Explaining Obama: The Continuation of Free Market Policies in Education and the Economy

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Introduction

Many who would define themselves as liberal progressives, including myself, were heartened by the election of Barack Obama to the presidency. However, perhaps almost as many have been disappointed by Obama's policies as president. In this paper I seek to understand and explain the seeming reversal in Obama's policies, especially regarding education. In particular, I situate his policies within the continuation of free market capitalism.

While it may have been either naivety or wishful thinking that led to some to hope for radical change in fiscal and foreign policy, in education Obama's campaign statements incorporated a progressive agenda. Obama, with Linda Darling-Hammond as his educational advisor, promised to scale back or reverse many of the education reforms of the Bush administration. This seemed especially prudent given the public's increasing distaste for top-down reform emphasizing high-stakes testing and charter schools. Indeed, the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Bushaw & Gallup, 2008), taken just months before the election, revealed that 77 percent of the public felt that placing education policy decision-making in the hands of business and political leaders, effectively ignoring teachers, as was done with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (DeBray, 2006), was exactly the wrong approach, with only 16 percent of the public favoring continuing the law as is. Furthermore, 44 percent of parents believe that too much emphasis is placed on achievement testing, and 77 percent think that class grades, teachers' observations, and students' work provide a more accurate picture of students' academic achievement. Lastly, the public remained confused about the exact nature of charter schools, and support for them fell to the lowest level in four years, with only 51% in support.

Obama seemed to be aware of the public's disapproval of NCLB as he criticized the over-reliance on standardized tests, or "students filling in bubbles,"[1] and, in response, called for more useful formative assessments. In addition, he proposed improving the teaching profession by upgrading teacher education, developing mentoring programs, rewarding teachers through career ladders rather than individual bonuses, and engaging with teacher educators. Darling-

Hammond appeared in a televised debate with John McCain's education advisor (Education Week, 2008), and many educational professionals hoped that, if elected, Obama would choose Darling-Hammond as his Secretary of Education.

Instead, President Obama chose Arne Duncan, who, previous to becoming CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, had little experience in education. Together they have promoted policies that are the antithesis of his campaign promises. Rather than supporting teachers as professionals, he has attacked teachers as the central problem, and along with Duncan, applauded the mass firing of teachers in Falls River, Rhode Island (Zezima, 2010). Furthermore, states now must compete for federal funding through Race To The Top (RTTT). For states to be eligible to "win" the competition, states must pass laws linking teacher compensation to students' scores on standardized tests and while there was no mention of charter schools in his campaign literature, states must not only pass legislation permitting charter schools, states are required to either eliminate the cap on charter schools or raise it significantly. For example, New York State raised the limit on the number of charter schools from 200 to 460. Moreover, while states are falling over one another passing legislation linking teacher pay to test scores and authorizing charter schools, only about 15 states will receive RTTT funding. Consequently, most states will have passed sweeping legislation creating radical changes in their education systems without receiving any of the funding promised. In a climate of financial desperation, extortion works.

So, the question to be answered here is: How do we explain this drastic course reversal in which Obama is pushing education reforms that not even Bush dared to propose? The answer, I will suggest, can be found in understanding the degree to which neoliberal policies promoting unregulated markets, competition, privatization, and entrepreneurialism have come to dominate political and public discourse. Johnson and Kwak (2010), two mainstream economists, in explaining the ability of Wall Street's financial institutions gaining control of the federal government and the Federal Reserve System, cite the extent to which "the *ideology* of Wall Street---that unfettered innovation and unregulated financial markets were good for America and the world---became the consensus position in Washington on both sides of the political aisle" (p. 5, emphasis in original).

Since Obama's election, the neoliberal ideology of Wall Street is, ironically, increasingly echoed by the groups such as the Tea Party, who represent primarily the White middle and working class. Neoliberal and neoconservative media commentators, as exemplified by Glenn

Beck and Rush Limbaugh, are also critical of government spending for health care and other social services, and governmental regulation of corporations, including regulations aimed to protect the environment or reduce global warming. Neoliberals and neoconservatives criticize public education, which they sometimes pejoratively describe as "government schools" (Johnson & Salle, 2004), and, instead, support charter schools and markets as ostensibly representing the will of the people.

While some of this so-called grass roots movement also criticize corporate, especially Wall Street's, governmental influence, a further irony is that some of their largest organizations, such as Americans for Prosperity and Citizens for the Environment, are funded by and serve the corporate interests of the Koch brothers, two billionaires who own the second-largest private corporation in the US (Mayer, 2010, Rich, 2010). Consequently, what inclinations the Obama administration might have to reform schools, health care, environmental regulations, and the banking system to reflect more social-democratic principles are undermined both by the ideology of Wall Street and what is presented as Main Street.

Moreover, Obama has chosen to include in his administration economic and education advisors who have a shared ideology that markets operate rationally, that private is preferable to public, and that problems are best solved through technical solutions such as high-stakes standardized testing. Many of Obama's economic advisors previously held top posts in the nation's largest financial institutions or the Federal Reserve Bank. Accordingly, they tend to take positions that favor the banks and marginalize individuals who hold contrary positions. For example, Jonathan Alter, in *The Promise: President Obama, Year One* (2010), portrays Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner and Director of the National Economic Council Lawrence Summers as maintaining very narrow neoliberal economic policies that bail out Wall Street but fail to overhaul the financial system and inadequately fund rebuilding the infrastructure, creating jobs, or developing sustainable energy technologies (Krugman, 2010a). Also, writes Alter, Geithner and Summers have little interest in other viewpoints, including those of George Soros and Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman, who have been ignored.

Similarly, education secretary Arne Duncan came to the White House from his position as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools where, as Pauline Lipman describes in *High-Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform* (2004), schools were central to an ambitious effort to use neoliberal policies to transform Chicago into a global city focused on real estate, tourism, and retail.

Therefore, in this paper I will begin by describing the ascent of neoliberalism as a doctrine to restore corporate profits in response to the pre and post World War II spread of social democratic liberalism. Social democratic liberalism, which in the United States is more commonly referred to as liberalism, endorses Keynesian economic policies in which governments should adopt economic policies to limit economic hardships and promote economic growth and individual rights. Subsequently, from the mid 1930s to the 1970s, workers, women, and people of color made substantial economic and political gains.

In response to the negative effects such policies had on corporate profits, finance institutions have, over the last four decades, used their economic and political power to promote neoliberal ideology and policies, gaining hegemony over how we conceptualize economic and social policies. Johnson and Kwak (2010) argue, "Wall Street banks are the new American oligarchy" (p. 6) who use their economic power to gain political power which they use for their own benefit. The major banking institutions have succeeded at concentrating power in their own hands to such an extent that, as of early 2009, the assets of the *three* largest banks equaled 44 percent of the nation's Gross National Product (Johnson & Kwak, 2010).

In addition, neoliberalism fails as a general economic and social policy. First, contrary to neoliberal ideology that markets will regulate themselves, over the last several decades we have experienced reoccurring financial bubbles that have destroyed jobs and the financial health of millions of individuals and families (Brenner, 2002; Harvey, 2005, 2010). The most recent crisis resulted from the misuse of subprime loans and the way in which those loans were repackaged and sold to other financial corporations. Neoliberalism weakens our economy by enervating or removing regulations necessary to ensure a sound financial system. Second, neoliberals conceptualize our economic and social issues as technical problems to be solved through markets that ostensibly provide for rational and neutral decision-making. However, as historian Tony Judt (2010) states, because neoliberal rationality does not consider what is important---fairness, quality of life, and how we create a sustainable future, such a system is highly irrational.

I will conclude by proposing that we need to counter neoliberal ideology with an approach that focuses on developing a more equitable and sustainable world. Furthermore, we need to counter the power of the oligarchs by reforming our governing structures so that wealth does not equal legislative control, by creating political alliances that work toward economic and social equality and environmental sustainability, and by reinvigorating democratic dialogue at the local, national, and international level.

The Rise of Neoliberalism and the Current Fiscal and Social Crisis

In the United States neoliberal doctrine is often described and defined as free market capitalism (Friedman, M., 1962; Friedman, T., 1999, 2005), in which economic prosperity is best achieved through unregulated or free markets, the withering away of the state as government's role in regulating businesses and funding social services are either eliminated or privatized, and encouraging individuals to become self-interested entrepreneurs. Under neoliberalism, economic inequality does not result from unequal social structures that privilege the already advantaged but, instead, from differences in individual choices and efforts. Inequality, therefore, is deserved and should not be a concern of government.

Over the last three decades neoliberal concepts have superseded the previous social democratic or liberal policies that first became prevalent in the United States during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and gained dominance in the US and Western Europe during the first quarter century after World War II. Social democratic liberalism built on Keynesian economic theories in which the government was obligated in intervene in financial cycles to either spur or dampen economic growth and had responsibility for providing for the general welfare and education. Examples of President Roosevelt's social democratic policies included his promoting fiscal regulations, such as the Glass-Steagal Banking Act of 1933 that created the Federal Deposit Insurance Company and increased banking regulations, and his burgeoning governmental spending during the Great Depression and World War II. After the war, workers, women, and people of color struggled for and extended the gains made during the Roosevelt administration, expanding their personal and political rights (Bowles & Gintis, 1986, pp. 57-59) and increasing their standard of living (Hacker, 1993).

However, during the 1960s and 70s, corporations, because of the increasingly competitive and open world economy, were less able to pass workers' wage increases onto consumers. Therefore, while neoliberals claim that markets work best when governments stay out, in this and later events, such as the 2009 bank bailouts, corporate leaders urged governmental intervention. As a result, the federal government adopted monetarist and neoliberal policies supporting corporations over workers (Gill, 2003). In the United States, monetarist policies restored the power of capital by raising interest rates, thus inducing a recession that increased job scarcity, deflated wage demands, and reversed gains in social spending. These policies aimed to reduce the standard of living of all but wealthy Americans. Paul Volcker, Federal Reserve Board Chairman in 1979, pushed for a recession, asserting: "The standard of living of the average American has to decline. I don't think you can escape that" (Parenti, 1999, p. 119). Such monetarist policies were soon linked with neoliberal goals of deregulating the economy, reducing, eliminating, or privatizing social services such as education, welfare, and incarceration, and elevating the free market above the public interest.

Moreover, corporations began to reduce their costs by moving production to low-wage countries. This, combined with a false assertion that families' incomes would rise through "trickle- down economics," led to a continual decline in wages so that the current average wage is eight percent below its peak in 1972 (Magdoff & Yates, 2009, p. 50). However, neoliberal economists seem not to understand that decreased wages result in dampened demand for consumer products, and this, too, curbs corporate profits (also see Johnson & Kwak, 2010).

Not wanting to increase wages, the financial institutions and federal government have turned to other means of restoring profits. In the 1990s, the Federal Reserve lowered interest rates to encourage investments in financial assets, and consumers, looking for some way to improve their standard of living, increasingly invested in their own homes by buying more expensive homes through which they might make a profit and borrowing from the equity. The housing market boomed. Brenner (interviewed Seong-jin 2009) notes that "housing by itself accounted for one-third of the growth in GDP and close to half of the increase in employment in the years 2001-2005."

In addition, because banks could borrow money cheaply, they "were willing to extend loans to speculators, whose investments drove the prices of assets of every type ever higher [and] housing prices soared" (Seong-jin, 2009). At the same time, the profits that could be made on guaranteed loans, such as US treasury bonds, plunged, leading an increasing number of lending institutions to turn to "investments in dubious sub-prime mortgages. The housing bubble reached historic proportions, and the economic expansion was allowed to continue" (Seong-jin, 2009). The ongoing effort to make money readily available for investment in either real estate or stocks led to a rise in housing values and stock prices that could not be sustained. Eventually, more homeowners could not make their payments, housing prices fell and “the real economy went into recession and the financial sectors experienced a meltdown” (Seong-jin, 2009). “In the first twelve months of the recession, 2.5 million people lost their jobs (Magdoff & Yeats, 2009, p. 86) and by June 2009, close to seven million jobs have been lost.

The housing bubble and collapse came about, argue Johnson and Kwak (2010), because the financial oligarchy “engineered a regulatory climate that allowed them to embark on an orgy of product innovation and risk-taking that would create the largest bubble in modern economic history and generate record-shattering profits for Wall Street” (pp. 120-121). However, even when the major financial institutions were responsible for the crash, “when the entire system came crashing down in 2007 and 2008, governments around the world were forced to come to its rescue, because their economic fortunes were held hostage by the financial system” (p. 121).

Rescuing the Banks and the Rich at the Cost of Everyone Else

In the United States, the federal government responded to the financial crisis by bailing out financial institutions such as Chase Morgan and the Bank of America because they were “too big to fail,” But rewarding financial institutions for their recklessness is unlikely to change their negative behavior. Therefore, many people have called for new banking regulations, including breaking up the banks so that their failure would not be as expensive to the taxpayer or as calamitous to the economy. However, the recent Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act tightened some regulations but failed to break up the “to big to fail’ institutions, thus making it probable that we will repeat the same cycle of boom and bust and again will need to bail out the banks (Greider, 2010; Johnson & Kwak, 2010).

While the federal government has quickly returned the banks to profitability, in part because the taxpayers took on the costs of the toxic assets, thus guaranteeing profits and a return to exorbitant wages and bonuses for bank executives, those who had no role in creating the financial collapse continue to pay for it through their taxes and with the loss of their homes and jobs. However, the federal government has been significantly less generous in their response to the increased unemployment and decreased revenues at the state level. Some Keynesian economists, such as Volcker, who has renounced his earlier neoliberal beliefs, Krugman (2010) and former Secretary of Labor, Reich (2010), argue that federal investments in jobs and the infrastructure have been inadequate and should be increased if we are to avoid a second recession.

Raising False Fears Regarding the Deficit to Cut Funding for Social Services and the Infrastructure

Nonetheless, such Keynesian policies calling for governmental fiscal stimulus have come under attack from both Democrats and Republicans who have become hostile to funding social services such as education, rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, and providing a safety net for the unemployed. While Democrats recently voted for legislation providing ten billion dollars to hire additional teachers, this was only half as much as the bill originally called for, and schools still face massive budget shortfall. At the same time, Democrats have approved massive bailouts for banks and other financial institutions, and may continue the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy.

Some, including Krugman (2010), argue that some legislators and media pundits are exaggerating the danger of the federal deficit to argue against funding education and other social services and using the economic crisis that their policies created to push for reducing or privatizing social spending. Hayes (2010) argues "Conservatives and their neoliberal allies don't really care about deficits; they care about austerity--about gutting the welfare state and redistributing wealth upward" (p. 4). He adds:

> Nearly the entire deficit for this year and those projected into the near and medium terms are the result of three things: the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush tax cuts and the recession. The solution to our fiscal crisis is: end the wars, allow the tax cuts to expire and restore robust growth. Our long-term structural deficits will require us to control healthcare inflation the way countries with single-payer systems do. (p. 3)

Moreover, points out Hayes, "the public is nowhere near as obsessed with the deficit as those in Washington.

The results, then, of the last four decades of neoliberal economic policies have been dismal. The average wage has not increased in forty years, the middle class has been decimated, our infrastructure is crumbing, and we have experienced several financial crises, including the savings and loan crisis of the late 1980s in which "over 2,000 banks failed between 1985 and 1992" (Johnson & Kwak, 2010, p. 74), the technology bubble of the 1990s, and the current recession.

Just as important is that neoliberalism, by prioritizing markets, economic growth, profit and the entrepreneurial individual, ignores other values such as economic equality and the environment. Problems are to be solved, if they are to be faced at all, through the magic of the marketplace. We need not debate what obligation society or government has in reducing poverty or inequality. The individual entrepreneur seeking to improve his or her own economic situation replaces deliberation over our values and societal goals.

Neoliberalism and Education

Over the last several decades, neoliberal tenets focusing on markets, competition, privatization, and accountability have dominated education policy. Beginning in the 1980s, states such as Texas and Florida, with George and Jeb Bush as governors, began to implement high-stakes testing as a way to hold students and teachers accountable. Both states began to require that students pass one or more standardized exams in order to graduate from high school. Similarly, New York State began, in 1996, to require that students pass exams in five different subject areas in order to graduate (Hursh, 2008).

Then, in 2001, No Child Left Behind was passed requiring not only that states require students to take standardized exams in English language arts and math, but also that schools and districts whose scores in any one student population group (by ethnicity, gender, and general and special education) did not meet a minimum threshold would face negative consequences, including potentially loss of funds and reorganization of the school into a charter school.

One of the most significant and fateful examples of the how education policies were incorporated into a larger neoliberal agenda occurred in Chicago under Renaissance 2010, where Mayor Daley appointed Arne Duncan as CEO of the public schools in June 2001. During Duncan's term, control over the schools was handed over to the corporate elite. The Commercial Club, a by invitation only organization of corporate leaders, first created the Renaissance Schools Fund, which they used as leverage to dismantle the elected school board and replace it with the Chicago Board of Education, a body composed of their own representatives. Referred to in the press as a "secret cabinet," this unelected body not only participates in the selection and evaluation of new schools, but also distributes Commercial Club funds to those schools (Rossi, 2004; Cholo, 2005).

The Commercial Club closed "failing" public schools (those generally attended by students of color) and reopened most of them as either privately run charter schools or schools governed directly by the Renaissance School Fund. Moreover, areas of the city in which white middle-class students made up most of the student population saw International Baccalaureate and other prestigious magnet programs open while students of color were offered military academies.

The Chicago Board of Education also sought to improve schools by holding teachers accountable through standardized tests, raising test scores through teaching to the test, and focusing on the "bubble students," those who, based on previous tests, are just above or below the passing score. One teacher, Lipman (2004) reports, devoted the first half of the school year to developing students' writing skills and familiarity with sophisticated literature, but then, for the third quarter, was pressured to shift to test preparation, which included familiarizing students "to the format of a short, mediocre selection of writing…to get them to recognize this type of question is asking you for some really basic information you can go back to look for" (pp. 110-111).

The Chicago model of school reform became the basis for Obama's current approach: top down, standardized tests to hold teachers and students accountable, weakening teacher input, privatizing schools as charters or handing school governance over to business groups. After Obama won the election, there was significant public conjecture over whether Obama would appoint Darling-Hammond or Duncan. However, Darling-Hammond, who has worked for decades researching and improving teaching and learning in literally hundreds of schools, was criticized by neoliberal and neoconservatives as "wedded to the status quo," while Duncan was described as the true reformer (Bracey, 2009). In the end, Obama chose his basketball playing partner, Duncan.

Duncan has brought to his position as head of the federal Department of Education the same approach that he took in Chicago. As mentioned earlier, he has placed much of the blame for education's failures (and we may question the extent it is education's failures or the failure to provide jobs that provide a living wage, health care, and a toxin-free environment) on teachers and teacher educators, claiming, like the criticism of Darling-Hammond, that they support the status quo. Instead, he has placed his faith in privately run charter schools--in particular the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP schools)--and philanthropic organizations such as The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walmart Foundation. The education of our children is increasingly taken away from educators and handed over to individuals who are wealthy enough to have foundations, and entrepreneurs who run academies like KIPP (Hursh, 2011).

Moreover, Duncan has widely proclaimed that he prefers that mayors from urban school districts dissolve the elected school boards and to appoint their own boards, which often serve as the discretion of the mayor. The takeover of city schools by mayors has resulted in mayors dismissing school board members with whom they disagree (as in New York City) or hundreds of teachers (as in Washington. D.C). Furthermore, mayors and their superintendents, in order to demonstrate that their “reforms” have succeeded, have placed even more focus on scores on standardized tests (Ravitch, Meier & Avitia 2009).

The push for mayoral control, like neoliberal and neoconservative organizations like the Tea Party, are portrayed as grassroots efforts, but received most of their funds from corporations promoting neoliberal policies. Lastly, the debate over mayor control and the push for high-stakes testing and privatization has been so deafening, there has been little substantive discussion about education. We neither discuss what should be the goal of education, how to improve schools, nor the relationship between an economically declining city and student performance (Ramos, 2010).

Creating Alternatives to Neoliberalism

Four decades of neoliberal policies have resulted in no gains in people’s incomes except for the rich, increased economic inequality, global warming, an environment replete with toxins and in which species diversity is declining, and a school system in which the emphasis on test preparation undermines students tackling meaningful questions. Furthermore, financiers from the largest banks have successfully created in oligarchy in which they control the federal government, limit regulations that might be placed on them, and because they are “too big to fail,” are rescued from their own financial misadventures. Lastly, our public discourse regarding who and what we want to be as individuals and a society has been limited by the dominance of neoliberal ideology promoted both by the finance institutions, spurious grassroots organizations and their corporate funders and media promoters, in which it is assumed that markets and competition are the preferred way to make all social decisions, that government, wherever possible, including the military, prisons, and education, should be privatized, and that regulations are harmful. However, neoliberalism, as David Harvey (2005) reminds us, is neither objective nor neutral. Neoliberalism provides:

> a benevolent mask of wonderful sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstruction of naked class power, locally as well as transnationally, but most particularly in the main financial centers of global capitalism. (p. 119)

And neoliberalism has delivered. In 1970, after decades of social democratic policies and just previous to the rise of neoliberal polices, the wealthiest one percent only amassed 8 to 9 percent of the U.S's total annual income. "But after that, inequality began to widen again, and income re-concentrated at the top. By 2007 the richest one percent were back to where they were in 1928—with 23.5 per cent of the total" (Reich, 2010, p. 13). Similarly, writes, Orlando Patterson (2010), Blacks in general and the Black middle class are losing ground. "A 2007 Pew Foundation/Brookings Institution study found that a majority of black middle-class children earned less than their parents and, even more alarming, that almost half of downwardly mobile offspring had fallen to the bottom of the income distribution" (p. 20).

Neoliberalism, then, has had both real material and ideological consequences. It has increased economic inequality and poverty, and racial segregation. Moreover, observes Tony Judt (2010), after four decades of neoliberal dominance:

> We know what things cost but have no idea what they are worth. We no longer ask of a judicial ruling or a legislative act: Is it good? Is it fair? Is it just? Is it right? Will it help bring about a better society or a better world? (p. 1-2)

It is irrational to believe that a society can be based on the pursuit of material self-interest and that markets are the means through which decisions are made as to what services or goods will be provided. We must rethink the nature of society, the role of the state, our relationship to the environment, and our educational system. We need to begin to describe what kind of society and world we want and how will we get there. We need to rethink how best to provide health care and financial security for the elderly, how to rebuild our nation's infrastructure and our schools. Given the current divisive debate in the US and the complexity of the answers, engaging in this discussion will not be easy.

Further, our political system is broken. We no longer have a democracy. Michael Kazin (2010), professor of history at Georgetown University and co-editor of *Dissent*, recently quoted Senator Richard Durbin as admitting that the barons of banking "frankly own" the most powerful legislative body in the world. Barbara Ehrenreich (2010) adds, "The government…has become a handmaid to corporate power---a hiring hall from which compliant officials are selected to vastly more lucrative private-sector jobs, as well as an emergency cash reserve for companies that fall on hard times." We need, therefore, to redraw lobbying and campaign financing laws to empower individual citizens. We need to increase the voice of middle and working classes and reinstitute democracy. Again, this will not be easy, especially with corporations lined up against us. However, the United States was founded with the aim of limited centralized power, included the power of the bankers (Johnson & Kwak, 2010).

I began by noting that the public has increasingly turned against high-stakes testing, politicians and corporate executives deciding education policy. Instead, the public and especially parents have more faith in teachers and their assessments. The most recent Phi Delta Kappa poll (September 2010) confirms that a majority of the public disagrees with current policy. Less than 30 percent of the public has a favorable view of NCLB and more think that it has harmed rather than helped education. Only 13 percent agree that the best way to improve a failing schools is to close them and reopen them as a charter schools. Instead, for the public, the biggest problem that schools face is inadequate funding. Moreover, rather than focusing on creating better tests, the federal government should focus on improving the quality of teachers (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010).

Over the last few months the public has begun to respond to the attack on teachers and other public servants. In Wisconsin, thousands demonstrated against Governor Scott Walker's attack on teachers. In New York City, thousands plan to protest Bloomberg's planned layoffs (Kilkenny, 2011). We need to make sure that the public is heard. Those against neoliberal policies and favoring social democratic ones cannot afford to remain the silent majority.

The future is highly uncertain. We cannot hope to engage it, concludes Judt (2010), "if we confine ourselves to issues of economic efficiency and productivity, ignoring ethical considerations and all reference to broader social goals" (p. 8). We need to imagine and work for a new future, one in which we rethink and reconstruct the role of government, the nature of the economy, our relationship to the environment, and the purpose of schooling.

[1] Obama's education platform for his campaign has been removed from his website.

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