



A nation that destroys its systems of education, degrades its public information, guts its public libraries and turns its airwaves into vehicles for cheap, mindless amusement becomes deaf, dumb and blind. It prizes test scores above critical thinking and literacy.

It celebrates rote vocational training and the singular, amoral skill of making money. It churns out stunted human products, lacking the capacity and vocabulary to challenge the assumptions and structures of the corporate state. It funnels them into a caste system of drones and systems managers. It transforms a democratic state into a feudal system of corporate masters and serfs.

Teachers, their unions under attack, are becoming as replaceable as minimum-wage employees at Burger King. We spurn real teachers—those with the capacity to inspire children to think, those who help the young discover their gifts and potential—and replace them with instructors who teach to narrow, standardized tests.

These instructors obey. They teach children to obey. And that is the point. The No Child Left Behind program, modeled on the “Texas Miracle,” is a fraud. It worked no better than our deregulated financial system. But when you shut out debate these dead ideas are self-perpetuating.

Passing bubble tests celebrates and rewards a peculiar form of analytical intelligence. This kind of intelligence is prized by money managers and corporations. They don’t want employees to ask uncomfortable questions or examine existing structures and assumptions. They want them to serve the system.

These tests produce men and women who are just literate and numerate enough to perform basic functions and service jobs. The tests elevate those with the financial means to prepare for them. They reward those who obey the rules, memorize the formulas and pay deference to authority. Rebels, artists, independent thinkers, eccentrics and iconoclasts—those who march

to the beat of their own drum—are weeded out.

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