

Trinity's retreat from Anglican privilege in the years following Strachan's death in 1867. By the early 20th century, Trinity came to terms with its secular adversary, as it entered the University of Toronto federation and moved its premises from Queen Street West to its present location on the U of T's St. George campus. Enrolment and funding crises, like politics, have the capacity to make strange bedfellows.

Still, one wishes that Westfall had gone beyond his immediate focus to draw some parallels (or contradictions) between higher education and issues surrounding the common schools and grammar schools of mid-19th century Ontario. What relationship might exist, for example, between the secularization of the University of Toronto and the establishment of a provincial public school system? Or between Strachan's attempt to re-establish a church role in high education with Roman Catholic efforts to found a separate school system? Decisions in these spheres, made in the crucial decades of the 1840s and 1850s, have endured for 150 years.

Despite that caveat, the editors of the McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion must be commended for publishing *The Founding Moment* as a case study of the intersecting worlds of religion, education, and politics in mid-19th-century Ontario, and reminding us of a world we have lost (or misplaced?).

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The Last Good Job in America: Work and Education in the New Global Technoculture,
by Stanley Aronowitz, 2001. Lanham, MD:
Rowman & Littlefield, hardcover, 273 pages.

The recognition that contemporary neo-liberal technoculture is beset with a plethora of severe social, economic, and moral problems is, in itself, no profound revelation. In *The Last Good Job in America*, however, Stanley Aronowitz addresses these issues with extraordinary urgency, clarity, and intellectual depth. Not only does he articulate the

egregious state of modern industrialized societies where stress has become the “new black lung,” but provides educators with concrete practical alternatives to help transform these deplorable conditions. For those holding a somewhat different vision of social utopia from that propelling neo-liberal technoculture, then, this veritable *tour-de-force* offers significant hope, moral inspiration, and political encouragement.

Aronowitz begins the text by describing what he believes is the best remaining job in America – his own – and suggests he is extremely fortunate to have preceded the reprehensible conditions American faculty currently confront. His comments will undoubtedly resonate with the personal experiences of many contemporary academics whose role has been diminished to that of “institutionalized clerical proletariat labor.” Rather than focusing on creating an informed, critical, and politically active citizenry, Aronowitz observes that universities increasingly stress technical training to produce a docile and compliant labor force. The growth of technology on university campuses also enables centralized administrative control over course content and delivery and, hence, renders the role of university faculty largely superfluous. Those faculty who resist the reduction of academic life to clerical labor and information delivery risk being marginalized as political trouble-makers. In Aronowitz’s less than eloquent but deadly accurate metaphoric terms, “the administrators are the cat and the faculty the cat box” (p. 42).

Aronowitz believes that the role of academics as public intellectuals is being effectively undermined by the same policies that impact deleteriously on many other American workers. These unrelenting concerted attacks on labor are part of an well-orchestrated neo-liberal agenda that views democratic social dissent as counter productive to the technical rationality on which market economy efficiency depends. Aronowitz suggests that demonstrations like those at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle reveal a significant undercurrent of resistance to this trend, but they also unveil the violent, anti-democratic measures governments and corporations are now prepared to employ to protect their narrow interests.

The political ideological balance between socialism and capitalism was seriously disrupted by the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Although Aronowitz refuses to endorse the countless foibles of Soviet socialism, he correctly understands that its presence forced capitalism to retain some semblance of a conscience and, in its absence, “nation states are increasingly held hostage to capital” (p. 167). With the demise of

socialism, capitalism is generally considered historically triumphant and, therefore, the best of all possible economic and social realities. He also observes that the synthesis of capitalist and democratic discourses has further convinced an ideologically manipulated populace that the former is a necessary condition for achieving the latter.

Aronowitz contends that the considerable growth of the American anarchist movement, perhaps most notable during the Seattle protest, is the inevitable result of failure by those on the political left to offer meaningful policy alternatives to corporate friendly neo-liberal social practices. He observes that the Democratic political party under the Clinton administration, for example, effectively punished working class America by enacting legislation that virtually dismantled the nation's social safety net. With decent quality jobs in perpetual decline, no effective social support system to rely on, and no collective political voice, American workers in technoculture find themselves in an increasingly precarious and vulnerable position.

Aronowitz argues that rekindling the idea of a collective working class consciousness is fundamental to constructing a more democratic and equitable social milieu. He suggests the ideas of critical theorists such as Paulo Freire, Herbert Marcuse, and Louis Althusser offer educators tangible approaches to reverse the surging blood dimmed neo-liberal tide. Their practical applications of theoretical knowledge encourage democratic activism and resistance, and depict education not as technical rationality, but as direct political intervention to promote social justice and economic equality.

The major obstacle to marshaling meaningful political resistance to neo-liberalism involves widespread false consciousness, or what Freire describes as the tendency of the oppressed to internalize the values of their oppressors. Many working class individuals have been convinced, for example, that poverty, economic hardship, and unemployment result from personal failure or skill deficit, rather than from systemic injustice. Aronowitz recognizes that transforming student consciousness within a social reality circumscribed by such common sense global market assumptions is no easy assignment. Nevertheless, he contends that contemporary education must challenge this ideological domination by providing students with the critical consciousness to evaluate global economic policies in light of democratic moral imperatives.

The present political failure of the American labor movement, according to Aronowitz, follows from the widespread corruption of union leadership and the untimely rejection of direct action as a means to

achieve class equality. Unnerved by the tremendous political clout of corporations in the burgeoning global economy, union posturing has become almost entirely defensive. Instead of aggressively challenging neo-liberal injustice through general strikes and other forms of direct action, then, labor leaders merely attempt to salvage meager remnants of past gains and insulate a few workers from the current corporate assault. Aronowitz considers this defensive posturing on the part of labor the unfortunate outcome of a self-interested and aloof leadership that lacks any vision of democratic social justice for a collective working class. The solution, on his view, requires reconstructing from the ground up a broadly democratic labor movement that accepts radical social transformation as its ultimate objective.

In the final chapter, Aronowitz speaks directly to those of us in the professoriat who enjoy a significant measure of intellectual influence that carries undeniable social, political, and moral responsibility. He offers the academic career of C. Wright Mills, a sociologist and political radical who died in 1963 at age 47, as the prototype public intellectual and, hence, the model for much needed direct political action by faculty. *The Last Good Job in America* is not merely another contribution to the cacophony of voices calling for meaningful political alternatives to the barbaric pillages of unfettered global capitalism. By resurrecting the frequently ignored concept of class, Aronowitz highlights the fundamental dialectical antagonisms directing current global economic policies and largely obscured by an all-encompassing neo-liberal ideological apparatus. He also rightfully reminds academics of their intellectual and moral responsibility to reclaim institutions of higher education as sites of democratic political struggle. Indeed, *The Last Good Job in America* affords labor and academics with a strategic blueprint to create a more equitable and just society. It remains our charge to complete the project.

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