

THE ICEBERG STRATEGY

UNIVERSITIES AND THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

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by Martin Nicolaus

In the Spring of 1966, VIET-REPORT published a series of three articles on the Michigan State University project in Vietnam,¹ describing what had been done and attempting to examine why it happened. What I will do here is criticize some of the conclusions that were made in those articles and also try to develop further those parts of the conclusions that I think are still relevant. One of the basic themes in those articles, and something a lot of people have been saying all along, is that the involvement of the university with the military complex and the accompanying secret projects are bad for education. Although I agree that it's bad for education I think there's a misconception involved.

GOETHE, KANT, AND THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

It's a misconception to say that the university is an educational institution. An institution is something that has walls of one kind or another; it may have physical walls but it can also have only social walls. It's a place inside of which you are supposed to be safe. A prison is also an institution that protects you, but it does so against your will. A university is (or was) supposed to be an institution that protected you against the outside world. Universities in medieval times were sacred grounds. If a student came there he couldn't be touched or arrested. This is what is meant when we call the family an institution; the family is a place where nobody is supposed to be able to get at you; it's a place where you're safe. This obviously is not the case with universities today, and we'll come back to this.

Education, from the Latin, means *exducare* (to draw out); originally it involved two ways of drawing out. First, it meant to draw out of the human being all the potentialities that were there; to draw out of the human brain all the possibilities that were inside it and to develop them. The ideal of the educated man, in this sense, was a person like Erasmus or Goethe. Goethe was that great fellow who was a zoologist, botanist, philosopher, poet, playwright, novelist, political theorist, and all kinds of other things. He was not only good at each of these different fields but he was at the head of the science in all of them. He was one of those who fit the definition of what an educated man is: 'An educated man is one who can do also what other people can do only.' The goal of education was to produce an all-rounded kind of individual. The other side of the definition was that education drew the individual out of the people. It took the brightest people (and this is also the church concept of it) in the lower classes and drew them out of the 'vulgar mass' into an obvious elite position. For example, when Goethe came out in favor of the French Revolution, he wrote a beautiful, strong philosophical support of the principles of the Revolution. However, he could be read by only about 5% of the population of Germany at the time (and they were all elitists like him) and so it didn't matter at all. Or take Kant, the great philosopher of Konigsberg who took his walks at five o'clock every afternoon very regularly. Everyone set his clock by him, but he wouldn't have dreamt of talking to a lowly watchmaker. He wrote a fantastic essay on the 18th Century Enlightenment saying 'dare to know!' But nobody could read and so it didn't make any difference. These were the two meanings of 'education' -- on the one hand to develop you as an all-sided individual; on the other hand to develop you into an elite individual who couldn't communicate (and wasn't supposed to communicate) with people below him.

STRAIGHT ACADEMICS AND THE KNOWLEDGE INDUSTRY

Obviously what we have today in our so-called educational institutions doesn't conform to this definition in any way. There is a book put out by DAEDALUS magazine (which is sort of a READERS DIGEST of the academic com-

¹ Martin Nicolaus, 'The Professor, the Policeman and the Peasant,' VIET-REPORT, Vol. 2, #1, 2, 3 (February, March-April, June-July 1966).

munity) called The Contemporary University USA.² The writers include such notables as Clark Kerr, David Riesman, Kenneth Keniston and Martin Myerson (straight academics all) who reveal their thoughts about what's happening in higher education today. They don't make any bones about it; they call it the 'knowledge industry.' Here are a few things from the editor, Robert Morison: 'The faculty expect salaries roughly comparable to those of middle management in large industry.'³ (He then explains why this is no coincidence.) 'Not surprisingly, it turns out that the classical departmental structure of universities is not well adapted to devising new weapons systems, putting a man on the moon, cleaning up polluted rivers (!), planning for healthful and convenient cities (?), or learning everything one needs to know in order to deal sensibly with the emerging nations of Africa.'⁴ Our favorite ex-president, Clark Kerr, also puts it very straightforwardly. He says that there are three great changes taking place in the university: there's growth, there's shifting academic emphasis, but most importantly there's involvement in the life of society. 'The university, in particular, has become in America, and in other nations as well, a prime instrument of national purpose. This is new. This is the essence of the transformation now engulfing our universities.'⁵ He goes on to show how, through federal funding -- of research, of departments, of professors and of students -- the university's control over its own destiny has been substantially reduced. This is obvious, because the people who put up the money for the universities control what happens to the money in the universities. Now, therefore, university presidents (even people of the stature of Clark Kerr) are not nearly so powerful about determining what happens within their institutions (or ex-institutions) as they used to be. Kerr notes that 20% - 80% (the larger the university, the higher the percentage) of a university's expenditures may be handled outside the normal channels, and universities are thus gradually losing control over the activities carried on within their walls. This is one essential feature of the knowledge industry. Study specific fields from the foundation's viewpoint and you'll find why they don't subsidize the social sciences as much as they do the physical sciences. The phrase that is used is 'the investor in the social sciences has a more difficult time than do those of us who deal with the natural sciences.' The term is clear; it's borrowed from industry -- 'investor'. Robert Morison, the editor, notes that 'many of the characteristics of American universities owe their existence to the peculiar tendency of wealthy Americans to leave their capital in trust for the public welfare.'⁶ We could talk about almost any large university in this country today just from this one book. Peter Rossi, in his article on researchers and scholars notes:

The major foundations and government agencies from whom funds on this scale [on the scale necessary to conduct sociological studies] are usually obtained are reluctant to part with this much money without being quite convinced of the practical importance of the survey in question. Hence, large scale survey research is generally 'applied' social research; that is to say, the grantor is convinced that the results will have some immediate bearing on policy formation. The high cost of social research has meant a close tie with the machinery of policy making.⁷

He goes on to tell an example of a visit that was made to NORC (National Opinion Research Council) at the University of Chicago. 'Recently,' he says, 'NORC was visited by Mr. Louis Moss, who is director of the Government Social Survey in Great Britain.' He sat down with Mr. Moss and compared the types of surveys they had done. In Great Britain it's a government agency, straightforward and here it's NORC, a university group.

We could find parallel studies on about two-thirds of ours and about one-half of his projects. This means that together with other survey research organizations connected with universities or functioning as commercial enterprises, NORC is serving the same function for the American policy-maker as the Government Social Survey functions in England.⁸

2 Robert Morison, ed. The Contemporary University USA (the Daedalus Library.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966.

3 ibid., p. x.

4 ibid.

5 Clark Kerr, 'The Frantic Race to Remain Contemporary,' in Morison, op. cit., p. 20.

6 Robert Morison, 'Foundations and Universities,' in Morison, op. cit., p. 123.

7 Peter Rossi, 'Researchers, Scholars, and Policy Makers,' in Morison, op. cit., p. 123

8 ibid.

What all these examples show is that we no longer have education; we have a knowledge industry. This means that the goal is not to draw the student out in any sense -- either in the sense of drawing out his individual potentialities or in the sense of drawing him out of the life of working society. Instead, we now have a system of 'inducation' or 'induction' into society. What the knowledge industry is trying to do (and what it is doing) is to train people for industry. This is obvious at the large universities; at the smaller universities it's often not so clear. The smaller schools don't get so much money and have more of an elitist orientation. There will always be some of these small elitist universities because there will always be a need for a few people who know a little about everything. But the needs of industry in general are not for people who 'know a little about everything' (people like Goethe); industry needs people who have specialized skills.

THE EDUCATIONAL ICEBERG AND THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

This is where the question of the iceberg arises. In our discussions about the military and the universities, what are we aiming at and what are we trying to do? It seems to me that it's very clear that the military -- the baby burners and the people who study how to burn babies -- are only the top of the educational iceberg. This whole knowledge industry is oriented toward precisely the same task that the military is oriented toward. Former President Eisenhower noted quite rightly that there is no essential distinction to be made between the military and the industrial complex in this society. There is no real difference between the people who actually manufacture baby-burning machines and the people who design these machines. This is all done in the universities; the research for these things comes from the ordinary science departments. It is often argued that most of the research on these things is done in the Dow chemical research laboratories, not at the university campus. But who trains the people for the Dow laboratories? Who gives them the skills and the ethics that are necessary in order to produce people who are willing to make napalm? Who produces people who will make ordinances, learn how to do ballistics, or learn to do social studies of what happens to the social network when people are bombed out? Obviously, this is all done by the universities. It seems to me that the distinction between these two things is really very hard to make. It is right for us to protest when a member of the university community is involved in burning babies but we must also see what other members of the university community are doing. For, in fact the entire university is oriented at the policy level toward the burning of babies -- either the rapid burning of babies with napalm or the slow frizzling of babies' minds in the so-called educational system. If we don't see that the whole thing is oriented at the policy level toward specialization and destruction of individuals and induction of individuals into the industrial system, then it seems to me that our strategy is not going to get off the ground.

Suppose we see ourselves in a gunboat facing the top of this iceberg -- all the military things that we've forced to come to the surface -- and we blast it. We get all of these military contracting organizations out of the university. I think this is going to be relatively easy, because all that will happen is that when these organizations disaffiliate, professors will take jobs with them on their own, as 'outside consultants.' This has happened at Pennsylvania; it is probably going to happen at Princeton; it's the kind of thing that can happen elsewhere. There's nothing that prevents it. If we are going to attack military involvement in the university, as it seems to me we have to, then we have to attack the principle of faculty members contracting out to industry. In other words, a whole other part of the iceberg is going to surface. We must not think that the first thing isn't worthwhile doing (for it is); but we must see that the first thing implies other things. If we are going to attack the ties between the university and the military apparatus, then we will inevitably have to attack the ties between the university and the corporate industrial structure as a whole. This I think is quite clear.

DEPARTMENTS, GRADES, AND BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

Then, it seems to me, we have to look ahead, not necessarily to what we are going to be able to do (because I don't know how much power we have) but to what is logically involved in what we're doing. If we are going to do something about ending the military influence in the universities we must first get rid of defense contracting. If we then can get rid of industrial contracting, we will have to get rid of boards of governors, because these are largely composed of businessmen who are tied in with both the military and the industrial complex. (This is very nicely illustrated in a recent paper by Kathy McAfee.⁹)

9 See the paper by Kathy McAfee on IDA (Institute for Defense Analysis) in the January 1968 issue of VIET-REPORT.

When all this is done, we must do something about the departmental structure. The way that 'departments' and 'area projects' are separated really has nothing to do with the subject matters that are involved. There may be departments of history, politics, sociology and anthropology, but that doesn't mean that there are actually different worlds out there. You can look at a process but you can't split it up and say one part is the anthropological side of it and one part is the sociological side. That's not real; in reality these things are connected together. The reason that we have departments in the first place, other than for administrative convenience, is because industry needs 'economists' or 'political scientists.' Industry needs people with job classifications that are standardized, rationalized, and computerized. In this way, you can get one economist in your industry, fire him, and be fairly certain that the economist you hire in his place will be just like him, though hopefully a little better (more informed about what's happening or more yielding to your demands). We have to recognize that the departmental structure is involved in this.

Still another important concomitant of the university as a knowledge producing industry is the grading system. Why are there grades -- does anybody really care whether somebody is 'smarter' than somebody else? None of the professors I've talked to will admit that in their heart of hearts they really care about any of this business -- grades, exams, or papers. It's not because they care about the students; it's just because they don't care about the crap-work. There is, however, a necessity for a grading system. For if you look at the statistics, you will see that the people with the higher grades get the better jobs. Industry needs a grading system in the knowledge industry in order to know who to hire to the top positions and who to hire to the less important positions; to know who to pay and where to feed people into industry.

TAYLORISM AND IMPERIALISM

If we are going to do something about the university's involvement with the military-industrial complex we have to go further than what has been outlined. Take the concept of courses. One person, a teacher, takes a batch of students (a steadily increasing batch of students with classes of 400, 500 or 2,000) and runs them through a pre-determined, standardized routine with textbooks. These are the methods of industry; you recognize them as the methods of Taylorism, of scientific work management; you recognize in the process the principle of the highest output at the least cost, least wages, and least educational investment. The course structure is also something that is determined by the needs of industry and something must be done about it if the university and industrial world are to be separated. Look, also, at the actual content of what's taught; take anthropology. There's a very fine anthropologist, Kathleen Gough Aberle who studied the history of anthropology during the last 200 years and says flatly: 'Anthropology is a child of western imperialism.'¹⁰ There have been anthropological speculations for hundreds of years but anthropology as a field of academic inquiry didn't originate until the 1870's when European imperialism got underway. Anthropology in this country didn't originate until the federal government, among other organizations, started sponsoring research. This means that not only the actual research locations that are chosen but the attitudes, concepts, and ways of thinking about the world that are involved in anthropological thinking are essentially the products of imperialism. The way that an anthropologist or a student of anthropology looks at a so-called native is conditioned by at least a hundred years of involvement with his people as a conquering race. If something is going to be done about separating the university from the military-industrial complex, then the very concept of anthropology has to be exploded and rewritten. New ones must be created in its place. The same is obviously true of sociology and the other social sciences. An excellent book on this subject is Loren Baritz' The Servants of Power,¹¹ which studies the involvement of sociologists with government and with industry. Baritz shows in detail that sociology (in this country at least) didn't come out of the dark ages of philosophical speculation and become a 'social science' until industry started paying for sociology. Industry paid sociologists to do studies of why workers strike and how they can be stopped from striking, and how workers can be induced to produce more. Sociology also grew during the second world war when it was found that the behavioralist method (the survey research business) could help the Army train its soldiers and keep them happy while they were in combat. There's a big four-volume study on the American soldier¹² which contains information of no use to anyone except the Army.

10 Kathleen Gough Aberle, 'Anthropology and Imperialism.' A paper delivered at the Southwestern branch of the American Anthropological Association meetings, March 1967. Available from the Radical Education Project.

11 Loren Baritz, The Servants of Power. Wesleyan University Press.

12 S. A. Stouffer, et al. The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949.

The methods of sociology and all the survey research work have in them implicit assumptions about what people are, what society is, and how people hold opinions. These concepts are based on three general attitudes. First, the sociologist is a superior person to the person who is being studied. Second, the person who is being studied is a passive person to whose wishes no attention has to be paid (except in a manipulative way). Third, the only thing that's worth knowing about people, in general, is what the people that sponsor research want to know. Take the concepts of sociology that we have; the concepts of Talcott Parsons. This philosophy should not be viewed as an empirical description of reality but as a grand analogy to the real world. There is implied in this a view of a harmonistic universe in which everyone gets along nicely -- a universe in which people who protest are not put down for being 'communists' or 'radicals' but are put down for being 'dysfunctional.' This is true of practically all of sociology; most sociologists have this kind of thinking at the bottom of their thoughts and there are few sociological concepts that do not, in some way, reflect the position of sociologists as servants of power.

To go beyond that we should probably go into our own attitudes. I think that we can say that the educational system has been molded by the military industrial complex and by military research in the areas of university structure, grading, course structure, and course content. The same forces have probably shaped all of our minds in ways that make it extremely difficult for us to see the problems that exist for people who are being oppressed in the way that they see them. It is extremely difficult for us to get down in the valley and look up at the mountain and see it the way that the people below see it. It's possible for us within the university to write book critiques -- papers against Lipset and Hoffer, for example;¹³ this is excellent and really must be done. But it's still not entirely possible for very many of us to look at the world through the eyes of people who aren't even in the university. This is one of the things that the university has done to us, for in 'inducating' us into the knowledge industry it has 'exducted' us out of the people.

EDUCATION AND REDNESS

It seems to me that we need to have a long-range strategy. The strategy we have now, of getting people to see the little peak of military research at the top of the iceberg and blasting that doesn't seem to me to be enough. I don't mean to put down the current campus activities because these things have to be done; you get other people to see what's below the top of the iceberg by making them see how horrible the top of it is. But as a long-range strategy, blasting what's on top isn't enough. If we challenge the military invasion of the university but we are not willing to challenge corporate invasion of the university we may get caught in a bind where we cannot explain ourselves to other people. People will say to us, 'you object to professors contracting out for napalm, but what about professors contracting out for social surveys among napalm victims?' We have to face these questions, we have to think about them and answer them.

It seems possible to me that we could attack the iceberg at different levels; instead of just lopping off the top of the iceberg (or trying to melt it down with love) we could demand changes right at the base of the structure. We could challenge the departmental structure or the grade system or perhaps we could go deeper and challenge course content. I think also we have to challenge the part of ourselves that has become 'exducted' or 'educated away' from what's really happening. Because we have been trained in the university to fill jobs in industry; 'education' in the university today is training for management positions. We are intended to get jobs with corporations that oppress people; with companies that are the cause of the fact that people are down and out. Somewhere along the line we have to make a decision in our own lives about what we're going to do, and I wonder if it's not possible for us to coin a new concept of the university. Take the part of the old concept of education that was clearly good, the concept of education as developing an individual's potential. But do this not by isolating ourselves from the people that are being oppressed but do it in their terms of reference. In other words, combine expertise (not expertise in the sense of knowing how to put two molecules together to make napalm, but in the sense of being an educated man) with 'redness'. Because it seems to me that what is going on in China in the cultural revolution business, which all started with university students challenging course content and administrators, is very relevant to what's happening here. Because what the Chinese are saying is that even in their society, the process of education has caught us up and isolated us from each other.

¹³ See the book-critique series published by Madison SDS and the Radical Education Project; included are critiques of Lipset's Political Man and Hoffer's The True Believer.

I wonder if there's some way in this society we can put together the concepts of education and the concept of being red, that is to say, of being 'with the people.' This is just one way of thinking down below the top of the iceberg.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN THE KNOWLEDGE INDUSTRY

What is happening in our educational institutions, what The Contemporary University USA describes, is very similar to what happened a hundred to two hundred years ago in England. Peasant boys were thrown off the farms and put to work in the cities. On the farm, they had been universal men in their own way. They had a self-sufficient agricultural economy; they knew how to make clothes, how to slaughter cows, and how to raise cows. Then they were taken off the land and drawn into factories where they lost all these skills that might have led to the development of a fully rounded human being (it doesn't have to be brainwork). They were put on machines where all they had to do was to make certain motions. This was what the industrial revolution did; it took people who had some kind of all-sidedness (even if only a very primitive sort) and put them into the production industry. It made them narrow; they were not even cogs in the machine but were made into a sort of raw material of the machine.

The same thing is happening now in the so-called education business; it is being turned into the knowledge industry. People who have aspirations to know lots of things are taken and compressed into knowing just a few things. We are confronted with an industrial revolution in education.

What we are trying to do now when we try to throw Dow Chemical off campus (for example) is approximately on the same level as the French peasants who took off their wooden clogs and threw them in the machines -- sabotage (wooden clogs -- 'sabots'). This simple beginning is a really good beginning, but it is not going to be enough. We are faced with a new system of producing knowledge and our efforts are going to have to measure up to that in the long run. We must have a full-fledged 'iceberg strategy'.

