
The School for the Masses: The People's College of Fort Scott, Kansas.

by Eugene V. Debs

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There is no college or university in all the world for the education of the masses.

Education of the masses? What business have the masses to be educated! The business of the masses is to continue steadfastly to be the masses they have always been, through all the ages past, and to remain in the darkness of ignorance for the benefit of the privileged class perched on their backs. The lower class require no education, no knowledge, no light to remain the lower class. The smattering of so-called education they receive in the schools controlled by their masters is artfully adapted to their condition and not calculated either to arouse discontent with their lot or prompt them to question the rightful supremacy of the "upper class."

It is a strange paradox that "education" is today used as the chief instrumentality to keep the masses of the people in ignorance and subjection. The colleges and universities are without exception "endowed" by the rich with funds taken from the poor for the purpose of controlling educational influences in a way to keep the rich and poor respectively where they are, and to impress the public with the wonderful work the philanthropists are doing in spreading the light when all the time their cunning ingenuity is being taxed behind the curtains to keep the people in darkness.

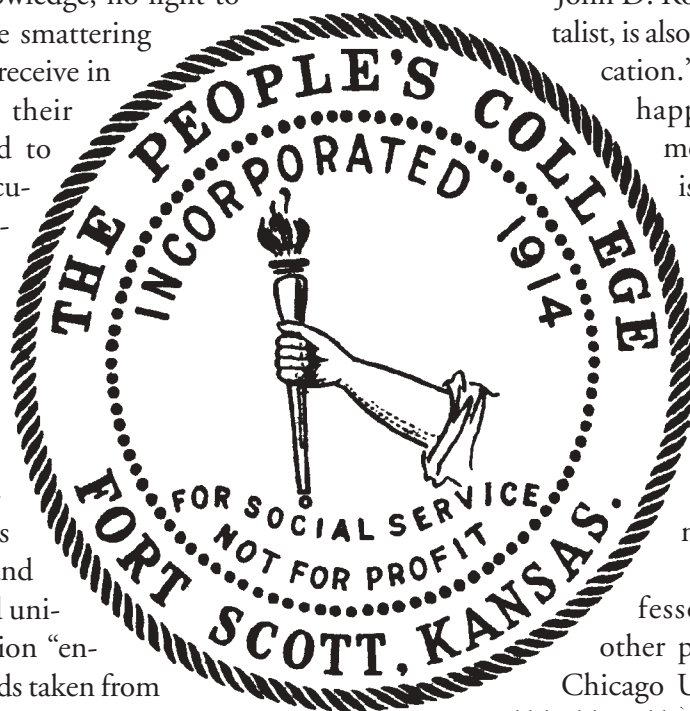
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The man who finances a college controls it as certainly as he does the political party he provides with funds. The motive in each case is the same. The college like the party becomes the personal asset of the capitalist who invests in it. He needs it in his business as a factor in producing dividends.

John D. Rockefeller, the master capitalist, is also the master patron of "education." And why not? It does not happen by chance that this most successful of exploiters is at the same time the most liberal contributor to the "educational" fund. John D. Rockefeller knows that the man who controls a nation's education also controls its coal, oil, and such other things as railroads, mills, and mines.

Professor Bemis, Professor Zueblin, and divers other professors in Rockefeller's Chicago University were dismissed and blacklisted long ago as a terrible example to the rest of the faculty and they now know enough to know that they are not hired to teach economics which prove their master a thief but that their business is to so train the minds of the pupils that they look unto him as a benefactor.

The case of Scott Nearing of the University of



Pennsylvania, James Brewster of the University of Colorado, Kendrick Shedd of the University of Rochester, and others almost without number attest uniformly the fact that the class that owns the mills and mines also controls the colleges and universities and to a very considerable extent the entire educational system of the country.

Then besides, the colleges and universities are for the few only, the sons and daughters of the rich and such of the sons and daughters of the poor as are willing to be intellectually prostituted in the service of the rich. A poor boy who is admitted here feels like a beggar and when he emerges with his diploma he is one. His education under the circumstances has served to make him a refined and polished retainer and apologist.

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Just so long as the capitalist class control the education of the masses, just so long will they ride on their backs and despise them as beasts of burden. It is characteristic of the human parasite that he or it detests the creature whose veins it drains and whose substance it consumes.

The masses must awaken to the fact that if they would be free they must seize upon the means of education and use them to light up the dark places in which they grope like cavemen, and march out into the great free world which awaits them.

The People's College at Fort Scott, Kansas, is the beginning of a worldwide revolution in education.

It marks the awakening of the masses to the necessity of establishing their own colleges and universities and educating themselves with the one supreme object of getting at the truth in all things, knowing that the truth alone can make them free and fulfill their destiny.



The People's College was founded by the working class, is financed by the working class, and controlled by the rank and file of the working class to the minutest particulars. Each member of the college union which controls the college has equal voice with every other in directing the policy and managing the affairs of the institution. It is fundamentally democratic and no shadow of caste falls across the threshold or has a hiding place in its counsels or classes.

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Every teacher's heart and soul are in the work and apparent in the results. The classes consist of comrades and all are comrades with their teachers.

When I entered these walls I felt that I was breathing the air of pure democracy. It was beautiful and I was glad and have been glad ever since to think of this working class college, without an exploiter's dollar to contaminate it, and to see Comrade Sheppard, Comrade Marian Wharton, Comrade Arthur LeSueur, and others who could command any salary they might name to serve the rich, at work here, their faces all aglow with enthusiasm and bending all their energies to realize their ideal and make the People's College the greatest school for the education of the masses ever instituted among men.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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