

Recent letters to the WSWS

1 February 2002

To the Editors:

Of course the corporate model should be running the public schools in Pennsylvania and everywhere else. They ought to be allowed to do for public education what they've done for mass transportation in this country, i.e., drive what's left of what works well into the ground.

I just spent five years teaching in New York City, where bank presidents and corporate moguls are consulted on how to run a school district, which is pretty interesting given the labyrinthine levels of licensing people who have actually studied education theory are expected to go through in New York. But, never mind, the high church of the dollar always knows what's best. One might question the wisdom of consulting a plumber when what's actually plaguing the victim is a toothache, but hey, I'm only a teacher. What do I know?

Nor is Pennsylvania all that different from places like Seattle, Washington, where I've just returned and found that the corporate model introduced to Seattle public schools by a retired army general named John Stanford is still in full swing. Stanford was a former public relations officer to Colin Powell in the Persian Gulf, whose only other experience in education was in the Atlanta district. His one enduring contribution to public education in that city was (Surprise!) School uniforms. Out here, the general was landing on school lawns in helicopters and conducting game-show-like school pep rallies in order to generate "enthusiasm" for public education. At one such medicine show performed at our school for the benefit of teachers and media, I asked a reporter why they weren't examining Stanford's credentials the way they want to examine those of teachers. This so-called journalist turned to me and said, "Give him a chance. He's a nice guy."

Now, leaving aside the belief that most people in corporate hoodoo culture have about where nice guys finish, it might be mentioned that when you take the state licensing exams to teach anywhere in this country, simply pleading personal charm is not considered an adequate answer to the questions asked by state examiners.

Every public school office out this way actually has a

color photograph of the late General Stanford, who died a couple of years ago from some form of cancer perhaps contracted through the depleted uranium shells that he and his boy Powell dumped on the people of Iraq 10 years ago. At the Middle College High School where I teach out in the south end of the city, our staff sensibly keeps our copy of the photo tucked between books on the main office desk. We try to keep that item and a box of votive candles accessible should board members come to visit.

Besides, the melody may be gone, but the song lingers on. Stanford has been succeeded by another corporate magus named Joseph Ochefsky, who, just weeks ago, suggested to one of the Indian schools in the area that their community come out and wine and dine him so that the Native American community could get to know the superintendent, but of course, neglected to offer up any funds from the central offices himself to pay for this purported honor. Currently, one of his pet projects is something called a "mall academy," which takes high school students and locates them in the Northgate Shopping Center, where they may have opportunities to learn about the service industry, we may assume. The teachers in this program are working hard to make sense of this mess, but the obstacles are great.

All we know for sure about this particular group of students—who formerly attended a Middle College High School on a Seattle Community College Campus, and who are expected to accept their current learning environment as being one of the same quality—is that they have been subject to harassment from security guards and merchants over the course of their so-called school day. We all know how much white suburban business people like to have young people of color visit their shopping shrines these days. This is not to even mention the crap Islamic students at this "school" have encountered while attempting to find areas in the mall to pray.

So Pennsylvania is not all that different. Why not hammer public education into the ground, after all, parts of it are still breathing. It's just too bad the Marx Brothers aren't around to oversee the process, which could use

some serious slapstick relief from professionals as opposed to these sad sack market cultists who think we'd all be better off with our slavery to the commodity deepened. Call it "Pedagogy of the Distressed," with apologies to Freire, but don't call it public education.

MHP

New York City

24 January 2002

Dear WWS,

A simple note to say that I first read your web site this week, past. I must admit that I was genuinely impressed by the articles and want you to know that I agree wholeheartedly with your perspective. As a worker and as a student of history I find that your material confirms what I already know about the ruling class in America and the world. Rest assured in the days and weeks to come I will be reading WWS for a balanced approach to the issues of the day.

With kindest personal regards,

RWH

24 January 2002

Dear Editor;

Your articles are very useful to me in teaching Political Science. I like to point out to my students that the word "dictator" in contemporary usage has two meanings. In one sense, it has the same meaning of "usurper" or someone who takes power illegitimately. You have given ample evidence that Bush has done that. The other sense of the word is as a synonym for "tyrant" or a person who abuses power and violates human rights. Bush and his lackeys are doing that just now.

Please continue to let people know that Bush is a dictator in both senses of the word and please spell it out clearly.

Thank you again for a great job.

EJ

26 January 2002

Dear Editor,

It is very good to present a mosaic of causal factors, indictments and accusation against some of our leaders and foreign collaborators who are working insidiously to destroy the socioeconomic fabric of Nigeria. But, what is conspicuously left out are practical solutions to the myriad problems. The most important question is: what do we do in order to restore sanity in the midst of these turbulent, conflicting and complex problems. What is the way out? Or is your organisation mainly interested in the correction of "editorial distortion"? Indictment of people, rulers and nations for wrongdoing?

Many thanks for your good effort ...

Best regards,

OO

Gambia

28 January

At the risk of being thrown to the wolves, I am going to start publicizing wsws.org. Ha. Well, I am strictly nobody, but a lot of us nobodies together maybe can start making a difference and get a class war up and going. Also I enjoyed the piece on the suicide of the witness? ["The strange and convenient death of J. Clifford Baxter—Enron executive found shot to death"] Somewhere there must be someone who will have the knowledge necessary to bring the Bush era to an end without it being the end of America.

HW

28 January 2002

I just want to make a comment, I personally, as well as a lot of people in the younger generation, are scared by the actions that are taking place. The Bush administration is going to ruin America by forcing their hate on us. I heard on the news last night that the first lady is planning on visiting school to teach moral values to the children in America because they seem not to care for war (particularly the war that is going on now). I find this very disturbing; this shows the outright disregard of this administration for the views of the younger generation. Who is she to teach our kids morals? I was always taught that no matter what, to kill is wrong, but that is what is happening. What makes this action any different than the brainwashed Taliban and their assumed destruction of the World Trade Center? I only hope that this country survives this administration.

DT

28 January 2002



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