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# THE FACULTY ORGANIZE, BUT MANAGEMENT ENJOYS SOLIDARITY

MARC BOUSQUET

*The salary of an annual appointee at the start should be low, – about the amount needed by a young unmarried man for comfortable support in the university's city or village. . . . He should receive, as assistant professor, a salary which will enable him to support a wife and two or three children comfortably. . . . [A]pproaching forty years of age [and] ready for a full professorship [the salary] may easily be four times the sum which the young man received at his first annual appointment.*

– Charles Eliot<sup>1</sup>

*Teaching here is like being in a bad marriage that looks good to outsiders. I'm the wife whose husband slaps her around but who, nonetheless, smiles gamely, maintaining the relationship for the sake of the kids.*

– “Lucy Snowe”<sup>2</sup>

Eliot's “University Administration” portrait of faculty life radiates a confident paternalism that remains viable in many ways today. Despite sporadic press coverage of the term faculty and graduate employees who do 75% of the teaching in higher education, the public image of the professoriate remains that of Stanley Aronowitz's “last good job in America,” tweedy eggheads effortlessly interpellated in a system of rational, meritocratic reward, administered on a generous scale by a trusteeship of honorable men. Indeed for faculty in certain overwhelmingly male-dominated disciplines, Eliot's picture is accurate enough. In engineering or business, at a research institution, the phenomenon of a generously-compensated young male wage-earner on

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<sup>1</sup>See Eliot's *University Administration* (1908).

<sup>2</sup>(Pseud.) a “lecturer in English at a major research university in the East.”

a track to a quadruple family wage (say, \$140,000) by the age of forty is quite common.

For most others, and especially the majority of women faculty, like “Lucy Snowe” working off the tenure track in the feminized liberal arts, the wages are similar to those of the women who stitched and laundered Eliot’s shirt. (The author’s use of the educator-heroine of Bronte’s *Villette* refers to the condition of nineteenth-century schoolteachers, who often compared their compensation unfavorably to that of needleworkers, whose circumstances were then, as now, a byword for extreme exploitation.) In every region of the United States, women faculty teach for as little as a few hundred dollars per course, frequently earning less than \$16,000 for teaching 8 courses a year, without benefits. Even in the full-time nontenurable positions, women with doctorates, averaging as much as ten years of post-baccalaureate study, commonly earn under \$30,000, often without benefits.<sup>3</sup>

A chief component of Snowe’s oppression is the very idea that this arrangement is fair or rational, the inevitable—and impersonal—consequence of some such guarantor of the public good as a “market” in the wages of women (and the men who do such “women’s work” as writing instruction in higher education). She characterizes her injuries in the terms employed by survivors of domestic violence with the intention of underscoring the systematic solidarity of the oppressor’s logic, the web of beliefs, loyalties, privileges and institutions composing the patriarchy itself, not just the individual abuser. She is especially attuned to the way the solidarity of the oppressor calls forth the participation of the victim, encompassing such diverse motivations as the opinion of outsiders (feeling the desire to show herself in a situation that “looks good”) or caretaker obligations, the fear that exposure of the violent nature of the relationship will harm “the kids.” The economic and social violence experienced by most faculty in their working lives, especially the majority of women faculty working in undervalued disciplines and in nontenurable positions, is experienced bodily, like a blow, and is sustained by a network of beliefs and institutions “outside” the relationship between administration and employee. The patriarchal web includes other women, including many academic and professional women who identify with the feminist movement, in the sort of cryptomachismo of Ann Marcus’s adjunct hiring policy at New York University: “we need people we can abuse, exploit and turn loose” (Westheimer 2002, 2). Even leaving out notions overtly associated with gender, relevant beliefs shaping the gendered relations of work in

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<sup>3</sup>For a brief discussion of the failure of gender equity initiatives to have a long-term effect on equity in adjunct employment, see Hoeller (2005), who observes that the unions of full-timers, campus employers, and state governments all participate in the situation by negotiating regular raises for full tilters but not for the disproportionately female nontenurable faculty.

higher education include those regarding “the position of the United States in a global economy,” the “value” of different kinds of education, “the responsibilities of management,” what it means to be “accountable” to the public and who belongs to that public, not to mention such ideological portmanteaux as “quality,” “excellence,” “merit,” “market,” “efficiency,” and so forth, maintained on these topics and many others by persons in legislatures, professional organizations, social movements, judicial panels, and political parties.

What Snowe’s vivid rhetoric underscores for us is that the solidarity maintaining her oppression is not an abstraction that will wither away upon exposure to the light of good analysis. Knowing that she is oppressed, even knowing that she participates in her own oppression, doesn’t of itself transform Snowe’s situation, who remains employed on the same campus under the same conditions.

There must also be someplace for Snowe to go, an *alternate* solidarity.

This piece looks at two of the three waves of thinking about higher education as a workplace since 1945, the academic labor movement comprised primarily of tenure stream faculty and nonteaching campus workers that arose in close connection with teacher unions and public-employee unionism generally, and the managerial consciousness that presently dominates. I have elsewhere examined components of the rising third wave, the unionism of graduate employees and other contingent faculty, whose struggle with managerial domination is one of the leading forces shaping employment regulation and education policy today (2002, 2003, 2004).

It is worth emphasizing that the movements of thought and action here dubbed “waves” are (or were) to a degree hegemonic. That is, as the consciousness of a politically-empowered group they circulate values and ideas about limits and possibilities shared by other groups in advance of debates about particulars. Each in their moment, they led in setting the terms of discussion and framed the world of possibility. For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, the values and expectations of higher education unionism, as part of a broad wave of movements committed to the expansion of social democracy through economic redistribution, direct action, and the law, yoked the notions of “faculty,” “tenure,” “freedom of inquiry,” and “workplace democracy” to a previously unprecedented degree. Even at the campuses where faculty feeling or the state legal climate did not favor unionism, the best defense against unionism by administrations was granting a large portion of the union agenda—instituting such now-standard reforms as consistent tenure policy and written guarantees of academic freedom, improved salaries and benefits, and securing greater faculty participation in decision making. Of course to a certain extent these

grants of union goals are simply cynical calculation: “if we do not grant some control, we will lose it all.”<sup>4</sup> But to a significant degree the beliefs were (and are) sincerely held. The vast majority of administrators believe something along these lines—“Of course faculty should have a powerful voice in governance; how could one imagine it differently?”—in which the inability to “imagine differently” is the trace of the union movement’s success. In the period in which faculty interests were hegemonic in higher education by way of their association with social movements generally and academic unionism especially, opposing unionism often nonetheless involved adopting the values and goals of unionism.

And of course it is obvious at the present time how managerial values interpellate the faculty and students as well, framing not just possibilities for action (what can be done) but possibilities for knowing (“this is the world”). In this way, tenured faculty, even unionized tenured faculty, accept the managerial accounts of “necessity” in the exploitation of part-time faculty, graduate students, and the outsourcing of staff. Through the managerial ideology, itself supported by a vast ensemble of reactionary social movement in the 1980s and 1990s, faculty no longer question the claims of “fiscal crisis” while the campus pays millions to basketball coaches but sub-Wal-Mart wages to mathematics faculty and custodians. The knowledge has taken hold everywhere that “markets” are real but “rights” are insubstantial, as if “market-driven” indicated imperatives beyond the human and political, of Necessity itself, rather than the lovingly crafted and tirelessly maintained best-case scenario for the quite specific minority interest of wealth. The managerial mind-set is currently widely shared by faculty, including the values and structures, and limits to possibility of, for instance, “continuous quality improvement” and “responsibility centers” and “informal” decision-making (as if the absence of regulation or due process benefited anyone but those with the power to hire, fire, reward and discipline). Students, too, share the mania for assessment, ranking, pay-as-you-go, revenue maximization, and continuous competition in pursuit of “excellence,” even where those values are demonstrably against their own interests.

The extent to which managerial ideology is at least partly hegemonic of faculty generally and even, distressingly, of organized faculty, is a matter of immediate political urgency. To some extent the vulnerabilities of faculty in this regard flow from their situation as educators. Like others involved in the labor of social reproduction, educators are under particular pressure to embody and transmit the

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<sup>4</sup>Susanne Palmer notes that that one “outcome of the Yeshiva decision is that universities have modeled their faculty self-governance committees after the Yeshiva model. The more self-governance and economic decision-making that is given to faculty the less likely that a collective bargaining unit can be certified by the NLRB” (5).

values of power—which seeks through their labor to reproduce itself and the circumstances most favorable to itself. The degree to which schooling can serve anti-egalitarian and anti-democratic purposes, and complicity with capitalist exploitation, is also the degree to which educators can be persuaded to arrangements hostile to democracy and equality in their own workplaces.

There are newer vulnerabilities, however, having to do with the situation of U.S. organized labor generally. Educator ideology might make faculty unions especially willing to tolerate a multi-tier workplace, but nearly all American unions have acceded to multiple tiers of employment, defending some of the privileges of enrolled union members while permitting the employer to hire its new workers on a “second tier” of often very different wages, fewer benefits, and so on. Academic unions are complicit with management in worker exploitation in their own way, but they are consistent with American unions in this regard.

Which is to say: higher education is a typical workplace, in that “solidarity,” like faith and chastity for Augustine, is more of an ongoing project and often-deferred goal than a naturally-occurring phenomenon waiting to be discovered.

### *Collective Bargaining as a “Survivor Project”*

*We need people we can abuse, exploit, and then turn loose.*

— Ann Marcus<sup>5</sup>

The higher education labor force is enormous. Including clerical, service, and administrative personnel together with instructors of all kinds, colleges and universities directly employ over three million full- and part-time employees. Hundreds of thousands more are indirectly employed through outsourcing contractors, now utilized by ninety-five percent of campuses in such areas as food service, vending, custodial work and campus bookstores. (While the number of campus administrators soared almost 50% between 1993 and 2001, the numbers of clerical, skilled workers, and service/maintenance workers held near steady or declined in the same period, largely due to massive outsourcing [NEA Higher Education Research Center 2003].) Additional millions of undergraduate students work on campus through work-study programs and other arrangements. Non-teaching employees outnumber teaching employees, and the largest group of persons working on a typical campus are undergraduate students.

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<sup>5</sup>The former dean of NYU’s Steinhardt School of Education strategizes the hiring of term faculty in an email submitted in evidence before the NLRB in the Westheimer case.

In this diverse basket of workers, the group most likely to be unionized is tenure-track faculty (44%) [Rhoades 1998a, 9]. They are closely followed by skilled, service and maintenance workers (42.8%); “white collar” staff, including clericals (23.4%); and graduate student employees, (about 20%) [NCES 1994, repr. Ehrenberg; Lafer]. All four groups are much more likely to be unionized than other American workers (currently less than 15% bargain collectively). Among non-teaching employees, union membership has a dramatic impact on wages and benefits: in the 1997-1998 APPA sample of 163 institutions across Carnegie category, mean salaries were dramatically higher for organized staff: unionized administrative secretaries earned 23% more, or an additional \$5,000 per year; custodians and groundskeepers 35-39% more; painters and heating-cooling workers 40-42% more, representing as much as an additional \$12,000 annually.<sup>6</sup> Undergraduate students and other casual employees are the lowest paid and least likely to be organized, and are increasingly assigned to duties previously performed by salaried persons.

At present, faculty on over 1,000 college campuses are represented by collective bargaining agreements, especially public institutions: nearly two-thirds of all full-time faculty at public institutions are unionized. Contingent faculty and graduate students often affiliate with the largest staff unions AFSCME and SEIU, as well as the United Auto Workers (which has scored major victories in the University of California system as well as the milestone contract with NYU, the first between a private university and its graduate employees). Full-time tenure track faculty, however, are mostly represented by the NEA, the largest independent union in the country, or the American Federation of Teachers, an AFL-CIO affiliate. A significant minority of campuses feature an independent union, sometimes derived from a faculty senate,

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<sup>6</sup>This data is computed by Ehrenberg et al from the APPA data compiled by the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers in 1999. Ehrenberg’s econometric approach leads him to emphasize that these dramatic wage differentials “are raw differences that do not control for characteristics of the institutions or the areas in which the institutions are located, which might be expected to influence staff salaries independent of unionization” (216). By “controlling for the other characteristics . . . that influence salaries” besides unionization, including “the logarithm of the average math and verbal SAT seventy-fifth percentile SAT score for entering freshmen at the institution,” Ehrenberg believes that the effects of unionization are smaller than the “raw differences” appear to suggest on their own. The problem with econometric modeling is that the assumptions are themselves rhetorical: by assuming that the SAT scores of entering students affects the wages of custodians, Ehrenberg reasons that because tenure-stream faculty at some selective institutions, such as Harvard, are paid more than at some less selective institutions, custodians will be paid more at the same institutions. While plausible, this reasoning confounds the actual wages of custodians at places like Johns Hopkins, and fails to account for the structural consequences of outsourcing, through which even prestige employers do not directly employ their staff, but simply “pay a service.” In this way, it is not putatively Johns Hopkins who pays a sub-living wage, but the contractor.

or else are affiliated with AAUP's collective bargaining operation, which is, by a very small number, the most popular representation choice among private four-year schools. While the largest percentage and absolute number of union campuses are among the ranks of community colleges, the total number of organized faculty on four-year campuses is significantly higher: nearly 140,000 faculty on four year campuses versus about 100,000 at two year schools. Even observers who have been skeptical of the economic impact of unionization agree that it has reduced wage and benefit inequalities, especially between highly paid and lower paid disciplines on individual campuses, or between units in multi-campus systems, raising the pay and improving the benefit structure of tenure track community college faculty in the CUNY system to greater parity with the four-year campuses, for instance. Overall, in excess of 700,000 campus employees are union members, about 250,000 of them faculty. By Gary Rhoades' calculation, *eighty-five percent* of faculty in public four year institutions—exclusive of research universities—are unionized (1998a).

Despite these impressive numbers, and continuing growth in higher education organizing overall, it is fair to raise the question whether most organized faculty and staff see themselves as belonging to a labor "movement." Clearly there are a couple of thousand labor *organizations* on campus today. But do they have the larger sense of belonging, solidarity and commitment that Joe Berry of Chicago COCAL calls "a social collectivity without clear edges, which in its power and motion creates, impacts, supersedes and floods and sometimes raises up organizations and institutions"[2002, 17]? Berry, together with other innovative organizers and labor theorists, such as Kate Bronfenbrenner and Dan Clawson, calls for a unionism of the largest possible resemblance to, and relationship with, social movement tactics and values, including organizational democracy, widespread participation, and the intent for a widespread social transformation. From this point of view: movements create institutions, which may survive in the absence of the movement's culture and passion, but in the absence of the broad-based democratic "upsurge" that Clawson attributes to the animating force of a movement, the things which those institutions and organizations can accomplish remain limited.

Indeed, it may be more accurate to speak of the clustered institutions of full-time faculty and staff as a set of "survivor projects," to use Johanna Brenner's term, rather than a "movement." By characterizing worker associations as survivor projects, Brenner means to capture the diversity of ways "people group together in order to live in capitalist society" (42). She notes that the diversity of forms of association and resistance represents also a very diverse degree of effectiveness, insofar as many forms of worker association involve a

high degree of “accommodation” to oppression, and “particularistic” and “exclusionary” organizing strategies:

... the skilled disregard the unskilled, the organized disregard the unorganized, the stronger unions disregard the weaker ones—and this happens among workers who share ethnic identity or gender as well as those who do not. . . . Registered nurses have been no more willing to take “less credentialed” hospital workers into their unions than male craftsmen were willing to assimilate the “lesser skilled” women workers into theirs. Unionized women teachers have often made separate contract deals with school administrations and failed to support the demands and organizing of clerical workers and teachers’ aides. (45)

By approaching the offenses against solidarity of trade unionism from the perspective of a “survivor project,” Brenner is seeking a way to value the successes of institutions whose missions, vision, and practices fall well short of the ideal of worker solidarity against exploitation.

### *The “Managerial Revolution” and Academic Capitalism’s Common Culture*

*And so, Management Joe, your political pronoun is ‘we.’ Your bargaining units are ‘they.’ Remember that the strike requires your team to organize a public relations office, generate a steady stream of public announcements of victories, and to cackle over the clerical union’s inability to mount a decent strike. Never mind if management is faltering, the union triumphing; the Rhetoric of Bull is essential . . . you who wanted to be provost in order to facilitate discussion of Great Ideas, are now to organize a corps of inspectors – your fellow administrators, whatever their titles – to stalk the campus with clipboards every hour on the hour to check that classes are held. Good luck persuading your late 1960s activist-turned-assistant-provost that this is her job.*

–Dean David Johnson<sup>7</sup>

It is common, in thinking about academic labor, to talk about the faculty as acting in various organizational groups (disciplines, senates, unions) or to have shared values and traits (academic freedom, a preference for semi-autonomous work process). It is far less common for critical scholarship to approach academic management as a collectivity,

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<sup>7</sup>Dean David Johnson of Gustavus Adolphus College offers “Response #1” to a clerical unit strike scenario in Ehrle’s *Managing the Academic Enterprise* (1988).

except in a largely abstract sense (as the instruments of “corporatization,” etc). There is, however, a booming “leadership” discourse aimed at introducing the many tens of thousands of deans, chairs, presidents, provosts, together with all of their associate deans, associate chairs, vice-presidents, program heads, institute chairs and so forth, to a common culture. This culture has blossomed since 1980, introducing a new and quite distinct system of values and practices, completing a radical break with the homelier tone of earlier treatises, over many decades, on the “art of administration,” typically compilations of addresses by retired university presidents. In 1978, a volume with that title, and a very late instance of the genre, was fairly typical of the relatively modest discourse in composing itself as an “amateur’s guide” to the mundane challenges of administration, offering a series of homely how-to’s to other amateur administrators (be on time, pay attention to detail), using the controlling and rather humble metaphor of the administrator as “file clerk” to a largely ungrateful and disdainful faculty.

A second, but overlapping transition phase includes the “governance” discourse, especially the material produced by the Carnegie Commission under Clark Kerr beginning in 1969. As discussed in detail below, this discourse gazed with tremendous apprehension at the New Left social movements and inferred a strong relationship between faculty and student involvement in those movements, and the faculty union movement. It is not an exaggeration to say that Kerr and the Commission at times shared Daniel Bell’s sense that the 1970s campus legitimacy crisis included the need to craft a campus administrative response to the possible success of political revolutionaries (Bell: “One thing we can expect is a force of urban guerillas”[162]). Like Bell, Kerr would see both analogies to, and relationships between, the labor movement and radical social movements. This might be called the “solidarity” phase of administrative discourse. Not anticipating either the 1980 Yeshiva decision or Reagan’s 1981 assault on the air traffic controllers’ union, one stalling unionism on private campuses and the other inhibiting it in the public sector, this discourse was designed to make predictions (What would be the future of higher education?) and policy recommendations (What forms of governance would meet that future?), and it is, above all, a discourse of reaction. Kerr, in calling for a science to be called “university relations” on the model of industrial relations, included the problem of managing revolutionary students and organized faculty under the same head, because he envisioned them as mutually reinforcing components of the same “new social force” comprised of “students and intellectuals.” He imagined this new social force as potentially “more damaging to the existing social fabric” than the radicalism of industrial workers, and to institutions of higher education

especially: "The actions of quite small groups are potentially more likely to break the campus asunder. The campus is a hot-house plant that withers before the hot wind of disruption" (185). Kerr reassured his audience by pointing to the outcome of the 1968 revolution in France: sometimes, he emphasized with prescience, "it has been the reaction that is triumphant" (1991, 181-82).

The 1968 Kerr essay that I've been quoting is interesting because it shows the transition from the older discourse to the new quite explicitly, turning from the an older, more egoistic notion of the administrator, to a radical new vision of the administrator as member (and often architect) of an administrative community that in turn sees itself as the collective architect of the sense of a community "whole." Commenting on an earlier essay in which he defined the role of the university president as equal parts "mediator, initiator, and gladiator" who fights "for academic freedom and institutional autonomy," he eschews the homelier, looser, and more spontaneous former terminology of gladiation, as well as the whole notion of "fighting" (against the state) in favor of a cooler, less playful and more determined terminology that indicated a willingness to collaborate with the state, especially in deflecting "the hot wind of disruption." "I would now use the phrase *campus leader*," he emphasized, touching on core elements of the Druckeresque leadership discourse, including mission ("responsibility for the coherence, cohesion, integrity, and structure of the institution") and maintaining the control-advantageous "sense of community and the sense of participation throughout" (186, emphasis added).

The turn to "leadership" as a trope for governance and the value to management of a "sense of participation" anticipates the key shift in the discourse of higher education administration toward the wholehearted embrace of management theory, circa 1980, especially the Toyotist innovations which succeeded by systematically treating all workers as intellectual workers. In treating auto assembly plant employees as brain workers, Toyota management was systematizing many of the features white-collar workers, including professionals and college faculty, found desirable about their jobs: especially a degree of autonomy in the work process and participation in management-level decisions, including questions not related to production mechanics, such as marketing strategies and product design. Rather than envision the "team" of management facing the opposing "team" of labor, Toyota management established "teams" of area responsibility that included managers and workers working together in what was meant to be a quite earnest spirit of labor-management co-operation. If Toyota practice sounds a bit like the idea of "shared governance," it should: in treating its workers like intellectuals and its unions like "partners in governance," Toyota's goal was to encourage its workers to have a primary identification with the institution that employed them, rather

than other workers, much the way that intellectuals and professionals develop primary loyalties to their firm or their campus.

As it cascaded through the corporate world in the 1980s and 1990s, the cultural dimension of Toyotism involves a panoply of rhetorics, institutions, values and processes aiming to create a common culture within the corporation, a common culture “led” by management but “shared” by the workforce. The modern “intentional communities” of multinational employers are supported by a massive corporate-utopian discourse that deploys the rhetoric of “liberation” (eg Tom Peters’ *Liberation Management*) and “revolution,” with the intention of convincing workers and taxpayers that redistribution is occurring downward while it is in fact occurring upward, that worker democracy consists of “dialogue” with management organizations rather than independent associations of their own, and that mass firings represent opportunities to exercise creativity and spontaneity for the “free agents” thus created. This pie-in-the-sky, down-is-up, snake-oil and free-love discourse is best observed by the scathing Thomas Frank, who notes that this literature’s real goal was to address the 1970s legitimacy crisis of the multinational corporation and the class who directed them. Nearly every writer in the field, he notes, co-opts the rhetoric of social “change,” rejects the older Taylorist models of “scientific management” and “elitism,” especially of technocrats and intellectuals, and promises a populist utopia of abundance, choice, and participatory democracy. During these decades the major texts of the management community’s “theory industry”

... almost universally insisted that its larger project was liberation, giving a voice to the voiceless, “empowering” the individual, subverting the pretensions of the mighty, and striking mortal blows against hierarchies of all kinds. Even as the lot of the worker deteriorated, [the management class] was announcing that democracy was thriving in the nation’s factories and office buildings. Captains of industry were they no longer: Now they were the majestic bearers of the popular will, the emancipators of the common man. (Frank 2001, 178)

Of course, as in Japan, this discourse didn’t succeed without the direct cooperation of the state (in helping to crush more militant social forces that might intrude from “outside”), and, especially, the unwavering enthusiasm of the corporate media, which continues to report as fact management theory’s self-described contributions to economic and political democracy.

The revolution in academic management, and the accompanying discourse, is simultaneously new and familiar, in some ways slightly in advance of Toyotist management cultures in the multinationals, and

trailing them in other ways. To the extent that Toyotism adapts the cultural and ideological methods of socializing and controlling white-collar professionals such as academics, there are innumerable contact points at which “the Toyota way” fits hand-in-glove with academic work processes. This is especially the case with partial worker autonomy and participation in management, and of course the ideological reproduction of minds suitable to the dominant circumstances of production and distribution is a core function of higher education. It is common for the managerial literature, both empirical and theoretical, to be frank about the usefulness of “institutional collegiality” as a management tool: empirically, “it motivates diverse members of the community to participate in strategic initiatives and support a conception of the organizational mission,” and again, empirically, through collegiality, individuals are “more willing to make the sacrifices” called for by “financial restraint” (Hardy 183-84). As Michael Yates points out in an early and important *Workplace* essay on the subject, through faculty senates and other ideological institutions, most academics “have already absorbed” the ideology of labor-management cooperation, but fail to understand that the underlying motivation for management’s eagerness for labor cooperation is the Toyotist conviction *that every aspect of work must be controlled [by management, with labor’s cooperation] to the greatest degree possible* (3).

In addition to its cultural dimension, Toyotism represents a genuinely radical transformation of the work process, which most workers have experienced as profoundly dystopian. The core concept is of continuous reinvention of the work process—often called, following Deming, “continuous quality improvement,” where “quality” means efficiency, so that managers are *continuously* being asked to improve efficiency, that is, to continuously produce more with lower labor costs. This is otherwise known as “stressing the system” or “kaizen,” a philosophy of continuous testing of the limits of worker performance, or “management by stress” (Yates; J. Slaughter; Weissman). Key “stressing” strategies include compelling “teams” and individuals to “act entrepreneurially” and compete with each other for raises or continuing employment, the continuous outsourcing of work elements to lower-cost casual employees, and a pyramid of reward that provides jobs for life to a few while the vast majority are consigned to a permanently temporary existence. To understand the scale at which this philosophy applies today, one only has to think of the relationship between Wal-Mart and its suppliers, who complain of that chain’s practice of demanding lower prices in every new contract, intruding under the guise of “partnership” into its supplier firms’ accounting, production methods, and employee relations in search of continuously lower prices for itself. Toyotism isn’t only a philosophy through which capitalist employers stress their workers, it’s an embracing worldview

through which large multi-nationals “continuously stress” and test the limits of smaller capitalists, governments, and the environment itself.<sup>8</sup>

In its academic version, the Toyotist work regime is supported by a triumphalist administrative literature—e.g., *Quality Quest in the Academic Process*, *On Q: Causing Quality in Higher Education*, *Continuous Quality Improvement in Higher Education*, the *Total Quality Management in Postsecondary Education* newsletter, etc—as well as by a series of active financial and philosophical partnerships with legislators and corporate leadership, such as the multi-company 1988 TQM Forum, IBM’s 1991 TQM competition and its successor TQM University challenge, funded by Motorola, Milliken, Proctor and Gamble and Xerox, all of which provided major grants to universities adopting “Quality” initiatives, including prominent public research institutions such as Penn State and UW-Madison. These were followed by the American Society for Quality’s Educational Division and the 1993 Continuous Quality Improvement Project of the American Association for Higher Education (the now-defunct former higher-ed division of the National Education Association, which broke away in 1968 over the issue of faculty unionization) [Dew 10].

In all of this literature, the notion of administrators “causing quality” is fundamentally a literature about the stressing (or “continuous improvement”) of faculty productivity. A key ambition of leadership is to create a culture amenable to the process of stressing, and which shares the aims of stressing. Ultimately, managerial “leadership” of institutional culture is a functional concern: “causing quality is easier to accomplish in strong cultures than in weak cultures” (Seymour 146). Continuous improvement in faculty productivity, of course, means working harder for lower wages, but it also means *productive for certain kinds of aims and not others*. The Scylla of quality-as-lower-labor-cost is always accompanied by the Charybdis of “responsibility” or “revenue,” as in revenue or responsibility center management (RCM), in which campus units are placed under a regime “in which resources will flow according to market demand and assessed performance.” From the “resource” pillar, teams (now “responsibility centers”) are “free” in the sense that the experience “relaxed restrictions” in “how to manage resource trade-offs” and “determine for themselves how to meet the agreed objectives within the available budget” (Massy 6-7). That is: while “responsibility centers” are unfree regarding the “availability of

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<sup>8</sup>The currency of Toyotist liberation management theory with the professional-managerial class and representatives of the corporate media notwithstanding, few workers and small capitalists are persuaded. Even though the UAW leadership, themselves generally labor professionals and labor bureaucrats, initially bought into elements of Toyota’s “team concept” during the late 1980s, a 1989 groundswell from the membership passed a resolution rejecting their leadership’s position of cooperation with management, describing teams as “a managerial device which encourages competition between workers in order to eliminate jobs, weaken solidarity, and help develop anti-union attitudes” (Slaughter 2).

budget,” and only nominally free in the “agreement” regarding objectives, they do have new flexibility in managing “trade-offs” in the goal of “improving quality,” such as choosing for themselves whether to increase class sizes or reduce travel funds. RCM does offer the prospect that some of what is robbed from Peter will be paid to Paul: cost savings from some revenue centers can be passed on to other “high-performing” centers, especially those showing a spirit of “entrepreneurship,” albeit according to management’s principles of assessment of independent accomplishment. Leading “resource allocation” theorist William Massy writes, “If one owned several gold mines, wouldn’t it make sense to invest in the one with the highest assay?” (Of course that depends on the capitalist assumption that all “values” can be converted into a universal medium of exchange—such as gold—in the first place. Hence the need for empty signifiers—such as Tom Peters’ “excellence,” notably analyzed in its academic deployment by the late Bill Readings.) One might reply to Massy: “If a hiking party includes four people, would it benefit from a distribution plan that gave eight lungs to the fastest runner, and none to everyone else?”

By now, the TQM-RCM continuous “stressing” of academic labor is long institutionalized, not least by the scene of perpetual retrenchment, in which every year is a year of fiscal crisis, and in which every year sees “new” pressures on wages, workloads, class sizes, benefits, and autonomy. Despite a high unionization rate among both faculty and staff, higher education is a leading example of the Toyotist labor pyramid, with a minority workforce employed for life, “participating” in the management of a majority casualized underclass (albeit one created by the “internal outsourcing” of women, minorities, and student workers rather than a global outsourcing). The faculty workforce often voluntarily competes with each other for funding, raises, course relief and so forth, and tends to view competition—even competition for wage increases lower than the cost of living—as “natural.” As S. Slaughter, Leslie, and Rhoades have contended, the cluster of behaviors they term academic capitalism (engaging markets and engaging in market behaviors, such as competition, the defense of property rights, etc.) is not just the product of managerial leadership but instead the result of a complex interaction of agencies—especially state and local government and multinational corporations but including faculty and other academic workers themselves: “We have come to see colleges and universities (and academic managers, professors, and other professionals within them) as actors initiating academic capitalism, not just as players being ‘corporatized.’” (Rhoades and Slaughter 2004, 12).

## *Academic Management and the Regulation Environment*

*Institutions not only are acted upon by corporations external to them but actively seek to lobby state legislatures in order to change regulations so that colleges and universities have more opportunity to engage in market and marketlike behaviors.*

—Gary Rhoades and Sheila Slaughter<sup>9</sup>

*The most important single factor that explains the pattern of unionization is the character of state public-employee bargaining laws. (61)*

—Joseph Garbarino

By emphasizing the agency of higher education participants—even where one's agency is devoted to furthering one's own exploitation—Slaughter and Rhoades are mapping the lines of association that connect agencies of capitalist exploitation *within* the academy to those without, rejecting the notion that higher education has been “subverted by external actors” without participation in its own fate. They are particularly concerned to avoid what they describe as the “triangle” model of analysis, in which the three points of campus, market, and state are taken as three independent groups with three clear agendas. Instead, they focus on the “blurring of boundaries among markets, states, and higher education,” and on the competition between the agendas of organizations and networks that cross those blurred borders, often in a struggle over state resources and state power (such as the law) regarding the ways that higher education will participate in the new economy (8-11).

From this perspective, university managements and the organizations that support them will often seek the backing of the state to economically position campuses and campus workforces in ways very different from those sought by individual faculty and their organizations. Of particular interest are the ways that university management and corporate management “external” to the institution have collaborated with political actors for the reinterpretation of labor law since 1980. The degree to which university management has been successful at shaping the regulation environment suggests the usefulness of Brenner's “survivor project” frame for viewing the extent to which tenure stream faculty have collaborated in their own exploitation and others.

Certainly the institutions of faculty and staff unionism are the survivors of a series of great judicial, executive, and legislative traumas after 1980. In a 5-4 decision that year, the Supreme Court delivered the most profound of the injuries caused by the judiciary branch, holding

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<sup>9</sup>See Rhoades and Slaughter's *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy* (2004, 5).

that the entire faculty at Yeshiva University were “managerial” employees and therefore did not enjoy legal protection for collective bargaining activities under the National Labor Relations Act. Most responsible scholarly observers are likely to be persuaded by Justice William Brennan, writing for the four dissenting judges, that faculty performance is assessed primarily on their teaching (and presumably in many cases, their research), not on their generally minor “managerial” contributions. As DeCew points out in glossing the dissenting view, most recent research “supports” the dissenting opinion, “indicating that administrators [not faculty] have continued to control institutions of higher education,” and that additional evidence shows that few faculty feel that their generally limited governance activities are “managerial” in nature (47).

The chilling effect of the decision was widespread and instantaneous. In the five years immediately after Yeshiva, activist administrations at private colleges refused to bargain with faculty unions more than fifty times (Yeshiva Watch, qtd. in Arnold 46). By 1989, one-third of the colleges that engaged in collective bargaining pre-Yeshiva had succeeded in discontinuing that arrangement (Saltzman 1998, 50). In other cases, hostile administrations succeeded in using Yeshiva to decertify the faculty union entirely. As Gordon Arnold points out, a series of executive decisions in the 1980s, especially Reagan’s termination of 11,000 air traffic controllers and the decertification of their union, as well as a series of strategic anti-labor appointments, including to the NLRB itself, also had traumatic consequences for faculty unionism.

As a result, while private-sector organizing came to a “virtual halt,” public-sector organizing also slowed dramatically in the “cooled environment for organized labor”: between 1986 and 1990, the University of New Hampshire was the only faculty of a four-year institution, public or private, to unionize (Arnold 46-47). Subject to partisan executive appointment, the federal oversight of private higher education is highly volatile, frequently reversing course in the aftermath of national elections. This volatility can favor faculty, as when an NLRB dominated by Clinton appointees narrowed the scope of the Yeshiva decision, finding that even “where there is substantial indicia of faculty’s managerial status” including “effective recommendation in such nonacademic matters as tenure and promotion” does not “require” the board to find any given set of faculty exempt from the protections of the National Labor Relations Act (Saltzman 2001, 46). But more commonly since 1980, federal oversight of higher education has favored union-busting administrations, as in the recent Brown case when Bush appointees to the NLRB reversed the historic finding of the Clinton era board on the employee status of graduate students, adducing no new evidence or precedent, but simply

drawing different politically-motivated conclusions from the same set of facts about graduate student employment.

While the consequences of judicial setbacks such as *Yeshiva* and blows from executive appointees at the NLRB has been much studied, fully comprehending the situation of academic unionism requires a close look at the encompassing web of state legislation. As Saltzman points out, labor scholarship during the 1970s often concluded that restrictive labor law had only a "modest impact" on the growth of organized labor (because powerful movement-driven politics could compel the creation of new supportive law after the *fait accompli* of forcing employers to the table), but during the 1980s a series of substantial studies found instead that "bargaining laws were the key factor" (45).<sup>10</sup> The legislative environment is a riotous patchwork of fifty states administering labor relations in public higher education, each in a complex of boards and regulations entirely of its own invention. Each state system of higher education confronts wildly varying state laws regarding the workplace rights of its public employees, and even more varying interpretations of the rights of faculty and staff under those laws. In the Northeast, New York, and California, public employee bargaining rights typically receive some measure of protection; in the south and west, there are generally no protections; in Texas, Virginia, Alabama, and North Carolina, collective bargaining is prohibited by statute. Where bargaining rights are protected, individual states vary on the relationship between "professional" academic employees and others, on whether full-time faculty and part-time faculty belong in the same bargaining unit, etc.

Overall, the general trend of lawmaking after 1980 was to accommodate university management, presenting a lattice of hostile regulation through which academic labor's "survivor institutions" squeezed but through which the movement often failed to pass.

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<sup>10</sup>Rather than emphasize the New Left social movements, Joseph Garbarino emphasized the strong relationship between faculty unionism and the "revolution in public-employee relations that occurred in most of the major industrial states" (20) after John F. Kennedy issued presidential Executive Order 10988, by self organization of public employee unions generally, predicting, accurately, that the regulation environment would shape future growth: "As more states adopt supportive bargaining laws for public employees, the staff of institutions of higher education will be caught up in the movement" (254).

## *The Moment of the Movement*

*The 1960s were marked by student dissent and student organization. The 1970s may equally be marked by faculty dissent and faculty organization. The decade of the student may be followed by the decade of the faculty. The locus of activism is shifting.*

– Carnegie Commission<sup>11</sup>

*Grousing about the decline of shared governance will only make faculty members more marginal to management decisions than they already are.*

– Marvin Lazerson et al.<sup>12</sup>

The handful of recent books looking at faculty unions describe the movement as stalled or at a virtual halt (Arnold; DeCew). And as Marvin Lazerson and his colleagues at Penn, the first Ivy to adopt TQM principles, acknowledge, the faculty can hardly be “more marginal to management decisions” than they are at present. (Though it’s worth noting that the Lazerson rationale for a “leadership” theory of governance, “Like the cities they increasingly resemble, colleges must train and retain competent managers,” neglects the key point that, however imperfect the process, those of us living in cities still *elect* our leaders.) With membership in the AAUP having declined from nearly 90,000 in the early 1970s to 43,000 today, the commitment to workplace democracy in higher education is in disarray. The most widely read critics of the corporate university are themselves administrators, such as the union-busting Derek Bok and David Kirp, who urge a centrist approach on corporatization (“making peace with the marketplace”) while trying to preserve some academic values, in some institutions, and limited elements of faculty governance. The relationship of the faculty with social movement commitments to the administration is generally one of collaboration: at the outer limits of this collaboration, William Tierney uses standpoint theory to argue for faculty support of administrators seeking “high performance in a reengineered organization”: “I am gay, politically on the left, White, a tenured faculty member at a research university, a card-carrying member of the AAUP, and a vocal advocate [of improving faculty productivity]” (99).

But the view during the 1970s was very different. Growing from essentially no representation in 1963 to twenty percent of the profession in 1973, the movement looked unstoppable. Opining that “the 1970s may belong to faculty activism as the 1960s did to student activism,” the

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<sup>11</sup>See the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education’s *The Governance of Higher Education: Six Priority Problems* (1973, 39).

<sup>12</sup>See Lazerson et al. (July 2000, A72).

Carnegie Commission under Clark Kerr, himself a labor economist, observed this “volatile situation” with a degree of alarm, noting that “collective bargaining sentiment goes far beyond the organized units of the present time,” with a clear majority of faculty in all institution types including Research 1, and of all ages, including those over 50, favoring both unionization and faculty “militancy” in their own interests. Even among those faculty self-describing as “strongly or moderately conservative” in their political views, 45% agreed that collective bargaining was appropriate for higher education. Among those who evaluated their administrations, or the effectiveness of their faculty senates as only “fair or poor,” the majority agreed that a faculty strike would be a “legitimate” tool. Most of the mid-1970s observers of faculty unionism shared the “long-term prognosis” of Kemerer and Baldrige for “substantial” growth in unionization (69), and the view of Ladd and Lipset that unionization and collective bargaining would be the decade’s most important “intramural issues.” The Commission concluded that the initiatives and issues originating in the faculty movement for collective bargaining “may be the dominant ones in the near future” (40-42; 56). In the vast majority of cases, organizing campaigns expressed the core motivation of securing meaningful faculty participation in governance, as well as wages and benefits, with the creation or securing of elements of workplace democracy providing the primary motivation for a sizable fraction of faculty activists.

In his scholarship as a labor economist, Clark Kerr adopted a largely dismissive role of unions as a social and economic force, viewing them as subsidiary to the force of industrialization itself, which he saw as trending inevitably toward greater equality and democracy, regardless of political arrangements, even claiming that capitalism and socialism tended toward similar degrees of wage parity [1957: 236-238; 1983: 266-268]. In a chapter composed for the 1982 edition of *The Uses of the University*, Kerr aired the similar view that bargaining had little impact on faculty salaries, further claiming, without adducing any evidence, that “organizations that rely on informal codes and implicit contracts [“as in a ‘gentlemen’s club’ where some things are just not done”] are more effective and more satisfactory to their participants” than those that rely on bargaining and formal arrangements. However, he also wrote that in the “breakdown” of a system of implicit contracts, collective bargaining provided an alternate form of contracting, having at least the bare merit of superiority to “anarchy or chaos” (134; 168-70).

This last sentiment closely parallels the official views of the Carnegie Commission published in the chapter on “Collective bargaining and faculty power” in the “Six Priority Problems” governance statement, in which the reality of the New Left looms large, and which, claiming that “the locus of activism is shifting,” clearly envisioned a close correspondence between “student dissent and student

organization" in the 60s, and "faculty dissent and faculty organization" to follow: "The decade of the student may be followed by the decade of the faculty." Declining to "take a position on whether faculty members should unionize," the Commission nonetheless urged "that faculty members should analyze very carefully whether or not" their best interests are served, instantiating at least seven potentially negative consequences (43). And the Commission's orientation is perfectly clear when it admonishes the administrations of institutions involved in bargaining that they would be "well advised to employ experienced negotiators" (50). On the other hand, the commission's profound anxiety about New Left social upheaval leads them to forecast the grim possibility that "collective bargaining will become more clearly preferable to an otherwise more anarchic situation" and that "history may carry higher education beyond its current state of development":

We may be involved in a long-term period of greater social conflict in society and greater tension on campus. If so, it may be better to institutionalize this conflict through collective bargaining than to have it manifest itself with less restraint. Collective bargaining does provide agreed-upon rules of behavior, contractual understandings, and mechanisms for dispute settlement and grievance handling that help to manage conflict. Collective bargaining also provides a means through which the public interest in the conduct and performance of the campus can be brought to bear upon decision making within the campus. Collective bargaining, thus, is one aspect of the rule of law, if and when a rule of law is required. (51)

Key to our understanding of the Commission's perspective is the sense, parallel to Kerr's own technocratic worldview, is that unionism represents a potentially conservative force, serving via contract to impose "the rule of law" in a situation in which the settled (desirable) "informalities" of managerial control have been supplanted by (undesirable) informalities dubbed "anarchic" because "out of [managerial] control." Unionism, it is fairly clear, is not otherwise desirable.

Recovering the foreboding with which Kerr and the commission viewed the movement in its moment is highly instructive. If those who work in higher education are to have even a fraction of the solidarity that management shares, one possibility that suggests itself is that academic unions might make real the sort of connections with social movements that Kerr particularly feared. They might also create larger coalitions of workers on campus and among other workers in the public interest. These strategies are common among graduate employees and term faculty, who often have to work either against faculty unions or within them as insurgencies (Gottfried and Zabel; Hoeller; Berry).

Especially important to the future of academic unionism will be a renewed commitment to workplace democracy, which the neglect of term faculty and graduate employee rights has eroded, and to a critical analysis of workplace inequalities, especially those organized by gender. One significant and neglected possibility is the commitment of academic unions to principles of gender equity via analysis of "comparable worth," seeking to rectify imbalances organized by gender between disciplines and job descriptions. As this essay goes to press, several major unions have split off from the AFL-CIO over the issue of organizing, demanding that a much larger share of union energies go into reaching new workers and workplaces in new kinds of ways. Perhaps the academic unions should devote more energy to organizing on the model of movement-building as well: the inter-organizational COCAL project receives only a tiny drip of support and token attention from the major unions. As Kerr and the Carnegie Commission understood all too well: the trade unions of the faculty can very easily serve to conserve a balance of power favoring the administration.

The era after 1970 was not the first moment of struggle between faculty and administration in higher education. As Newfield and Barrow, among others, have observed, the decades of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the successful imposition of Taylorist management practice on aspects of the faculty work process. And from this period also dates the first self-organizing of the faculty, including the founding of both the AAUP and the American Federation of Teachers, both presided over by John Dewey at one time. There are elements of historical continuity that need to be drawn out. For instance, Toyotist management theory while relying on a rhetoric of opposition to Taylorist scientific management (and hierarchical control of the work process), actually intensifies managerial control of the work process, an observation that is especially relevant to the reduced workplace rights of the nontenurable teaching majority.

But the continuities are probably less important than the startling rupture with the earlier consciousness, on both sides. For the faculty to participate in the public employee union movement was an epochal shift toward considering themselves not only as a collective agency in their own economic interests, but also as a political force, with the capacity (and the burden) of confronting lawmakers with a vision of what higher education should be and how it might fit into the future envisioned by other political forces and movements. Even the most militant and politically active of faculty unions, at the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY) systems, initially rejected affiliation with "regular unions" and attempted to bargain their first contracts with independent organizations based in the faculty senates, before reversing course and seeking the

professional bargaining assistance of the paid staff employed by the militant schoolteachers of the NEA and AFT.

Similarly the current dominance of management thought drawn from Toyotist “lean” production is an epochal shift. The older Taylorist production model sought to impose scientific management and maximize efficiency in order to *maximize output* as part of the capitalist utopian imaginary of plenty for all: aiming to place a Model T in every garage, Taylorist efficiency implied more and better goods for more people to enjoy.

What Toyotist “lean” production represents, by contrast, is an effort to *minimize output to the most profitable level of demand*. In industrial terms, lean production is an attempt to bypass crises of overproduction (e.g., we have the industrial capacity to provide food, cell phones, and computers for everyone on the planet, but actually doing so would not maximize profits). One particularly frank college president, John Harris of Alabama’s Samford University, explains that lean production means that higher education like other enterprises divides its “customers” into two groups, a “vital few, each of whom is of great importance to us,” and another much larger group, “the useful many, each of whom is only of modest importance to us.” He elaborates:

The ‘Useful Many and Vital Few’ in business means a few customers account for a disproportionate number of sales dollars. Is this concept applicable to higher education? The way many institutions support athletes suggests to me that the concept is not foreign to us. Are Honors students the Vital Few? Who are the Useful Many? Do we actually treat all students the same? Each institution has its Vital Few and Useful Many, given its mission, particular constituencies, and cultural ethos. Quality planning requires the identification of the Vital Few and Useful Many and of their needs and expectations in priority order. (10)

In short, a lean institution with “quality planning” caters to the Few and attends only modestly to the needs of the Many. Harris describes the Few in familiar terms—privileged students, corporate vendors, revenue-producing disciplines, elite institutions. But there’s a remarkable silence regarding the Many: “Who are they?” Harris asks.

In my view, academic unionism will once again be a movement when it can answer his question.

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