other attempts to democratize and revision the campus community. Crisis and action are transforming pre-existing professional identities. Most important for us is the diverse streams in consciousness that tends toward the community minded identity of the academic citizen. This identity is a component to and a product of collective action, political engagement, professional activism, collaborative work, and class-consciousness—that is the ideas and action necessary to the struggle for campus democracy.⁸

Property and Democracy

Campus democracy can only become a competing vision to corporatization if we can link our interests to ideals and make the political debate at the broadest possible levels of history and myth. The struggle for the soul of higher education must be placed within the context of history so it may be seen as the latest chapter in an on-going tension between progress toward a democratic society or surrender to illegitimate authority.

⁷ Dialogues in Americanism (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co. 1964)

It may well be argued that conservative corporate culture operates within the tradition of earlier economic regimes that relied on master-servant relations and paternalism. Managerial authority rewards some and punishes others but treats people as servants that perform best when insecure, poor, and powerless. Campus democracy and academic citizenship on the other hand are ultimately rooted in democratic political traditions that, while they take different forms, insist on the connection between economic and political democracy. I do not know Canadian or Mexican history well enough to offer the argument in detail so I will limit myself to the situation in the U.S. In any event, I think it is the method not the particulars that matter.

The economic underpinnings of political democracy in the U.S were private, but widely dispersed, property holdings among citizens. The classic model of the citizen was the yeoman farmer whose independent states of mind were thought to qualify them as worthy citizens.⁹ They enjoyed a sufficient measure of economic security, regulated their own work and answered to no earthly lord. In fact, property was understood as a guardian of political rights not a threat to them. In our time, the exemption of private property from the Bill of Rights has invited corporate tyranny, but in the 18th and 19th century the economic order was believed to act as the private foundation of public freedom.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, corporations formed and were thought by many at the time to be incompatible with democratic political traditions. Corporations bureaucratized and centralized property leaving most U.S. citizens without productive property. If we want to ground campus democracy and the academic citizen in contemporary economic life, and not be seen as resisting progress, we must make the

⁸ Cary Nelson, "Between Crisis and Opportunity" in Cary Nelson ed., Will Teach for Food: Academic Labor in Crisis (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Damrosch, We Scholars, Chp.3.

⁹ The citizen-soldier is the other classic form, see Richard Moser, The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam War (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ, 1996).

corporate coming-to-power open to multiple interpretations.¹⁰ The new corporate order is not the end of history. It created the possibility for the appearance of new forms of community or social property because it:

- Dissolved property rights as control over things reconstituting them as highly volatile human relationships no one could easily predict or control. Property rights became tangible only as a relationship between people because the ultimate value of property depended upon the interplay of social, political, and cultural forces.¹¹
- Attempted to control such volatility by exercising sovereignty and political power (i.e. corporatization) thereby fusing the private and public sphere together
- Unwittingly tied the fate of political democracy to economic democracy. One cannot likely exist without the other.

The dissolution of the 19th century notion that a distinct public and private sphere exists has been one of the most important, if under-appreciated, political developments of our time. On campus, there is simply no mistaking the growing economic role of our work. Higher education continues to underwrite the scientific, technical, and theoretical knowledge necessary for economic activity and to produce the labor power to get the job done.

What historical developments of the past century might offer a way to reconcile these contradictions and restore the connections between economic and political democracy?

¹⁰This interpretation of corporate capitalism is derived from the work of Adolf A. Berle and Gardiner C. Means, The Modern Corporation and Private Property (New York: Harcourt, Brace World, 1932); William A. Williams, Contours of American History (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961); Porter, Job Property Rights; Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Martin Sklar, The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law and Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and The United States as a Developing Country: Studies in U.S. History in the Progressive Era and the 1920's (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and James Livingston, Pragmatism, and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850-1940 (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹¹Sklar, The United States as a Developing Country p.59.; Livingston, Pragmatism p.194.

Corporate capitalism left most people with no productive property and solely reliant on their mental and physical capacities to earn a living. It is then no surprise that the *job*, its character, quality, numbers and regulation became the major locus of workplace conflict in the 20th century and continue on as the struggle over outsourcing and contingency and globalization. What emerges from the last century of labor and economic history is the practice and precedents for the recognition of property rights in jobs.¹²

For the academic labor movement, a broader appreciation for job property rights recontextualizes the special rights of the professoriate, and allows us to reinterpret the meaning of contemporary campus organizing.

After a long period of training and probation, a faculty member is protected by the kind of due process rights accorded the owner of property. This is a form of *social property* that is not for sale, is possessed only within a certain institutional setting and exists for the common good--but nonetheless is a property right. We know this job property right as tenure.

The due-process protections of tenure, then, allows the freedom and prerogatives of the public and civil sphere to be practiced in that part of life formally understood as private, that is work. We call this Academic Freedom.

Only under the conditions of freedom at work can the independent cast of mind necessary for citizenship develops it full capacity as the foundation of participatory and representative democracy. We claim this prerogative as the right to faculty governance in the form of our unions and senates.

Social Movement Unionism is the Vehicle

¹² Richard Moser, "Autoworkers at Lordstown: Workplace Democracy and American Citizenship," in Van Gosse and Richard Moser eds. The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003) pp. 303-308

While the rights typical of tenured faculty represent the real world benchmarks for a revitalized movement, the political transitions to a more community based model are already visible in *social movement unionism*. An approach that borrows from the early labor movement and the social movements, this innovative strategy stresses the common good, community organizing and promotes cross-sector coalition building. By embracing polycentric forms of consciousness, social movement unionism allows a more varied and incremental transition in consciousness from older professional forms of identity. This new campus labor movement is already taking shape in graduate student unionization, contingent faculty activism, the student-labor solidarity networks, living wage initiatives, gender equity campaigns, coalitions, and other union and association efforts that move beyond the boundaries of conventional workplace politics of wages and benefits. There are growing examples of multi-campus, cross-sector, and campus-wide organizing being placed on the agenda and practiced. Increasingly, successful collective bargaining campaigns for campus unions are based on solidarity efforts and coalition work between faculty, staff, students and community members. When these diverse constituencies come together over contract demands, or the right to organize, or resistance to budget cuts, or for fair labor codes, a new campus community is born and it is the only one with the potential power to win.