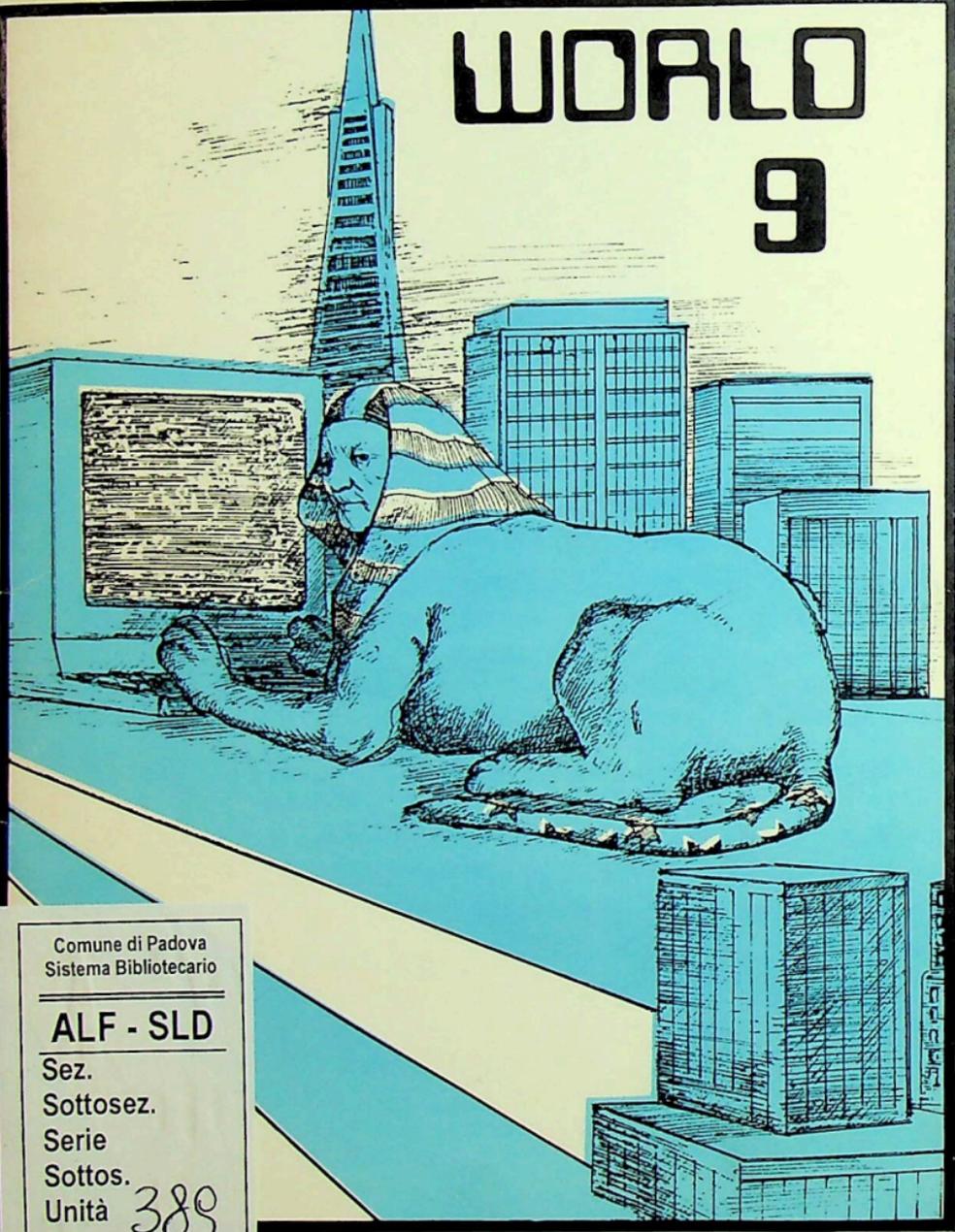


PROCESSED

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WORLD 9



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All of the articles in Processed World reflect the views and fantasies of the author and not necessarily those of other contributors or editors.

Cover Graphic by: Oscar Bernal ISSN #0735-9381



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People —

Your efforts provide a forum and vehicle for communication that is very worthwhile. . . I suggest that the notion that the "traditions" of the "revolutionary movements" can be drawn upon for any kind of guidance as to "what is to be done," is totally misguided. The past does *not* produce solutions; history is *not* liberation. Analogies about re-inventing the wheel, not putting one's hand into the fire a second time, etc., are specious and unhelpful. Even in *PW*, one can see (as one trend and variant among many) the tendency to pursue and produce *rhetoric*, which is the verbal mattress ideologues place between themselves and the cold, hard floor of reality's basement. To the extent that the temptation to "draw upon the past" is taken in a serious way, *PW* will founder and fail, as just another vehicle for processed thinking. Ideology is a Big Mac of the mind.

The great value of *PW* (and for which I send you hugs and kisses) is that, for the most part, it has not (yet, at least) succumbed to the temptation to reduce the world as it is, to a series of mental "spots," à la left wing commercials/singles. I regret it when people take as revolutionary, the primeval practice of

dividing the world into us/them, pig-dog-lackey-subhuman robots on the one hand, and revolutionary, freedom-loving, good-hearted folks, on the other. To the extent that people partake of such delusional ways of viewing the world, they tend to create these realities around themselves.

The exciting thing about *PW* is people talking in the language of life (which has no "revolutionary tradition"), about their actual experiences. Will was right in *PW*#6 when he spoke of apathy as the *functional politics* of the great (and, yes, usually silent) majority. When people see *actual* alternatives, *not* theoretical visions, then there will be movement. And let's be clear about what an "alternative" is: I am currently a member of a large, "progressive" food co-op in the Seattle area, which promotes "alternative" insurance that turns down applicants if it appears they might use the insurance; has a "democratic" internal structure with no printed set of documents describing how the levers of power within the co-op are available to its membership; and which has a current money surplus, the disposition of which is being used *not* to reduce prices for the membership, thus freeing them a bit from reliance

upon the *real* status quo, but instead, is earmarked for further co-op expansion, via the creation of more stores. Not all that's an "alternative," is, unless your idea of a real choice is Safeway vs. Tradedwell, or Brand X vs. Brand Y. Well, enough for now.

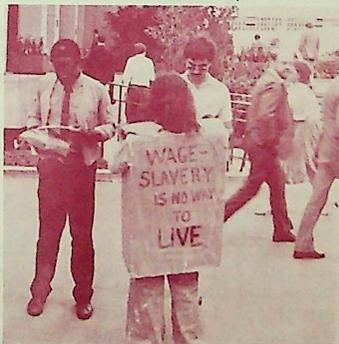
Sincerely,
D.R. — Seattle



Dear PW,

I think you have initiated the next great craze for the U.S.A. and enclose an offer to purchase 99% of your stock via our dummy-corporation fronts in the Seychelles, Panama etc. In addition we propose a clothing corporation selling 'Processed World' T-Shirts, buttons etc.; a 'people's stock exchange' to help community groups support our industrial efforts in the Third World; a private public relations organization to stimulate the imaginations of young Americans and increase their demand for our novelty items through flashy but essentially harmless pseudo-terrorist acts against straw capitalists created by our 'biographical staff'; a chain of 'Processed World' disco-ques serving "Marxist" drinks at high markups to the children of the privileged classes, together with an entertainment corporation whose records and videos, released under camouflage of a number of seemingly separate legal subsidiaries, will allow young Americans passively to simulate the process of social criticism and thus give them the illusion of independent personal existence as promised by the U.S. Constitution, all the while hooking them on our products. We shall create a large labour force by hypnotising large numbers of losers into the belief that since "wage

labour" is fundamentally immoral, they should work on strict commission and not expect any guaranteed support whatsoever from us. In court we can maintain that our status as a political organ exempts us from the minimum wage statutes. We have already drafted 20 self-help authors to prepare 'Books for Success' on the lines of "Think for Yourself in 30 days!", "How to be Rude to Capitalist Swine", "How to make a fortune as a political activist", "Processed World's Buyer's Handbook", "Socialist Realism: The Magic Key to Self-Expression", "The Girls of Processed World: Beauty Tips for Aquarian-Age Proles", "1001 dirty Marxist Jokes Old and New", "How to Make Nouveau-Expressionist Prints in Ten Easy Lessons", "Death to the AMA!" (naturally we have our chemists at work now on 'Marxist natural healing potions' which should guarantee us a 3500% retail markup) — etc. etc. Our publishing operations will include an endless series of romantic novels where the lowly word processoreess hooks a high-level management executive and, amidst a flurry of torrid sex disguised as noble political action, eventually persuades him to leave the wicked Capitalist Anthill and be her front man in a lucrative new 'Processed World' enterprise.



We are sure that you will find our offer exciting, since after all you are good Americans and know that making a profit is a nice thing for everyone. Americans love to think they are riding the crest of the future and we are in a position to flatter their vanity right to the limit in this respect. And after all — if they are happy with our products, surely we must be fulfilling an authentic need?! You will all end up with honorary doctorates from the university of your choice and lovely homes in Manhattan and Santa Monica. In the meanwhile you will have \$25,000 cash for the rag direct from us and a full 2% of the profits from future related enterprise, and until our advertising sales managers regard 'Processed World' as ripe for nationwide glossy distribution, you will maintain nominal editorial control! (These terms are subject to certain legal provisos which we can discuss after you have signed the enclosed contracts.) We know that you will find our offer scrupulously fair and a credit to the great American tradition of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Lucre; because if you do not you will be eliminated within two weeks and your children mysteriously refused credit for the rest of their lives. What a shame that would be, nicht wahr?

Yours truly,
John Q. Standard
Chief Executive Officer
The United States of America



Dear People:

Being a part of the bureaucratic red tape that puts people in little boxes and then forgets where they are placed, I am belatedly answering your kind missive, not knowing

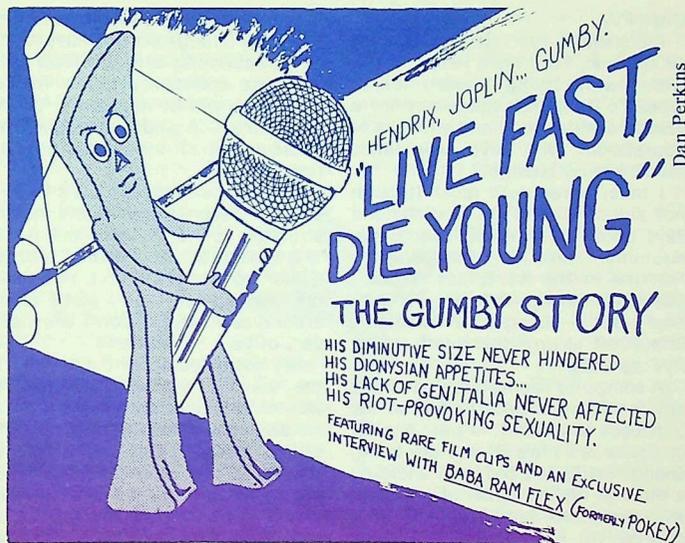
when you will receive this, but knowing that in due time you will.

As you are well aware of, I am a prisoner, and there are some things which are deemed unfit for my rehabilitation. It seems as if your magazine is included in that frame of mind. So when I do get your magazine it is only about three weeks behind when it is sent to me, sometimes even later. I am wondering if it is not read by the staff here and then passed around, which is not a bad idea, in point, but of little help to those who may read it. In order to understand what is said a person has to first have some understanding of their own worth first and no one who can work in this system has that kind of understanding.

I have no money, but if I did, I would have to pay the state for the privilege of receiving your magazine, which is something that I refuse to do. That is why I brush my teeth with salt and use some of the most caustic soap in the world (Pink Death) when I shower because I will not pay these people for the thrill of using Colgate.

I have enjoyed every issue of your magazine and I would like to keep receiving it, even if it is not conducive to my well-being in the eyes of the people who mis-run this hell hole, that is the only price I will pay for it while I am in here, to me that is worth more than money. I could order many hot-dog magazines which are offered, (i.e. hot-dog, fuck books, with pictures of naked women and men, condoned and approved by all the reigning members of the parole board), and I would be considered a model convict, as long as I did not masturbate, which is frowned upon, as being an illegal handling of the sexual organs.

I have done some writing and I just came out in the magazine *Yellow Silk*. It is a simple pleasure



to sit and let the human element of my being come alive. It is a sin for man in this place of lost souls to try to hold on to his humanity, it means that the system has not performed the final operation on a sleep starved mind. I read and listen to the news, and I hear the people who in their fear are calling for more people to be put into prison, and I cannot understand their reasoning for such an outcry. Prisons are made to employ the unemployable, it is a haven for the unskilled, for the redneck illiterate to visit his hate for anyone who can read a few more words than him/her. It is a place for the birth of hate/sexual fantasies which haunt a mind until they become a part of his every waking hour, and a ghost that clings to his back once he is released, back among those who must have hated him with the same malice, the same vastity, as the dreams which wake

him in the night, leaving him limp with release, at the sight of anger exploding in many colors before his closed eyes. Prison is a pit of snakes waiting for spring to come so that they can go forth and spend their poison in the waiting veins of whoever. It is also the home of self-pity, and selfishness, and survival at all costs. Yes it is good to sit and let my human-ness expand itself and replant its roots in the world of humans again. Did you know that upon receiving your letter I first put it to my nose and sniffed it like cocaine, breathing deep gulps of its humanity, letting it rain its waters on my cancerous insides healing me and rubbing me back in touch with my female humanity, and for the first time in many months, I slept with my arms wrapped around me and I was at peace.

Thank you,
F.C. — a Calif. prison

Dear PW,

I apologize for replying on this 1930 Royal, but I have fallen in love with it while trying to learn how to type. To think that this was once a standard office tool, and a means of oppression. My, my; how times (don't really) change.

I must agree with most (though not all) of what J.S. of Richmond says about information processing equipment and its relationship to humans in the workplace. I don't buy his cottage-industry dreamboat. But I do agree that info is important to any side (with which PW agreed).

A computer is only a tool, and like any tool, only as good or bad as the purposes to which it is put. A plow is a plow is a plow. If you are being economically coerced into wielding a plow to till the lands of a master who owns both land and plow, it is oppressive. But should that same plow be owned by yourself and used to till your own land, that's another matter altogether.

Work sucks. But what are you going to do? The problem is with the men who own the tools, and the relationships they foist upon their workers (management included). Office work is full of drudgery, as is factory work, or any kind of work — whether in a corporate-capitalistic republic, a military fascist dictatorship, a socialist democracy, or in an office in downtown Moscow. As distinct from the technology, the office situation, with its worker/manager relationships, is not a tool, but a form of human organization. It is the forms of organization that are the problem, not the tools.

Current technology is no more or less insidious than any past technology. Using tools positively allows humanity to do such incredible things as preserve food and escape the ravages of the elements. And with tools humanity will eventually control the so-called ineluctable

laws of economics (the owners do so already). Things do not have to be as they currently are. But tools such as those commonly found in the workplace will be necessary for the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of the presiding edifice.

Oh, hell; who cares? Let's face it: all that deconstruction and reconstruction is *work*. Who needs it? The tools are just a taunt, a dare. Easier to hang-out and trash out *their* workplace. "If I can't stand around and bitch, I don't want any part of your revolution."

My major complaint with PW is the way it exploits the natural worker/manager animosity. This is an easy shot; the manager is the visible "boss." But the truth, of course, is that manager and "worker" alike are drones for the owners. That the owners have exploited this animosity between the two camps is understandable — anything but unity among the drones. But why does PW agree with the owners on this point? Again, seeing the commonality of our plight, and putting that understanding to daily use is *work*.

It is fatuous to hold managers responsible for upholding the current system, while excusing oneself for being a worker on the grounds that one has no choice but to work. There are far more workers than managers; assuming that every human being counts the same, the workers provide far more support for the system than do the managers. And in total dollars they purchase more of the goods the system produces, which also supports the system. Don't be a cry-baby and say you have no choice but to work in an office, that's bullshit. The fact is, any alternative to the workplace of the owners would be even *more* work. This is due to the present nature of the system as the owners have it designed. But if enough

workers chose an alternative, the system would have to change. But the prospect of more work inhibits any such readjustment. It seems effort itself is the culprit. Like I say, what are you going to do?

I enjoyed Tom Athanasiou's piece "World Processing: Technology & Instability." Clearly, the separation of work and income is the answer (the question is how). With increased un- and under-employment due to computers and robotics (which I feel will be far greater than even Tom suggests), will come an economic paradox: who will be the market for the products these robots and computers churn out? For economic (as well as political) reasons that should be obvious, the power of the owners rests upon a healthy, growing economy, which in turn rests upon a relatively affluent middle-class that can purchase the commodities of industry. A miniscule professional and technocratic elite will not support such a system.

If the new technology is seen as a matter of labor-saving devices, the same wages being paid out for less work, the system will remain intact. But other than preserving the current system, what economic enticement does such a view offer? On the other hand, if the new technology is seen as a means to maximize profits — less wages due to less labor — economic havoc will result. But this is probably what will be required to instigate any real change in the current system.

As for myself, I am considering starting an open-forum 'zine in the Atlanta, GA area. As you are probably aware, unlike the Bay Area,

"Public Poetry" part 1

No poetry!
No poets allowed
Poets speak softly.
But they scream too loud.

by Linda Thomas

Atlanta is no hot-bed of worker reform, so I have no intention of forcing the zine in that direction unless reader response indicates such would be accepted. I'll content myself with general complacency-shattering and mind-opening, let whims and stances fall where they may.

Therefore, I am intrigued with the *production* of your publication. It is wonderfully laid out. And typeset! And has a glossy cover and colored ink! and 68 pages worth! With no adverts! and all for \$1.50! Even the savings you make with bulk mailing can't account for it. So who subsidizes PW? Have you actually found a print shop willing to publish you for a loss (tax-write-off)? Or have you another source of funding? Pray tell. I'm beside myself with the projected costs of a small-run, plastic plate, typewritten zine. So how do you do it? (And don't tell me it's merely a matter of the economies of scale!)

Thanks again. Keep up the good work.

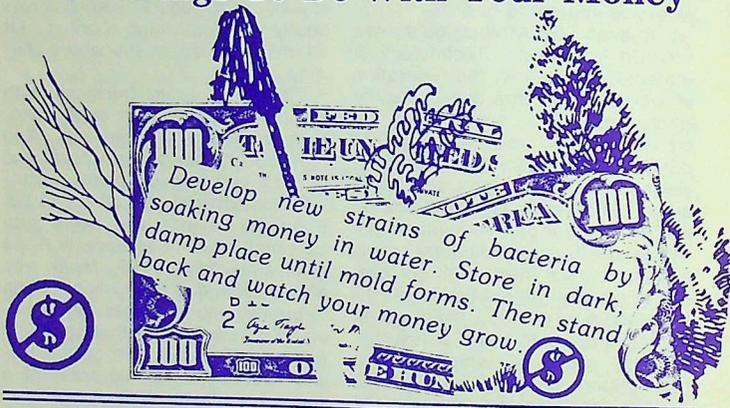
G.H. — Macon, GA

Dear G.H.,

I generally agree with you that computers are "tools" and can be used "positively." However, most forms of modern technology can clearly not be dissociated from the social organization that accompany their applications (including most uses of computers). In other words, some tools correspond closely to the way they are currently being used. Part of the danger associated with nuclear power is the oppressive and hierarchical security apparatus that goes along with the installation of power plants. Developments in numerical control computer technology which have been applied to automating machine tooling goes hand in hand with workers' alienation and their disempowerment by management.

Tired of feeling that money rules your life? Develop your "Financial Creativity" with the following guidelines:

101 Things To Do With Your Money



Furthermore, looking at computers simply as "tools" obscures the productive process they currently involve, i.e. tens of thousands of intensely exploited workers throughout the world.

It's all very well to speculate on how modern technology could be used if it was in the right hands, and applied to projects of direct social value. But the fact remains that aside from some significant advances in fields such as health care and library science (and even here there are plenty of examples of adverse effects of modern technology), the immediate results of widespread implementation of much of modern technology are disadvantageous to workers and others directly affected. I think it is important not to lose sight of the current reality of conditions created by these tools.

Although it is true that, in many ways, managers are just drones and more likely than not as trapped by their jobs as workers, their position and influence in the office is dif-

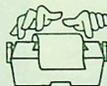
ferent. Managers usually have more power over the very details of office life that can make the difference between a job that is "bearable," and one that really sucks. The manager is the one responsible for enforcing work rules, assuring high productivity, punishing workers who come in late, etc. Their power can be used against the workers, and few managers can resist using it. In rare cases, humane and sympathetic managers can use their clout to shield and protect workers who are "under" them. But because they have greater responsibility — to the owners, to the company and its profit rate, they usually identify more with the company and its interests.

Workers have a "choice" to make — they can act like snitches or brown-nosers and undermine their co-workers, or they can act in solidarity with them, even if the choices are rarely that simple and clear. Managers also have a choice, but often this choice is already made by their decision to accept

managerial roles, especially if their job includes monitoring and accounting for the productivity of their staff.

PW keeps above water financially because most of the labor that goes into publishing, including printing, photography, and typesetting, is given freely by friends and collaborators. Over the 2½ years that we have been producing the magazine we have accumulated a lot of skills in these areas, so our expenses are mainly materials like paper and ink, and postage.

Sincerely,
Maxine Holz



Dear Processed World,

I was a secretary for 16 lousy years. Then I met Lou and he took me away from all that shit.

Sure, Lou's a little weird, and this mask gets so hot that sometimes I think I'm going to start shitting my bikini panties. So?

But then I look around at this beautiful condo and, hey man — I'm loaded on ether from noon on (which is when I get up) till 4 in the A.M. (which is when Lou usually crashes) (the insane sluglike whiff brain) and yeah you better believe this beats *the office job!* In spades it beats it!! So tell all your readers, especially those poor mousy little secretaries and file clerks!!! Tell those 9-5 gals or gally-slaves to find themselves a well-heeled pervert like Lou — Kick back — and start digging it!

E.R. — Los Angeles

P.S. You can always spot the *real rich sickies* like Lou because they always want to snort lady "C" out of your box on the very first date. Just say to them: "How High?"



Dear PW:

At first glance, PW came as a bit of shock. I have made my living for thirty years within the business establishment where all complaints are carefully swept under the rug of "good form." This sanitizing, by the way, has the effect of giving the misfit the impression of being a one-of-a-kind, and therefore abnormal.

But upon an unhurried reading of issue #7, I realized that you are not a bunch of wild-eyed anarchists; your readers are sensitive, intelligent, articulate people who simply have the courage to say what we all know to be true: that working for the establishment is boring and demeaning, and that management is a closed society of bull-shit artists conning the workers and the public. PW makes me realize that my long-standing feelings of alienation and being exploited are shared by thousands (millions?) of the others in this great country of ours.

A little bit about my background. Like J.S., I am in computers. After 20 years of programming and systems analysis (whatever that is, and yes, 20 years — I'm 51), I realized that my skill lies in the area of technical communications: writing manuals and giving courses. I'm particularly interested in the high-falutin' language members of both the business and computer establishments employ to conceal the truth and mask the basic emptiness of what they appear to be saying. I

Keep the faith. I look forward to reading many more PW's.

P.M. — New Jersey
P.S. Yes, I work for Exxon.



Alex Igloo

Dear Processed World,

I've been reading your mag for several issues now and find a certain amount of affinity with your concerns. There are only a few other mags that share your concern with making changes in everyday life. *Tabloid*, *Left Curve*, *Cultural Correspondence* and *Processed World* though not immediately similar, all share the vision of changing this work-a-day life.

Although your focus "on the job" provides a necessary forum for "talking back" your basic approach could equally apply to "life-time" vs. "job-time." What good are better jobs, bosses, conditions if a person's real life — one's own time — is worse than the time at work, i.e. *WHY* do people actually *want* to stay at the office rather than go home?

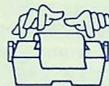
The time spent on the job, admittedly the largest block of time in a person day, is not the whole day. As I'm sure many of you putting *Processed World* together know — it is the time after the job that living

becomes vital and inspiring. To help people recover this vision in spite of fatigue, in spite of all the problems, in spite of every obstacle, is heroic — and I, for one, admire your efforts to encourage people to question their perspectives.

On a slightly different subject — computers — I'd like to note an analogy between the steam engine and computers. It was the steam engine and its evolution into the gasoline engine that drove the industrial era. The new driving force is the electrical engine — computers. The similarity between the rows and rows of data entry operators and those of say the rows of women seated at sewing machines in a garment factory has not gone unnoticed. The application of technology hasn't changed. Just as there were mechanics for the steam/gas engine there are now programmers and technicians to keep these engines going. When the steam engine was first introduced to the public there were those that feared its consequences, as

there are those that now question computers. However, their fears should not be of the technology but how and by whom it is used. All tools can be used to create a life worth living.

Pleasant Dreams,
K. — S.F.



Dear PW folks,

I've got a few belated responses to your "Special Sex Issue" (#7) that I'd like to share with you.

Though I disagree with Holz' article and the large number of other articles in more orthodox Left publications in the USA about the issue of sexuality and pornography, my disagreement doesn't come from a kneejerk reaction or from tailing of the anti-pornography movement.

The issue which seems to be missed by Holz and by both sides of the Great Porn Debate within the women's movement and the Left is that of ideals and ethics in the area of sexuality. When talking about changing life we have to have some idea of what we want to change *to*, as well as what we are changing *from*. What sexual styles should we promote and which should we not? Which emotional and sexual responses are in tune with our ideas of the way that the world should be which are not? Unless you would argue that our loves and sexual encounters are outside of our ideas about society as a whole (that public/private split that seems to hold true in the Left generally), in which case there is little to be said, there *are* norms that should apply to these areas and ideals that we can aspire to.

If all sexual and emotional tastes are equally valid, from the most stereotypical and traditional heterosexual-monogamy-from-first-fuck-

to-death, through homosexual coupling, tribal, and group, and sado-masochist, and onanistic, and so on and on, not to skip incest and rape, and prostitution, then all attacks on any form of pornography are invalid. If there are invalid forms of sexual expression, oppressive forms, then material which promotes those forms is also invalid, *n'est pas?*

I think that a good case can be made for the feminist idea that 'the personal is political' and that our personal lives set up the frameworks of oppression (typical idea in the anarchist movements, too). So, if you want to change life, you have to change and analyze ALL OF LIFE. I believe that a sexuality that was based on equality and consent, on persons relating to each other and themselves as whole and unique individuals, rather than objects interchangeable with other objects, as bodies that fit together and were all of a part and all erotic, rather than just assholes, breasts, vulvae, mouths — the parts that the pornographic image takes from the body — is a good thing. Sexuality that unites one with oneself and others rather than making one more alone and more alienated, that is surely a good thing?

Why don't we start thinking about good living, good loving, good sex? Pornography does not promote these things. Regardless of the images that are presented, and some *are* erotic (not very many, to me), this industry is making people more alienated from themselves and each other by selling their sexuality back to them. That is not a good thing. It lies about sex by removing it from feeling and making it purely a physical action, like another technical problem, like something an engineer could solve. That is not a good thing. It reinforces differences and divisions between women and men. And, worst,

it takes my body away from me and tries to sell it back to me.

I am not sure why the orthodox Left hates the anti-pornography movement, because, though I recognize an anti-sex, and anti-male tone to some of their pronouncements, the Left is generally *more* opposed to sex than the anti-pornography movement. I think it might have to do with the Patriarchy, which the A.P.M. believes exists and cuts us off from our bodies and nature, while the Left believes that all oppression is economic.

I hope PW remains a satisfying thing for y'all to publish and that you don't succumb to pressure to be 'just another boring Leftist journal.'

Love and Kisses,
S.W. — Toronto

P.S. Reading *Processed World* seems a bit hypocritical to me, cause I'm trying to get an office job so that I won't have to work with boiling alkaline soap and electrified acids in an electroplating plant anymore. . .



Dear PW:

When I saw that PW had finally published a piece dealing with gay issues, namely Stephen Marks' "Sex Roles/Social Control," I was thrilled. It was the first article I read in issue #7. As I read it, I found myself nodding in agreement at almost every point. But upon finishing, I felt somehow disturbed by it. I read the article again, but this time, instead of nodding my head, I found myself thinking "Yes, but. . ." Several months later, I picked the article up again in an effort to draw out some of my reservations, those nagging "yes, but's."

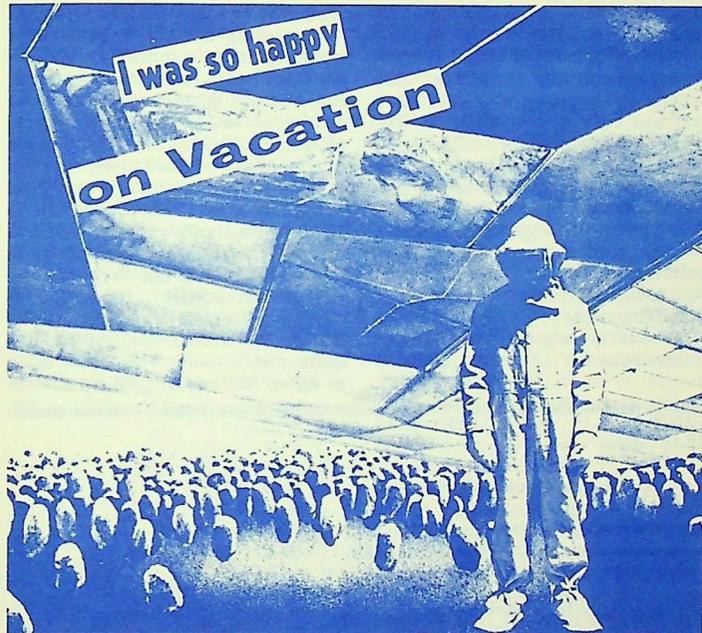
I guess the main problem I have with the article is that Marks seems

to see the gay and feminist movements as passive victims of corporate/media manipulations to spawn new forms of consumption and new methods of employee pacification. The history he presents is too neatly packaged, bound in a ribbon of cynicism. He ignores opposing strains and breakthroughs in the gay and feminist movements.

Marks sees women as pawns of the corporations at every turn. First the corporations collude with psychiatrists and others to keep women at home. Then women break through, only to reinforce oppressive stereotypes at the corporate workplace. Nowhere in the piece does Marks mention the feminists critics of Friedanian careerism, or feminist efforts to create lives and institutions apart from "mainstream culture" (whatever that is).

In a similar way, Marks seems to see sexuality not as an innately beneficial desire, but as an easily preyed upon impulse — a poor substitute for "self realization" that is used in the same destructive way that drugs and alcohol frequently are.

Although I share Marks distaste for real estate speculators, I think that the urban gay migration and the consequent "refurbished inner city neighborhoods" are a little more complex than the way he presents it. He cites the Berube article on WWII, but seems to forget that the cities were as much a haven in the 70's as in the late 40's and 50's. Some of the later gay migrants were "counter-cultural" types, but many were not. This raw accumulation of people became the critical mass for some vital, heavily textured communities. Some adapted symbols of traditional American culture. But symbols do not mean the same thing in every context. The sentence "Gay marching bands waved American flags and gay men lavishly squandered their disposable in-

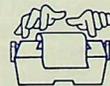


comes on material symbols of mainstream status and security" conveys a great deal of more-radical-than-thou attitude that skips over a meaningful analysis. Besides, I happen to have a very good, very progressive friend who is in the marching band.

Marks seems to be working around a theory of commodification, i.e. capitalism's ability to turn needs into commodities for sale on the marketplace. The frequent problem with using such a theory is that it fails to examine the genesis of human needs or how those needs can snap around in subversive, unexpected ways at the powers that be. He implicitly denies the possibility of autonomous action in a schema that presents people controlled at every turn by command centers of power. In the end, the

strategy for change that Marks proposes is the abstract call to "challenge sex role stereotyping" and "reconsider our relationship" to the system of "social manipulation." Could Marks' failure to point towards a more concrete political direction be a function of his failure to arrive at an understanding of the holes and rips, as well as the seams, of the present social fabric?

M.L. — S.F.



Processed World:

Below is a letter written to Lona Jensen. . . Individual in a mass of lemmings. I'm in NY now and unemployed. In 36 years — 18 of them working, I can't remember more

than 2 periods of time in my life when I've felt better.

When I was temping at Levi-Strauss one day *on line* at the "copy machine," a young man was beating and cursing the machine. The effect of this on the "structured ones" was that they were "appalled." It was great. It was perfect. It was magic. He had a flair — this free spirit. A gift of displaying himself in truth of what he thought and felt. The "structured ones" on-line thought he was nuts. I knew he was. The letter to Lona Jensen was written after I was instructed to look "professional," shave my legs, etc.
M.G. — NYC

BRAIN ROT

when professor T put chalk to board
he lost his thought
somewhere in that chip micropuff
dissolved under the first yellow speck
on green board

he bowed his bristly head and
looked at stubby fingers
still clutching chalk
cuticles smiled
they weren't telling

he could not remember why
board hung stagnant on block wall
chalk dangled from board
hand grasped chalk
warm body ossified
in 2 shiny leather shoes

why
to 25 squirming students
he spewed words about books
he barely recalled titles of
much less contents

professor T barely recalled yesterday
did not remember this morning

somewhere between
the collapse of the roman empire
and rise of postmodernism
an alarmclock sounded
he dressed and drove to school

Dear Lona Jensen Temporaries:

Regarding our conversation this morning, there is something you are overlooking, or just not understanding. We are all individuals and yet are expected to look alike, professional, expensive, etc. At 34 years of age, I have my own style, my own taste and preference. I won't be suppressed by "dress codes" which can only be another "rule" made to be broken. Who has the authority to instruct others on how to comb their hair or how to dress? Will we all one day be instructed on how to think? Obviously I think I look fine and am quite comfortable. You don't have to agree but you should be able to

once
twice
for weeks
months
years
eons

the empire kept collapsing
the alarm sounding
he and postmodernism rising
and brushing their teeth

papers and books kept coming
and words
like empty boxes
stared
until one day
professor T

drew
blank

mind
board
faces behind him

and as void cannot fill void
professor T turned slowly
found that limp muscle
called a tongue
parted his lips
and said

"class dismissed"

by Sheila Goodman Brown

accept. Dress codes are for the army. I am not in the army. I am an individual who prefers if everyone does not look alike, think alike or smell alike. I am neat, clean and have my own way of using clothing. This society is losing its individuality by suppressing one's self in the falsity that we should all look alike and be comforted that we all are alike. But. We are not. I will not conform when it comes to what I eat or what I wear. That is me. Not a "professional," but a person, making my own choices. I will not alter my taste to suit another, a corporation or a fashion of the day. I thank you for acknowledging me for me.

— M.G.



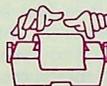
PW—

2 comments on PW#8:

a. It wasn't funny, how come? Have we all become overwhelmed by the external shit?

b. Referring to Dorothy's poem ["My Lead at Work", back cover #8], I've been in the position of her "lead." Chances are, she thinks the same way Dorothy does, but Dorothy will never know it if she "don't talk about anything/When she's there."

E. — Petaluma CA



Dear PW:

During the past year I have been a word processor with over a dozen temporary agencies in the Los Angeles area. Working through temporary agencies has its benefits. The pay is good (usually \$10 to \$12 an hour) and working on a temporary basis allows me to continue in graduate school. The drawbacks

to this kind of work, however, are clear. Living with a ball and chain around your leg for seven hours a day is a source of tension and strain which those who are not subjected to it cannot understand.

The degree of hegemony of the word processing systems varies from place to place. Although some secretaries use the word processor as an appendage to their main tasks, there seems to be an increasing tendency to form word processing pools (a variation of the typing pool). This results in people (usually women) being stationed next to a word processor for about seven hours a day. This form of work is dehumanizing, a kind of stationery assembly-line. But not only is such work dehumanizing, it may be hazardous to your health.

Lately, I have become concerned about the possible hidden effects of word processing. Several weeks ago I began an assignment with a legal department of a city in Southern California and came across a business card of a sales representative for Wang. I had heard that the radiation level of Wang was low and the sales representative gave me no new information when I called him. He mentioned tests conducted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the people who brought us Three Mile Island) and thus whetted my appetite for more information. I requested more information and her referred me to the main office of Wang Laboratories in Lowell, Massachusetts. I called Lowell and told a person in the Product Safety Division I wanted more information about possible radiation effects. The supervisor of the division wrote to me, assuring me that Wang workstations are (or have been) tested for compliance with a number of official standards: Underwriters Laboratories, UL-144; Canadian Standards Association, CSA C22.2 No. 154; and the U.S. Dept.

of Health, Education and Welfare.

They sounded very impressive. However, a close reading of the articles was unsettling. They disclosed that there are still unanswered questions about long-term radiation effects. Although numerous studies have been conducted, findings still tend to be equivocal. Some studies, for example, recommend that word processors wear vests or utilize protective shields. And it is recommended that equipment be thoroughly inspected periodically for radiation leaks. Fifteen-minute breaks are also recommended for word processors every two hours. This type of information apparently is not widely distributed. In the dozen or so companies I worked with this past year none advocated such breaks and I saw no radiation screens nor word processors who wore vests.

I brought the articles to work and the women I work with read them and were outraged. One of the women who was pregnant had the foresight to ask to be transferred to non-terminal work when the new system was introduced in March. [In fact, there have been a number of miscarriage clusters in Canada and the U.S. among CRT operators — *Ed. note*]. Copies of the articles were sent to the union representative who will make recommendations to management.

We also found out that radiation shields which block 95 percent of the radiation are available. (A So-mashield is such a product. It blocks about 95% of the radiation and costs about \$100.) The union will ask management to buy these shields for all word processors.

This office operates democratically in terms of scheduling so most of the word processors are taking 15 minute breaks every two hours. Initially, this felt self-indulgent, yet it is surprising that a back-log of work does not result from this

practice. Moreover, we all agree that we do not feel so fatigued at the end of the day.

This experience raises a number of questions. Why doesn't Wang make it a policy to warn users of their systems about possible radiation effects? The obvious answer is that word processing systems are cost-effective, particularly in terms of personnel time, the largest expenditure of any organization. Wang, as well as other manufacturers, do not readily disseminate information about the hazards because this would jeopardize the profit margin of their product.

Another question is why management has not investigated the question of radiation more thoroughly. Much of this inactivity has to do with ignorance. Also, in the final analysis, management has historically been indifferent to the health of workers.

The ramifications of this problem are just beginning to be understood. More than seven million people in this country work at video display terminals, and in the next few years most offices in this country will be automated. This means that health hazards will proliferate.

Of course it is the responsibility of producers of VDTs to ensure that the use of their product is not hazardous to the user's health and safety. And it is just as clear that these manufacturers are not willing to invest time and research dollars because such measures, at least in the short-run, do not make money. As such, it is incumbent on us who are exposed to radiation hazards to hold these manufacturers accountable.

If you are interested in protecting your health and your rights (closely related entities), there are a number of organizations you can contact. Information about health hazards can be obtained from the Los

Send PW
Your Writing!

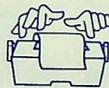


We are very interested in your articles, short stories, "Tales of Toil," letters, etc. Usually the PW editorial collective

comments on things we receive, either verbally or in writing, so a dialogue of some sort is sure to ensue. Generally, everything should be typed, double-spaced and preferably in 3-10 copies. Thanks! Also, all you artists out there, send us your graphics!!

Angeles Committee on Occupation Safety and Health, (724 South Park View, Los Angeles 90057, (213) 387-7283). If you are interested in becoming involved in the issue of radiation effects, 9 to 5 [Local 925 — SEIU], a national union, is organizing around this question.

M.K. — Los Angeles



Dear M.K. —

Thanks for the information on WP hazards. Some other groups organizing around VDT hazards are: Bay Area VDT Coalition, c/o LOHP, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley CA 94720; and VDT Committee, Labour Council of Metro. Toronto, Rm. 407, 15 Gervais Drive, Don Mills, Ontario. Both groups publish newsletters full of latest news in research, law, and contract developments about VDTs.

One question that immediately came up for me was my profound skepticism about suggesting people turn to unions to solve this type of problem. You state in two places, almost as an afterthought, that the union will make recommendations and requests of management to alleviate the problems. Well, did they? And if so, what changed, if anything, and what qualitative difference in daily worklife has been achieved? My guess is that things aren't that different, but I'd be curious to hear what you think now. By the way, readers are strongly urged to send accounts of any successes they have been part of, in addressing office health hazards, and how it was done.

I'd also like to say that I think it is a mistake for office workers concerned about workplace health hazards to focus exclusively on the potential radiation hazards of VDTs. In fact, practically the entire office environment is riddled with poisonous substances, not simply CRT

problems. A focus on radiation could lead to a defusion of protest if it is convincingly proven that radiation is not a major problem. A good source of information about the full range of office health hazards is the book *Office Hazards* by Joel Makower (\$6.95, Tilden Press), which unfortunately fails to address the ideology of medicine/disease/health and "acceptable risk" that underlies nearly all discussion of these subjects. We hope to have articles and "Tales of Toil" on the medical industry, "processing disease and health," in future issues

— readers are urged to submit related material.

Lastly, I don't think a discussion of WP hazards can avoid talking about the content of the work. Some studies have shown that clerical CRT operations are the highest stress occupation around, while writers who use VDTs have statistically rather low stress levels. It becomes necessary to look at what is being done on these machines, and how the entire labor process is organized and controlled, in order to begin understanding how deep the sources of "health hazard" go. In fact, we have to look at office work in general, its usual purpose in the circulation of capital, and the irrelevancy of that "purpose" to human well-being.

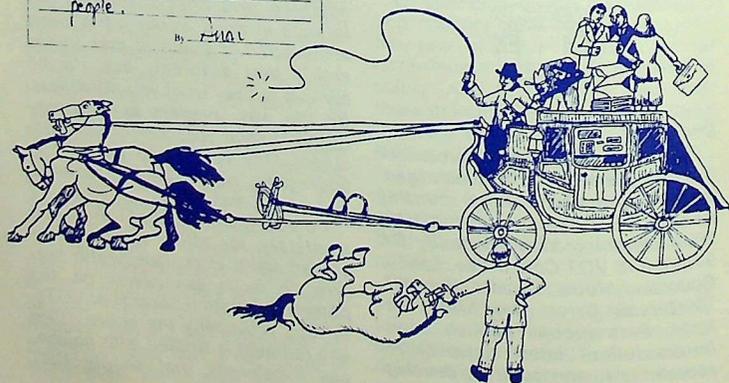
Thanks for starting the discussion.

— Lucius Cabins

WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A.	
TO <i>Processed World people</i>	
DATE <i>8/14</i>	TIME _____
WHILE YOU WERE OUT	
M _____	
OF _____	
PHONE _____	EXT. _____
TELEPHONED _____	PLEASE CALL _____
CALLED TO SEE YOU _____	WILL CALL AGAIN _____
WANTS TO SEE YOU _____	URGENT _____
RETURNED YOUR CALL _____	LEFT THE ATTACHED _____
MESSAGE <i>This is unanimously dedicated to those employees either laid off or doing extra work of laid off people.</i>	
By <i>— rnal</i>	



Bonus Situation



I would like to say that most, if not all, of MESSENGER was taken from a notebook that I kept on me at all times, and the different "blocks" were more or less taken from this notebook, ... out of incidents, thoughts and so forth, in the course of a day's work.

Block Five TRANSITS

The structural reality of Street-Office and Office-Street alike is based upon a deliberate and deadening linearity and rectilinearity. The city is an ordered chaos of square and rectangular blocks of various shapes, sizes, and combinations, with the only variations and breaks assumed by arrogant corporate and banking structures who only break from the linearity to further sharpen its morbid effects, and never as an integral and organic element of a larger transformative area of the city as a whole.

But the messengers come to know another possible set of patterns, shapes, and configurations in all this mesh of the straight and square. The messengers must cut across and through the cross-cross and up-down structurality of the city in a way that changes the sense of visual perspective, of the illusion of "solidity" and concrete massification, and especially of the otherwise dehumanizing effects of always keeping to the straight and narrow path of linearity, signing or walking away one's own freedom along dotted lines, on paper or cement. The messengers break out and rise above this web of mortification by following the principles of physics that now tell us that the shortest distance between two points is not necessarily a straight line.

So messengers largely come to ignore the separation between sidewalk and autoways, which are blended into a single and integral entity — the Street. Swerving, weaving, and

OFFICE HAIKU

Inside
Overloaded
Workday
Of constant noise
And paper answers.

by Miriam Clavir

jaywalking, the messengers trace out a new geometry of curves, zig-sags, and odd angles which defy the still-dominant linearity. The messengers also come to learn of the existence of several parallel-universes of Transit, spiralling passageways of all kinds whose magic always engages the young, and which by their challenging presence, however limited by their creators or intended purposes, hints at a possible free city of the future.

These irregular Transits are, of course, represented mainly by the Subway system, with its bends and even sharp turns, dictated to the designers and builders by natural configurations in the rockbed base of Manhattan island, natural patterns of flow and form. Is it any wonder that it is the Subway which has attracted, magnet-like, that true and liberatory expression of Present-day Proletcult, the Graffiti artists?

In addition to the great snaking tunnels beneath us, there are also several other small examples of non-linear and anti-linear eccentricity, which receive special attention and usage by messengers. These include the system of passageways, with

stores, news-stands, cafes, etc. underneath Rockefeller Center and environs, as well as various arcades cutting through whole blocks and buildings at street level, special above-street walkways and foot-bridges between structures, and special escalators and stairways veering up, off, and away from their adjoining or surrounding archi-textures.

Block Six □ STRUCTIONS

The entrance swallows you and the exit shits you out. Between the two, you are digested like a morsel, divested of your measured labor, and processed through a mesh of surveillance and security.

Like the castles of the nobility in the era of feudalism, the headquarters of the corporate-banking-industrial complex, in the City of the World in our own time of crisis, are fortresses of fear, fortresses against the living, battlements of iron and glass and concrete armor to defend against, and the crush, the human. Like the castles of the past, the architecture of the era of Late Imperialism is a hideous combination of function and design. Just as molten metal or burning oil would spit out on the heads of attackers from the mouths of ornate gargoyles, so today, the latest in "high-tech" electronic spying and listening devices peeps out from that potted plant in the hallway, that junk "abstract art" by the elevator, or those large mirrored surfaces that have become so popular....

The latest innovation in this overall

effort is the "friendly environments" sometimes called "Atriums," that many corporate or banking buildings are having built into their first and/or second floors. Complete with tranquilizing artificial waterfalls, plastic and/or real plant-life, coffee-stands and food facilities, as well as seats and tables, these places serve several functions on behalf of the particular interest involved. First of all, employees can be induced to take their lunch and other breaks here, thus not leaving the building and staying within reach of the boss. Secondly, these places are highly-monitored by all kinds of TV and video spy-systems, and probably listening-bugging devices as well, as well as being patrolled by both uniformed and plainclothes private-security inokers, thus allowing the bosses the option of investigating any specific workers, or of keeping an eye on the workforce as a whole in times of tension, firings, strikes, or whatever. Finally, these "friendly spaces" are carefully integrated into the overall para-military fortification system which now dictates much of real estate manipulation, "city planning," and particular architectural-design techniques in all the "strategic" central locations of all the big cities of the world today.

This is why there are no longer any windows in the first, second, third, and sometimes even more floors in so many of the new buildings being built. This is why your walkman-radio, or even your LED watch, will be often thrown out of whack when you go in or out of the new hi-tech/security buildings, as invisible probing fingers of special devices designed to screen sensitive computer-complexes tangle with the weaker signals of devices carried through, or even near, the building.

The buzzing and beeping of automatic-locks, the crackling of intercoms, and the hissing of doors without handles or any other human attributes, all of these are the burping and

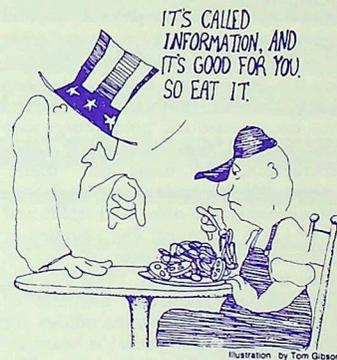


Illustration by Tom Gibson

farting of an organism which just barely tolerates the presence of the life-forms it was initially intended to serve.

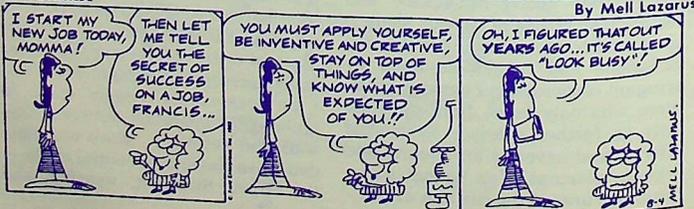
Like the castles of old, these fortresses against the living are only awaiting the cannon of the future, the force of the New which turns their greatest strength into their greatest weakness, their massivity into immobility, their towers into targets.

Block Eleven □ END-COUNTER II

On the corner of 57th street and Madison avenue, where the effete elite meet and excrete, a symbolic cataclysm has just erupted, and magnetically pulls on everyone in the immediate area, congealing a crowd which soon draws yet more of the curious.

This Mini-Apocalypse is the destruction of a traffic light by a gigantic yacht, being towed on a special wheel-carriage over to the annual boat show at the Coliseum on the west side. Pieces of the rigging from the deck of the yacht are entangled with the fragments of traffic light, more surrealistic than any indulgence by poseur-artists. Around this tangle gather rich women in fur-coats, businessmen and the usual number of

MOMMA



messengers and other proletarians and street people. The divisions of class and status are immediately stamped on the faces of all present, as they gaze upon this bizarre wreckage. All the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie bemoan the "loss of property," the disruption, the mess on "their" street. All the proletarians and lumpen-proletarians alike find uplift and even joy in the sight. The negation of apparently-fixed objects of control (the traffic-lamp) by, through, and with the simultaneous negation of apparently-inviolable commodities for the super-rich (the yacht) is beautiful truth and true beauty at once. The vulnerability of this material world of things is hope, and life's hope, for the world of the living and the human.

Block Fourteen □ TWIST OF FATE

The worse nightmare of the messenger is the run where he is delivering an envelope containing the means of his own undoing.

The manila envelope that he is rushing crosstown or uptown or downtown with is carrying the eviction notice from the landlord that will throw the messenger out into the street, his workplace. The manila envelope contains the pink-slip from his employers that will now end this job and force him to look for another. The envelope encloses a medical report that will condemn the messenger to a lifetime of illness. The envelopes carry letters from one great power to another that will involve him, unwittingly, in sordid intrigues which will seal his fate. The envelope contains a message which concludes with the inexplicable, but irreversible, command to eliminate all traces of itself, including the one who delivered it...and so it goes....

But what are all these nightmares of the messenger but the imagined and concentrated expression of the daytime and night-time reality of ALL forms of exploited labor in this exploi-

tation-based society, in this Civilization of Exploitation?

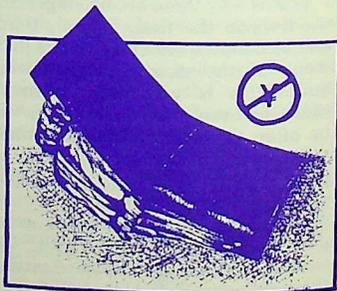
In fact, the messenger is always delivering the means of his or her undoing, even if only in the smallest ways. Every message is stained with one tiny drop of blood, and the immensity of delivered packages and envelopes and commodity-forms of all kinds is a sea of life's blood, flowing from the exploited walk-work of the small army of messengers, and into the ocean of blood of all the world's exploited and oppressed and enslaved labor, down through history.

And all this world's work, all of humanity's toil, and all the commodity-forms of that labor, are marked with that same mark, and even where workers, or workers and their true allies, already rule.

And this is the terrible truth of all of our lives, until the Emancipation and Equalization of the whole of this suffering world.

by Jonathan Leake

Full text of 20 "blocks" available from the author: c/o G.P.O. Box 1643, New York, NY 10116.



The All-New MoneyDroid!: when shopping, don't go without your MoneyDroid... Pull him out and let him pay the bills with his credit card. Never pay for anything again!

THE WALLING OF AWARENESS

by Bradley Rose

Three years ago I spent a few days in a mountain wilderness with two friends. We wanted to "do a sweat" and so we set to work at building a sweat hut. After choosing a flat site along a stream, we began to collect boughs for supports, wood for a fire, rocks for heating, and so on. We used the renewable resources at hand and a sheet of plastic we brought from home. We bent and tied boughs to form a dome-shaped ribcage over which we stretched a plastic skin.

At each stage of construction, we had to make choices. What should we do first? How many ribs did we need? What kind of rocks were best to use? Who would get wood for the fire? We sensed or came to agreement on all issues and we had several rejuvenating sweats during our stay in the mountains.

The days were mild, broken by afternoon showers. Inside our sweat hut, seated around a small pit of red hot, steaming rocks, sitting close on grass which we had sprinkled with

sage, we talked and chanted and hushed to hear the thunder. We had combined our architectural prowesses into something that was mutually satisfying. Moreover, our sweat hut didn't impose upon others since it was only a provisional reorganization of time and space. It was acceptably "rough around the corners," richly sensual, and celebratory—like us.

As that experience settled into my memory, I began to examine how the space surrounding me was shaped and defined, who made such decisions, and with what intentions.

ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS

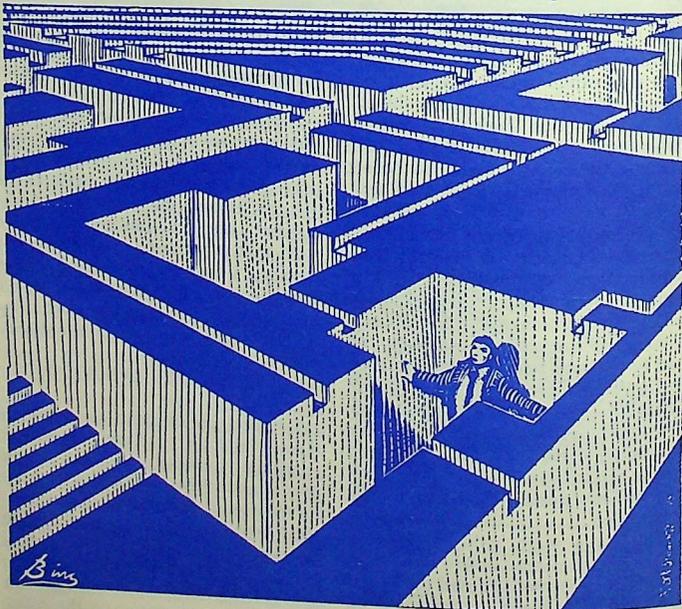
I define architecture as behavior (i.e., thinking, acting, building, choosing, burning, etc.) by which space and time are structured for future use. This definition is deliberately broad in that it recognizes that all people, not just a professional elite, are capable of structuring space. If we remove a door within our home, if we use space on the office

desk to grow herbs or display photos of loved ones, if we make a garbage can of the street, or if we simply leave a space and time untouched—we are making architectural choices.

How such choices are made is a *political* as well as *architectural* matter. The architect, professional or not, limits possibilities, channels tendencies, concentrates resources to facilitate certain kinds of activities (and not others). Architecture, to a large extent determines how people will interact with each other and their environment. The predominant role of professionals in architecture—as in most other spheres of life—is a recent development. Until the Industrial Revolution, only royalty and organized religion needed or could afford the services of professional architects. Most people met their architectural needs by drawing on communally held science and tradition.

When I returned to San Francisco from my mountain experience, the professional, modern architecture in my day to day life seemed even more miserable and inadequate than it did before. I labored in offices permanently sealed against fresh air and sunlight, rain, animal life and all the other "snares and snakepits" of nature. I ventured into streets made cold and windy by highrise aerodynamics. I was hoisted up to work in 'elevators' as one of the human units which measured an elevator's capacity. Phone booths for single people, restaurants with parking lots and family accommodations, "men's rooms" and "ladies' rooms," public parking garages, hallways—even doors (glass, locked, automatic, front and back)—all presupposed and attempted to facilitate and perpetuate certain planned human relationships.

San Francisco's corporate architec-



ture institutionalizes the most unimaginative uses of form, color, texture, taste, smell and other sensory qualities. It is designed to be unappreciable to human taste, hearing, smell and touch. It shows a bias toward what can be mass-produced, for high-tech precision and engineering, for mirry smooth surface, for metal, concrete and glass, and for uncompromising uniformity or regularity. Environments based on sensory deprivation result.

With my wilderness trip still fresh in my memory, I asked myself: what is the value system behind modern design and what are its underlying messages? I began to pay more attention to the effect of architecture on my own life. From the architecture itself emerged a pattern of messages and values shaped by the consciousness of industrialized people.

In San Francisco, new buildings are meant to be as *permanent* as possible. They are erected without regard either for people who live and work in the vicinity or for future generations. Through these buildings, developers attempt to *colonize the future*. Although this has characterized monumental architecture in all ages, only in modern times has the secular corporate world utilized the symbolism of monumental architecture. Right up to modern times, civilizations symbolically established their own permanence in stone. By its sheer size and timelessness, such architecture seemed to convey the impression that the status quo would last through eternity. Corporate modern architecture seeks to do the same.

Modern building materials are largely made of *nonrenewable resources* in limited supply from the far parts of the world—steel, aluminum, copper and petroleum. Oil and gas are used to perfect other raw materials into building-quality glass, steel and concrete. Oil and gas are also used to hoist, weld, press, fit, bore and otherwise erect San Francisco's



buildings. I used to eat my bag lunches on the windy and cold terraces of 3 Embarcadero Center, watching resources from all over the world concentrated into 4 Embarcadero Center across the street.

INDUSTRIALISM ON THE DRAWING BOARD

Through the 19th century the machines created to mine, traverse, smelt, and manufacture affected the way reality was perceived. People could not ignore the sudden and overwhelming presence of machinery. With railroads, canals, bridges and the telegraph, people broke through spatial and temporal barriers. New materials—such as steel and rubber—and new technical aids to production—such as control of electric and steam power—seemed to make many traditions obsolete. Many philosophers who were born to that world

were inspired by the power of contemporary machinery. Machine operation metaphorized their experience and convinced them that 'civilized man' could master nature. He had learned to release and harness the power stored in oil, gas and coal; with nitroglycerin (1847) and dynamite (1866) he blasted his way through mountains. Amid so much progress, industrial men showed an unprecedented self-confidence. They no longer felt bound to hold sacred what Nature through her "wiles" had created. Men leveled forests, bred meatier cattle and sturdier corn, and 'reclaimed' wilderness and wasteland. To them the 20th century represented a new era, not only man-centered and man-bound, but man-controlled.

"The era of the great mechanized individuals has begun and all the rest is palaeontology."

—Umberto Boccioni, 1912

Radical artists and architects, such as the Futurist Boccioni, were among those who dreamed of a world restructured by industry. Architecture became more and more a subject for conversation, discussion, debate, diatribe . . . and manifesto. The supporters of industrialism confronted the old traditions. Fantastic and unprecedented architectures and radical theorems were published during the early 20th century. Adolf Loos, an Austrian architect, equated ornament with crime. Bruno Taut, an Expressionist, pictured dazzling, jeweled cities in watercolor. Antonio Sant'Elia, a Futurist architect whose work rarely got beyond the drawing board, apotheosized grand dams, monumental train stations, colossal power factories and megalithic apartment blocks. On the surface, these fantasies seem various and fundamentally personal, but they all shared a vision of a wholly new world, built and controlled by industrial Man.

New schools of modern design were established in Austria, Germany, Italy, Holland and Russia. Many of the "architects" in these schools had little to show of their work other than manifestos, sketches, and slogans, but over these they attacked and counter-attacked each other and formed alliances. These architects equated the value of their visions with their appropriateness to an industrially restructured world.

As Theo van Doesburg, a radical modernist from the Dutch *de Stijl* school, asserted with millenarian bravado in 1922:

"All that we used to designate as magic, spirit, love, etc. will now be efficiently accomplished. The idea of the miraculous, that primitive man made so free with, will now be realized simply through electric current, mechanical control of light and water, the technological conquest of space and time."

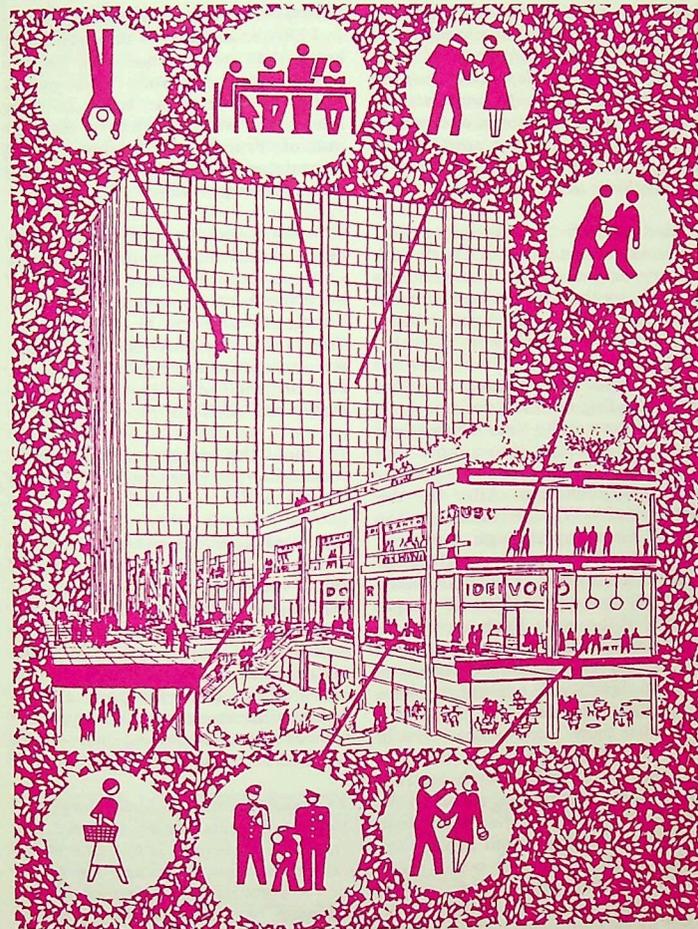
SOCIALISM: ONE WORKER EQUALS ANOTHER

"The individual is losing significance; his destiny is no longer what interests us."

—Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1932

The radical architects, like so many other people of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were possessed with the promise of social-isms. In many of these social-ist schemes, the heinous extreme between the plight of the poor and the luxury of the wealthy was attributed to individual excess. Many of the social-ist architects of the early 20th century—and in Europe nearly all the formative modern architects referred to themselves as social-ists—assumed the task of designing an urban, worker-oriented world which reflected and reinforced their anti-individualist attitude.

Around 1920, for example, the Swiss-born architect and painter Le



Corbusier designed "A Contemporary City for 3 Million Inhabitants." The inhabitants were to be housed in rows of identical highrises conveniently connected to their places of work. He did not have any particular 3 million individuals in mind; he de-

signed his city for a co-conscious, worker-identified society.

The influential German architect Muthesius in 1911 also echoed the principles of popular social-isms:

"In modern social and economic or-

ganization there is a sharp tendency to conformity under dominant viewpoints, a strict uniformity of individual elements, a depreciation of the inessential in favor of immediate essentials. And these social and economic tendencies have a spiritual affinity with the formal tendencies of our aesthetic movement."

Guided by such "formal tendencies" the fantastic sketches of the early 20th century looked more alike and less fantastic by the mid 1920s. Elements of design which could be labeled individual or eccentric were ridiculed by the cliques of architects and designers who had banded together under the flag of industrialism.

The history of the "State Bauhaus" school in Weimar shows how modernist architecture was shaped by conformist pressures. After the devastation of WWI, Germans hoped to rebuild Germany through industrial production. To meet the need for industrial designers, Walter Gropius's Bauhaus opened in 1919. A unique feature of the early Bauhaus was its liberating preliminary course, conceived and elaborated by Johannes Itten. In this course, apprentices were encouraged "to start from zero" and to express their "inner voice." But in 1923 Gropius scrapped the preliminary course and yielded to industrialist-socialist dogma. In order to finance the Bauhaus he needed to appease government and private enterprise, and leaders in both groups pushed for social-ist industrialization.

Gropius's Bauhaus had been criticized by Le Corbusier and van Doesburg who were seen by many as the leading Art formulators of the day. In 1922-23, Theo van Doesburg himself settled in Weimar near the Bauhaus. He took credit for turning the Bauhaus curriculum away from handicrafts and individualism. "At Weimar I have overturned everything . . ." he wrote. "I have talked to the pupils every evening and I have infused the

poison of the new spirit everywhere . . . I have mountains of strength and I know that our notions will be victorious over everyone and everything." At the same time, Le Corbusier was working (that is, writing) out of France. Le Corbusier had formulated the "scientific laws" of industrial expression:

"Nothing justifies us in supposing there should be any incompatibility between science and art. The one and the other have the common aim of reducing the universe to equations . . . The work of art must not be accidental, exceptional, impressionistic . . . but on the contrary, generalized, static, expressive of the invariant."

To him, the dominance of simple rectangularity characterized the industrial style:

"If we go indoors to work . . . the office is square, the desk is square and cubic, and everything on it is at right angles [the paper, the envelopes, the correspondence baskets with their geometrical weave, the files, the folders, the registers, etc.] . . . the hours of our day are spent amid a geometrical spectacle, our eyes are subject to a constant commerce with forms that are almost all geometry."

Gropius planned a Bauhaus exhibition in response to criticism and industrial pressure. The theme of the exhibition was "Art and Technology—A New Unity," in which the influences of van Doesburg and Le Corbusier were obvious. At the same time, Gropius suggested that artists should wear conventional clothing—that is, business dress. The Bauhaus opened a department of worker architecture and Bauhaus students produced volumes of genre drawings which imitated the many other impersonal drawings then circulating around Europe.

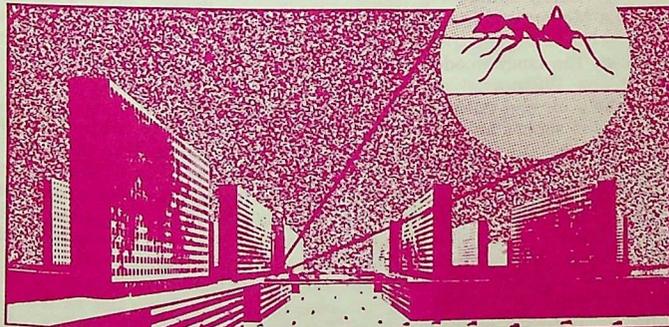
Before the Bauhaus closed in 1933

the new industrial style had become well established in Europe. It was characterized by a rational, impersonal, systematic approach to architecture in which standardized "worker needs" were met with mass-production technology. Efficient hierarchical social organization was its basic goal. Emotional expression and ornament—which purportedly interfered with efficiency—gave way to simple geometries in black and white. This modern style was also characterized by what seemed (to any Westerner) to be its international base; after all, it had developed simultaneously and under similar conditions throughout industrial Europe. And so, in 1932, when H.-R. Hitchcock and Philip Johnson arranged the first exhibition of this style in the US—at the New York Museum of Modern Art—they called it the 'International Style', a label which persists to this day. Through the International Style Exhibition, Americans saw that the principles by which their cars and factories were designed would also shape their homes, shops and schools.

In the late '30s many of Europe's modern architects (Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer) emigrated to the US where they further influenced the development of modern

architecture. Gropius, for example, was asked to teach at Harvard in 1937 and the following year, he became chairman of its architecture department. By then it was obvious that the new style was no mere fad. American capital financed its development in the US. By the end of WWII, modern architectural style emerged preeminent.

The socialist principles which shaped the development of modern architecture—the suppression of individual expression, domination over Nature, time-efficiency, and mass-production—served American capitalism as well as it had served the social-ists in Europe. Mies van der Rohe, for example, welcomed a commission to design a 'communist' monument, but when he became director of the Bauhaus he expelled communist students because it was expedient under the Nazis to do so; he designed a Reichsbank for Hitler (whose personal tastes thwarted the advance of Bauhaus-type architecture in Nazi Germany) and then designed school buildings, apartment towers, and corporate highrises for American business. Gropius asserted the international quality of modern architecture in the '20s, designed Nazi ex-



hibition structures in the '30s, and tried to persuade Goebbels that modern architecture was not anti-Nazi (but failed—again because of Hitler's personal stance). Whether under the state socialists or the capitalists, the social reorganization necessitated by industrial production was facilitated by modernist, social-ist architecture.

TOWARDS RADICAL CRITICISM

Not surprisingly, a body of professional criticism has developed in response to modern architecture, but very little of it penetrates to the deeper flaws. Most critics examine modern architecture as one would examine an exhibit of paintings in a museum: they write about the "articulation of light" and the "thingness of the brick" and they ignore the hostile reality of the modern design in which human beings live, work, buy and die.

Some critics have rejected the visual austerity of "Manhattanization"—the concentration of megalthic office slabs in urban financial centers. Responding to such criticism, some architects began in the 1970s to design highrises with 'old-fashioned' decorations; condos with 'Victorian' ornament; and buildings with unusual shapes. This trend has been promoted as a new, visually stimulating style, called Post-Modernism. But the Post-Modernist call to bygone traditions is superficial. The fancy wooden scrollwork of new 'Victorians' no longer reflects the pride and talent of craftsmen. It is the soulless imitation of the craftsman's art, turned on factory lathes. In fact, the spirit of Post-Modernism is that of modernism itself. It incorporates the same biases as modernism—biases toward the same building materials and methods ... toward a-sensuality ... colonization of space and time ... 'sanitization' of nature ... coercive preplanning of human activities and relationships ... and professionalization. Modernism

also prevails over architectural "preservation." When civic groups demand the preservation of an older and noteworthy building in cities such as San Francisco, nothing more than the facade gets preserved. Behind the facade, both literally and figuratively, modernism holds its ground.

A meaningful criticism of architecture therefore must rise from something more substantial than "what it looks like." Modern architecture, for instance, has had many notable *technical* failures. Peter Blake, in *Form Follows Fiasco*, cites a number of the technical shortcomings of modern buildings—such as Boston's John Hancock Tower which dropped 10,000 of its windows into the streets below. Gross technical failures are inherent to modern architecture. When building materials are mass-produced, so also are their flaws. The same is true of construction methods.

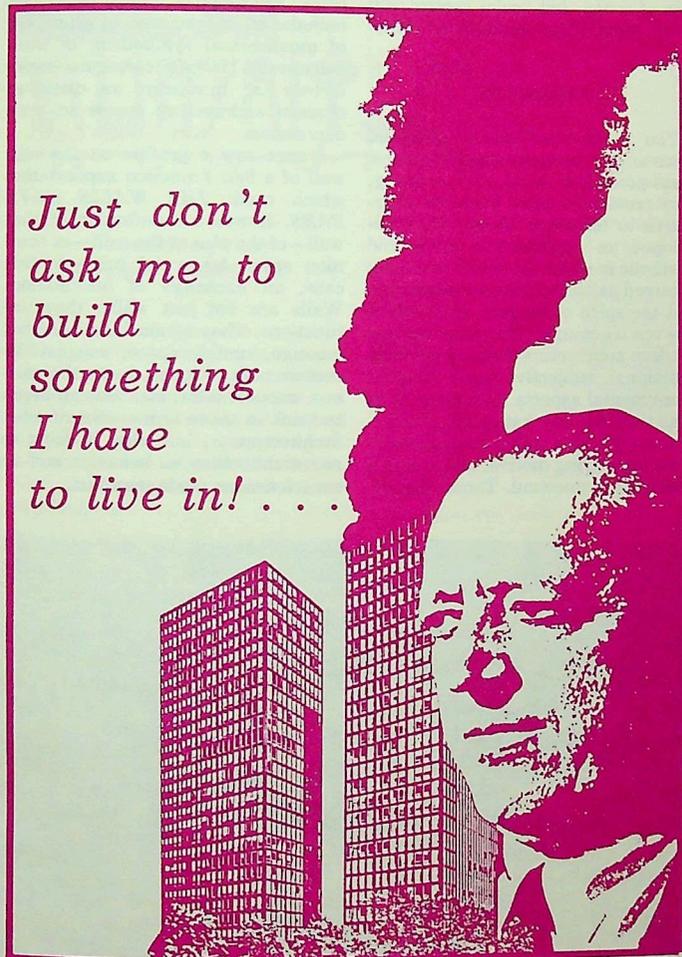
A radical analysis of modern architecture examines the inherent messages and values from which modern architecture is formulated and which it perpetuates. Modern architecture reveals itself as a censoring expression, as a message of social control. Every modern building says: "You are not qualified to build for yourself. Your individual feelings have no significance in the structuring of common space. Your needs have been decided for you. The scope of your existence is circumscribed by professional preplanning. You are accommodated as shopper flow, floor usage, occupant, worker, etc. Your sensitivity and sensuality have no bearing on architectural concerns." Whether we live in a condo, use a men's room, or adapt to the office, we experience modern architecture as a subliminal lesson in industrialism.

The "modern" architecture of the near future is likely to *look* extremely different than what we're used to. As supplies of cheap oil run dry, professional technoarchitects are looking

to new building materials and methods. Transnational corporations are financing research into bio-engineering—the manipulation of genetic material in order to "manufacture" new, "living" materials, fuels, and

processors. The modern architects have a passion for "dead" building materials—concrete, glass, steel, and they control them with intimidating effect. But with the technology of bio-engineering, the future architects can

*Just don't
ask me to
build
something
I have
to live in! . . .*



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Bauhaus socialist, Nazi opportunist, the darling of American capitalism. . .

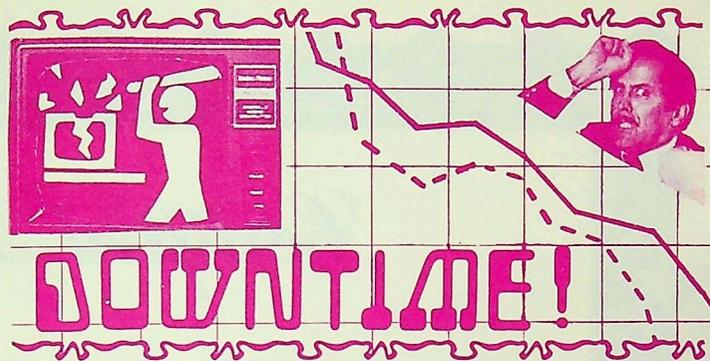
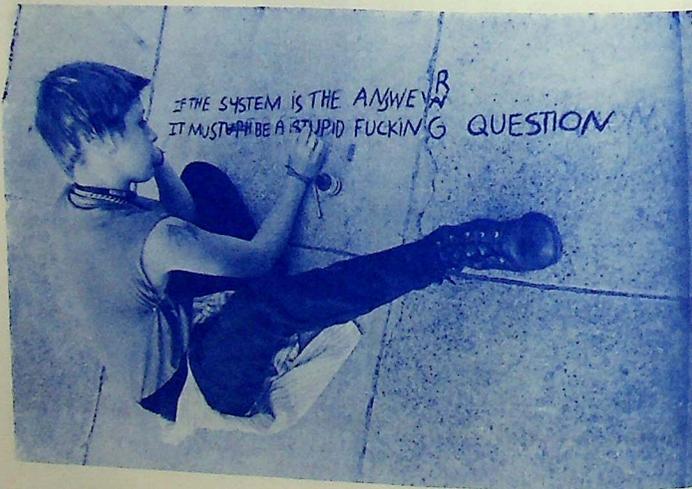
shape living as well as dead matter. Under such circumstances, the final distinction between life and manipulable matter may well be obliterated. Bio-engineered architecture may look substantially different than that of today, but social control will likely remain its predominant function.

PROSPECTS

The modern architects designed clean and inexpensive dwellings for a mass-produced world. In so doing, they provided a more healthful alternative to tenement living. They developed an architectural ethos and aesthetic in which the common worker received particular care and attention. But the spirit of modern architecture has run its course. We recognize that modern architecture does not promote individual, subjective worth; that its monumental aspects intimidate more than they inspire; that social control—and not free and willful cooperation—is its underlying motive; and that it is ecologically unsound. These charac-

terizations expose values by which we can examine the appropriateness of various architectural schemes to a free society. An architecture of the richness and scale of human being need not be limited to small structures. The range of human sensitivity includes an appreciation of grandeur, of monumental symbolism, of awesomeness. Today's corporate architecture is, ironically, as close as modern architecture comes to such expression.

I once saw a graffito on the rear wall of a San Francisco supermarket which read: *THE WALLS HAVE EARS*. It was a redefinition of that wall—of the *idea* of the wall—as common space for social uses—in this case, an *exchange* of information. Walls are not just walls: they are functions. They retain hills, obstruct passage, contain space, suggest the containment of space, invite the curious, support color, etc. We can begin to think in these terms—not of what architecture *is*, but what it *does*; to see architecture as behavior and as consciousness made manifest.



Translating Your Company Newsletter

Recently, in an attempt to rescue the sinking morale of employees in a time of widespread layoffs within the company, the top executives held a series of employee briefing sessions. Below are some of the questions employees asked, together with management's answers, followed, in turn, by translations into plain language.

Question: What is the purpose of this meeting?

Answer: While employee communications meetings have been held in the past, this meeting marks the renewal of management's commitment to management/employee communications.

Translation: We've neglected to talk to you for the past several years, but things are so bad now we had to do something.

Question: In the face of the current economic pinch, what direction will our company take?

Answer: We have two major goals. First, to become more trim and flexible in our operations. Second, to resize our operations to the level of profitable market opportunities.

Translation: We're going to lay some more people off.

Question: What steps are being taken to ensure career development for us as employees?

Answer: What the company offers each of us is an opportunity to utilize our talents and develop new skills. And it is up to each of us to take advantage of that opportunity. The challenges we face today have never been greater. If you're willing and able to tackle them, there continue to be good opportunities for growth, self-satisfaction and career development.

Translation: You're on your own.

Question: Has the company look at cost-cutting measures like elimination of the executive dining room?

Answer: The dining room is considered to be an accepted way of conducting business and is, in fact, judged to be a cost-effective program.

Translation: We're not giving up our dining room.

Question: As a result of recent layoffs, severe morale problems exist among employees. The company has made what seems to be little or no effort to help improve morale. Does management plan to address the morale problem?

Answer: We are sensitive to the problem and I think the problem has been the uncertainty of the environment during the past 12 months. I think

Certified Bad Attitude

IS HEREBY CERTIFIED AS HAVING A BAD ATTITUDE:

- *For the relentless theft of time from employers...*
- *For refusing to Dress For Success...*
- *For having better things to do than work...*
- *For retaining creative energy in the face of overwhelming opposition...*
- *For having a perpetually mistrustful relationship with all forms of authority...*



For these and countless other types of subversive behavior, the bearer of this certificate is entitled to solidarity in the form of active and moral support from all other certificate holders, and thousands of others, all indefatigably undermining the present global "order."

things are getting better. High morale comes internally, when people enjoy what they're doing. As we better structure the organization, hopefully morale will improve.

Translation: It's not our fault you're depressed, it's the economic situation. We don't know what to do, but we're hoping the problem will go away.

Question: A structured communication like this one could have been helpful to employees during the past 12 months of uncertainty. Is this meeting indicative of a consistent intention to inform employees of matters affecting their work environment, or is it just a one-time thing?

Answer: We plan to continue these on an ongoing basis. Employees are also reminded of the company's long-standing "open-door" policy. Talk to your supervisors and others about your concerns.

Translation: We'll probably forget the whole thing after this all blows over. Communication is really your responsibility anyway.

— by Peter Martin



What's a Word Processor?

A Duplex Planet Special Interview

Interviews conducted by David B.
Greenberger at the
Duplex Nursing Home

Harold Farrington: He makes words out of other words. Like did can say did backwards, d-i-d.

Bernie Reagan: A person who understands and knows so many words and so much English.

Andy Legrice: Processor? Producer — produc'n' the progress, progress ahead. Progressin'.

Bill Niemi: It's some kind of a new machine, isn't it, that was invented to put words in their correct place, so people can understand them properly. Sometimes it's hard to read printing.

Frank Wisniewski: I never heard of that word, so I can't help you out. I thought you said 'prostitute' at first. I don't know what that word means though. I'd like to help you out, but I'm not college material like Johnny Fay. I know a little, but not a lot.

John Fay: I don't know. I don't know if it's somethin' to drink or eat or what.

Harry Katz: Profound, they're profound.

George Stingel: To process words, to break it down. To process a man is to get rid of him from the service, to let him go — it's a discharge from the services — army, navy, coast guard.

Ernie Brookings: A word processor would be to arrange words to express past events and thoughts, is that true? It could be verbally or written.

Ed Rogers: Somebody that discusses words, on a subject, like a debate.

John Fallon: Somebody that figures out things. He figures out the cost of everything, he's a processor.

Gene Edwards: I never even heard of it before, so how can I tell you what it is? You're not gonna write THAT down, are you?

Ed Poindexter: Obviously I don't know at the present. Is everything alright? Can I have a cigarette?

Abe Surgeoff: A guy that works at the city hall and watches out for the work to be done. He attends to processes around the office. The processor is like a judge, but don't write that down.

Francis McElroy: It's one that gains, a prospector.

Walter Kieran: That means somebody that done something.

William "Fergie" Ferguson: One that measures gold. He doesn't make it, it's already made — he finds it. It isn't glued together or anything, it's just gold, g-o-l-d.

Private Computers' Income Data to Aid IRS in Hunt for Evaders

The Internal Revenue Service is about to test whether computerized information about the lifestyles of American families can be used to identify individuals who fail to pay their income tax.

The information includes the neighborhoods in which families live, how long they have lived there and the model and year of the cars they own, and will be supplied by the private marketing companies that sell computerized lists to direct-mail concerns, among others. For some time, these marketing companies have been compiling income estimates from such data, using the publicly available records of telephone companies, motor vehicle departments and the Census Bureau.

If the new computerized procedure to target those Americans who pay no taxes is successful, the IRS has a second experiment in store, to determine whether the same procedures can be used to spot those who underpay their taxes.

The attempt to use lifestyle information to estimate the annual incomes of households, and thus help the revenue service select individuals for further investigation, reflects the agency's increasing concern about the growth in

the number of Americans who are failing to pay their taxes.

According to the latest Government report on income tax compliance, the number of individuals and corporations not paying income taxes has been gradually increasing in recent years. Individuals who did not file any income tax returns in 1981, for example, are estimated to have reduced Government revenues by about \$3 billion that year. In 1973, such individuals are estimated to have owed the government about \$1 billion.

The service estimated that in 1981 the total of taxes underpaid by corporations and individuals engaged in legal activities was \$81.5 billion.

The report added that the percentage of all income voluntarily reported declined from 91.2 percent in 1973 to 89.3 percent in 1981, more than two-tenths of a percentage point a year.

The new attempt to find what the IRS calls "nonfilers" is made possible by the increasing power of Government and commercial computers to store enormous amounts of information and to manipulate this information at a very small cost.

The information used by the private companies to estimate the annual incomes of individual households is all legally available. The sources of the data are telephone books, the automo-

ABUSEMENT PARK



POEM TO A LEAKING SHIP NOT SUNK

the crest of the wave
the vault of the sky
leave me breathless;
the chicken of the sea
leaves me with heartburn
if over-seasoned

but let us not speak of such drivell
at such a momentous time
when our minds should be occupied
with the Great Challenge which sits before us
in the form of a mocking parrot who repeats, over and over
"Give me mellon, or i will make such a mess!"

the great buildings of our cities
the great advances of our age
instill me with such wonder;
but how i tremble before
that awful thing we have made
which may destroy us;
and if we survive American television
we will have only the bomb to fear

i do not dread abandonment
or confinement in love's great potato sack
to be smothered by your solicitous doting,
but your quivering thighs i do fear
inside them i could almost
exile myself for good, never coming out
taking all my nourishment there;
how tiresome for you

if i am not sensible, contradict me
if i am inefficient, instruct me
if i am irresponsible, chastize me
if i am indifferent, shake me
but if i fail to make money, leave me be:
this means i have found a profitless joy
which capitalism must despise
and i am content

by Ron De La Houssaye

mobile registration files from the 30 or so states where they have been declared a public record, and statistical information about the average incomes of the families living in different census tracts, which is compiled and published by the Census Bureau every decade. The income information compiled by the bureau is supplied by the individuals and families counted.

There are more than a dozen companies currently producing computerized lists of American households, their addresses and their estimated income. The three largest companies reportedly are The Reuben H. Donnelley Corporation of New York, R.L. Polk & Company of Detroit and the Metromail Corporation of Lincoln, Neb.

The techniques of the different com-

panies vary. But according to several industry experts, one of the more complex methods is used by Donnelley. That corporation's national list begins with the telephone book. As each new city telephone book is published anywhere in the United States, the names, addresses and numbers in it immediately are fed into a computer by Donnelley. A special program then places each of these households in its appropriate Census Bureau tract, which includes information on the median income of the households within its borders.

There are two more major steps in the Donnelley process. Because studies have shown that people who live at one address for a long period tend to have higher incomes than those who are mobile, the computer is instructed to adjust the estimated income up or down according to how long the telephone book data shows the family has lived at the same location.

Finally, information on the car or cars registered in the names of individuals living at each address is added to the equation. This information is made available to private companies some by motor vehicle departments, although New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut bar release of such information to those concerns. Using complex computerized formulas, the estimated household incomes again are adjusted to the make, model and year of the registered cars.

"To have a free society, we have to have a viable Government," he said. "And a working tax system is essential to government."

New York Times, 8/29

COMPUTER FRAUD BILKS GOVERNMENT OF MILLIONS

Hundreds of federal employees working at newly installed computer terminals are stealing millions of dollars from foodstamp, Social Security, Veterans Administration and other federal pro-

grams, according to a study of computer fraud and abuse.

The study uncovered innovative ways that federal workers, ranging from low-salaried clerks at the Social Security Administration to supervisors at the Commerce Department, have found to steal funds, computer time and other resources, such as valuable computer programs that can be sold to private businesses.

By creatively entering data and computer commands on their desk terminals, the federal computer thieves have pulled off these capers:

— A clerk assigned to the recovery of loan overpayments to veterans caused by computer errors found a way to divert the overpayments to his personal bank account.

— Three data-entry clerks at the Agriculture Department who were given terminals that could accept only names of potential food-stamp recipients were able to steal \$150,000 in stamps because their supervisor, whose machine was capable of actually issuing them, left the terminal running while he was at lunch. The thieves typed in fake applications and then approved them on the boss' unguarded terminal during the lunch break.

The investigation was conducted for the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency after White House budget officials found that no effort had been made to determine the scope of computer fraud despite the bureaucracy's dependence on the machines to handle work once done by humans.

The survey also found that many of the agencies had no way of keeping track of computer fraud. There were indications, Kusserow wrote, that the losses and people involved were substantially higher than what was actually reported in the 172 cases.

Because most of the cases were found by what Kusserow called "accident," the report warned that the extent of the abuse is unknown.

Chicago Tribune, 7/83



A Year's Worth of Journals About Working and Not-Working

July 1982

"Outpatient Administration"

Sitting the phones is much like taking care of a baby. It demands your constant attention — you can never stray too far away without its crying out; it won't stop until you pick it up and touch it in the right places, give it what it needs (another person, a message) or else reassure the voice at the other end (as quickly as possible before another line rings) that yes, things will be all right, yes, I will tell them to call you back, no, they have not forgotten you (though often they actually have. But a good receptionist, like a good mother, is there to soothe, not instruct.)

August 1982

The Fifteen-Minute Break

It is very strange to come out of the office (you know, The Office) into a parking lot with a ledge to sit on and which (furthermore) faces onto a hill with a spread of large beautiful trees and green grass....What I mean is, looking at this world and feeling

removed from it, how the World Outside and the World Inside collide and yet remain separate, I mean....

Ah, yes. That Office: sharp, efficient, phone rings and paper clips and high heels and pantyhose that itch unbearably when the cold wind blows around the legs...and yet, nature, beauty, the Unknown, somehow all the more intensified for being so rare, so removed, and yet *here*, as if by miracle (certainly not by purchase order)...What I mean is, beauty invades our life in spite of ourselves, in spite of That Office, and that is the real beauty of it.

October 1982

Blissfully Unemployed
(Poor But Halfway Happy)

This great empty space of spare-time has made me realize how truly dangerous it is to become lost in thought. I am now reduced to the point where I cannot read one sentence of a book without being lost for an hour or more in the infinite complications and suggestions, experiences and sensations, it evokes in

me. It seems that thinking leads more and more away from action and more and more towards a world in which no action is possible, because one's thinking is never yet completed, never will be. Thinking becomes an action in itself which cancels out all other action.

And so I realize that all that we call leisure, "doing nothing," "not working," "being unemployed," all that goes through us when we stare blankly into space, actually betrays an activity so intense and far-reaching that is could overturn our whole lives. The more I indulge in this activity which is no activity, the more useless and trivial the rest of life begins to seem. That, of course, is why this kind of leisure is forbidden to us — through the economic necessity of "work" — and why TV, bridge games, and typing pools (which never fail to evoke and image of drowning) were all invented. In other words, society is terrified at the prospect that we might stop working and start thinking.

March 1983

Back-To-Work
(Wherein I Leave the Swelling Ranks
of the Unemployed and Re-join the
Rank Swells of the Employed)

"Pulling yourself together" (which I am attempting to do now) is after all the opposite of spreading yourself out, laying thin and still, listening to the atmosphere, to the clouds condense, feeling the air pressure build....

I can feel acutely, now, the shift in consciousness when I occupy myself with "work" — instead of being filled with the world, immobile, I am sharpened, focused, bounded. It's the difference between thinking poetry and writing it — this involves also the unfortunate narrowing-down, just as we have to narrow our mouths to get the words out...to be open-mouthed is to be awe-struck, speechless and full

of wonder, or simply retarded, or perhaps all of these at once (and it certainly means being out of a job. Clerical workers must always keep their mouths shut.)

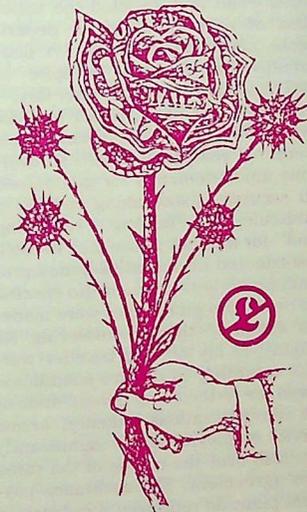
July 1983

At the "Office of Development"
at UC Med Center,
A "Very Well-Run Office"

Ultimately, the fault of the office — especially the well-run office — is that it organizes life in a way that it refuses to be organized — or, rather, that the life-outside-of-the-office (the Sutro Forest above the buildings) refuses to be organized. It creates an illusion of order where none in fact exists — and then, when the rest of life does not follow form, we are lost and betrayed. Therefrom (whence, thereto, leading out of) lies the obvious liberating solution: which is — (but I forgot, the phone rang.)

— by Roberta Werdingner

Make paper roses and spray paint red. Sell to military veterans.





'The Line You Have Reached . . . DISCONNECT IT!'

INTERPRETING THE PHONE STRIKE

The 22 day nationwide strike by 700,000 telephone workers provided a window on the relative strength of capital and labor in the current era. In classic style, both management and unions are claiming victory, since neither side was able to push through its most aggressive bargaining goals.

The union successfully resisted the "takebacks" that management demanded. Nationally, AT&T sought a restructuring of medical insurance payments that would transfer up to 25% of basic costs to workers, but surrendered in the face of union intransigence. In California, Pacific Telephone workers won two important issues when they resisted the imposition of split shifts in all departments, and maintained the 7½ hour workday for clericals in spite of PacTel demands for an 8 hour day.

On the other hand, AT&T and the soon-to-be-divested regional basic operating companies (BOC's) overcame union demands for guaranteed job security, establishing instead a miniscule \$31 million "retraining fund" for workers whose jobs become obsolete and an incentive-bonus program for early retirement. No specific job protection guarantees were made, the company thereby reserving its "right" to lay off and transfer workers according to market conditions. Given the forthcoming deregulation of the communications industry, phone service employment will significantly diminish over the course of the three year agreement. The severance payment plans do represent a concession

by management to cushion workers from layoffs, but for a corporation giant with \$7.2 billion in profits last year, and \$1.9 billion in the first quarter of this year, it is a small price to pay in exchange for control over workforce levels and the labor process itself.

Both sides have expressed satisfaction with the wage settlement, 5.5% in the first year, 1.5% + COLA in second and third years (estimated total for the three year contract is 16.4%). For the company the settlement looks good because it is less than each of the last two national contracts; it is substantially less than the 28.5% granted to GTE telecommunications workers in bargaining last year; and most importantly, the BOC's are blessed with very low built-in labor cost increases for the first two years of their marketplace independence ('84 & '85). The unions, for their part, can point to the total increase of 16.4% as an improvement over widespread wage freezes and wage cuts agreed to by other big unions.

AT&T: Strengths & Weaknesses

The media has made much of the 97% automation of basic phone service that made it possible for 700,000 people to strike without much affect on the public. Of course, this high level of automation did hurt workers' power to affect phone service from outside the workplace. The company could also rely on a built-in force of

250,000 strikebreakers — its vast bureaucracy of "managers," most of whom usually perform routine information processing and have only narrowly-defined decision-making functions.

The Bell System assumes it has a basically uncooperative and "lazy" workforce. Thus, it exercises rigid control over all its operatives via close surveillance and evaluation of workers and managers alike, and more recently through computerized tracking of work performance. Now that the machines are able to take on much of this work, Bell is saddled with a redundant, costly middle-management bureaucracy. During the strike, most middle managers were in a sense re-proletarianized, as they went back to being operators, linemen, sales clerks, and secretaries, commonly working 12-hour days and 6-day weeks. In the Bay Area there were grumblings about starting a "managers' union" for future protection from these conditions. This strike experience could be a hint of what's to come for managers with further industry automation and rationalization.

LEAVING THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT, SUDDENLY, THE SEA

The sky explodes at noon.
Hundreds of office workers
killed in the streets
by a hail of silver dollars.

The survivors are only disgruntled
about the added city costs
for clearing the district of bodies.

Somewhere outside the economy,
I peddle like a falcon
down the dense city streets
to the bay

where shreds of fog drift,
blank paychecks,
a currency almost forgotten.

by David Steinberg

There was significant discord among the management bargainers during this strike. Marketplace competition is only a few months away, and different prospects for profits are facing different BOC's and AT&T itself. PacTel in California and several units in the new Bell Atlantic region (around Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington D.C.), fearing that deregulation and divestiture would aggravate their already weak financial conditions, pushed for substantial takebacks in this contract — this hard-line position prevailed in the early stages of the strike. Eventually, however, AT&T and other regional bargainers, wanting to ensure relative peace and stability during the breakup process, reached a compromise contract agreement.

The greatest weakness of the Bell System in this strike, ironically, proved to be the divestiture process itself. Because so much managerial and marketing time is being spent gearing up for '1-1-84,' the actual date of the breakup, there is a great deal of clerical work to be done — work which, while invisible to the public, is nonetheless crucial to the current and future profitability of the phone companies. The hundreds of thousands of striking word processors, data processors, key punchers, typists, secretaries, file clerks, etc. crippled the phone company's ability to continue vital information processing.

AT&T needs to get the divestiture over with as soon as possible. They are getting out of basic phone service just in time for the fast-moving technological upheaval in the communications industry. The phone system needs to upgrade its technology and overhaul its operations if it is to maintain a slowly falling share of the total communications market. By divesting itself now, AT&T is taking half its total assets, plus its most innovative and competitive divisions, into the competitive and profitable

communications marketplace.

The divested BOC's will have to modernize their technology and decrease their workforces. Had they remained part of AT&T they conceivably could have tapped its enormous capital resources to finance this restructuring. Instead, they will have to obtain the needed capital by doubling basic phone service costs — thereby lowering the basic standard of living (10-42% of present phone holders are projected to give up having a phone at home as basic costs double) while AT&T uses its retained capital to dominate the communications markets.

Labor: Strengths & Weaknesses

The strike caught the unions unprepared. The smallest union's president, John Shaughnessy of the Telecommunications International Union (TIU), claimed that management forced the strike. The largest union, representing 525,000 phone workers, was the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The CWA didn't expect a strike until it was almost underway. Also, the CWA's small strike fund couldn't sustain a long strike.

In spite of the union leadership's flatfootedness, the important trade-union principle of solidarity was reaffirmed in this strike (contrast the predicament of the Machinists on strike against now-"bankrupt" Continental Airlines without support from other airline unions until the bankruptcy scheme — the same Machinists who crossed PATCO picket lines 2 years ago). The three unions in the phone strike (CWA, TIU, and the International Brotherhood of Electric-

DOWNTOWN

waiting in a phone booth for the rain for the business to come down on my lackey head between ink-spurts and cloudbursts of exhaust and cement reflections which shine in the overcast as though there were still something to sing about here downtown where everyone's either dead, sad, or believing that it's over, their checkbooks cupped in their hands like prayers, that there is no choice, you've got to be this way, or else . . .

by J. Cleave Barker

cal Workers — IBEW) promised to respect each others' picket lines, and with few exceptions did in fact stay off the job while others were still negotiating. At its last national convention the CWA had the foresight to pledge national solidarity among locals so that everyone stayed out until all local issues were "resolved."

In spite of these positive steps, the phone strike was definitely "under control." For information strikers depended on daily bulletins issued by the union, which offered the same platitudes dished up to the press about progress in negotiations. Negotiations were carried on at all levels in secret meetings, and the negotiators were primarily union officials. Strikers do have the right to vote on ratification, but that ballot took place over a month after the back-to-work

order.

The structure of the strike reinforced a passive role for the actual strikers, whose primary function was to stand at isolated picket posts for a few hours a day. The structure of U.S. labor conflict is based on "experts" on both union and management sides defining what is "negotiable" and then proceeding to arrive at a "settlement." That arrangement, in which strikers are spectators of their own battle, is an important element in defusing the common (but difficult to "negotiate" or "settle") frustration and anger stemming from alienation, boredom, work quotas, and management. The humiliation of submitting to the discipline of a phone company job is well known (it's not uncommon to have to raise one's hand to go to the bathroom). Less clear is how that humiliation, and the anger at it, is used by the union for its own narrow economic goals. Since "management's right to manage" and capital's right to exist aren't rejected by the unions it follows that they cannot address problems about the qualitative nature of work, or life in general.

Even what solidarity there was was a mere shadow of a real class soli-

arity. For example, AT&T's vulnerability as a result of the divestiture process could have been exploited to better advantage. Instead of accepting the constraints of "acceptable demands," such as wages and working conditions, the strikers could have demanded that AT&T put up the money to modernize local phone systems, and thwarted its scheme to double the customers' costs. Such a demand would have created a natural unity between all phone users (most people) and the strikers *against* company and union negotiators who were trying to limit the issues, and against the courts and government bureaucrats who have set up the great "divestiture" scam.

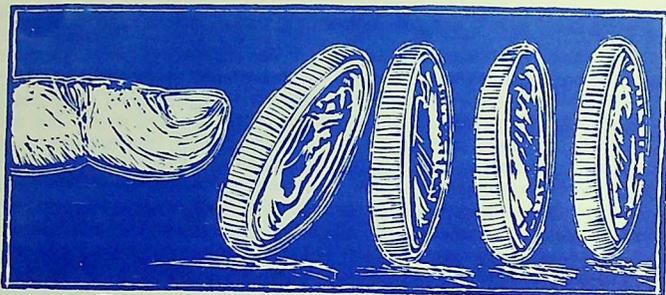
Widely considered "progressive," unions are themselves *capitalist* institutions, having the function of bargaining over the sale of human beings. Collective bargaining is inherently oppressive since it always implies the continuation of wage-slavery and never allows for the *termination* of the selling of human beings, for any time or price under any conditions. Trade unionism, especially in its narrowest and most widely practiced form, is a vital

We're On Strike!

FOREVER!!



Money kills. Drop a two ton sack of money on somebody's head — you'll see it's true.



You can be popular at bars by proving the Domino Theory with your pocket change!

support for capitalism, since it contains workers' conflicts within the logic of the system of buying and selling.

In the phone strike, the workers did partially break out of that logic through widespread sabotage, albeit sporadically and unlinked to any radical demands or goals. There were perhaps a thousand incidents nationwide, many of which demonstrated great skill and good sense about targets. In New Jersey there were 25 acts of sabotage reported in the first three days of the strike. The most dramatic was a severed cable which cut off phone service to a New Jersey state police barracks and Fort Dix, a major army base. In the Chicago area there were 47 acts in the first week, one of which consisted of throwing a lit highway flare into a switching box, thereby cutting off service to the Du Page County Sheriff's Department. In California, Pacific Telephone reported there were 227 incidents of sabotage, for an average of over ten per day during the 22 day strike. Damage was done in most parts of the country, including Miami, Dallas, Detroit, Reno, Philadelphia, and many other places.

This remarkable outbreak of direct action undoubtedly steered management negotiators toward conciliation. Beyond that, it kept the scab work-

force in a state of "crisis management," where in addition to handling the ever-increasing backlog of routine repair and installation, they constantly had to attend to emergencies.

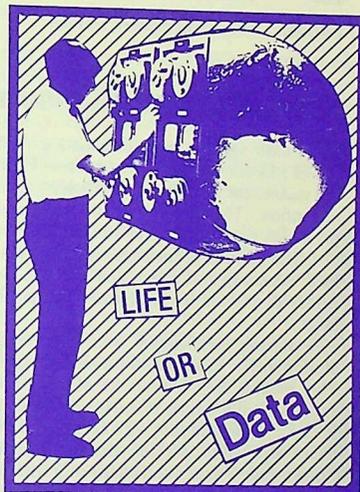
In several areas the picket lines were militant. In Providence Rhode Island pickets skirmished with mounted police, and in Brooklyn NY a scuffle took place between strikers and cops, injuring three police and leading to the arrest of 3 strikers. In Dorchester Mass. (a suburb of Boston) strikers surrounded three scabbing phone company trucks until they were dispersed by police.

In spite of this direct action, union control and direction prevented strikers from resorting to a much stronger form of leverage: the occupation. Two years ago, in a strike against British Columbia Telephone (Canada), which is owned by GTE (U.S.), 11,000 phone workers occupied 20 installations over an area as large as California, Oregon, and Washington combined. At the height of their occupation they controlled all telephone, radiophone, satellites, and cable in British Columbia, and provided free phone service to people during the six days. Similarly according to a recent report from Australia, phone workers were giving citizens free long distance phone calls from specific phone booths in major

cities. What characterizes these tactics is the suspension of the business part of phones while maintaining their use value for the general population.

In the U.S. phone strike, workers gained significant leverage by thoroughly disrupting basic information-processing. The bulk of phone company information is generally only of use in billing or keeping track of ownership, etc., so disrupting it halts the smooth circulation of capital. The phone strike thus reinforced the power of clerical workers to hurt capital, though we probably won't hear much about it from most commentators.

The fact remains, however, that an occupation would have *totally halted* information processing, and also information *gathering*, as workers could have tampered with or destroyed vast amounts of data needed for billing. In fact, the power to destroy vital data is growing. With computerization there is less paper or "hard copy" evidence of what is "correct," so it is possible for workers to creatively intervene at each link of the infoprocessing chain.



out-of-control data institute

Phone workers are also uniquely positioned to exert tremendous leverage in solidarity with other workers. The selective cutting off of phone service to intransigent owners (or arsonist landlords or brutal cops for that matter) can be a powerful weapon in an increasingly hot class conflict. It isn't the new technology as an outside force which has disempowered workers, as *Time* and other establishment press claim. Capital has continually restructured work to expand its control, and new technology has always been a key to its strategies. The problems lie more with workers who don't grasp the power at their fingertips, instead relying on moribund and obsolete strategies imposed by a decaying trade union movement in its death throes. By taking direct control over worksites and labor processes, workers can make dramatic immediate improvements and begin to open the possibilities for a free future.

THERE MUST
BE MORE TO
LIFE THAN WORK
WORK WORK!!!



TO: Selected faculty and staff
FROM: President Sperry Univac



Spring 1984

RE: Orange Blossom Special Plan

Years ago we commissioned a study of the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) by the Bechtel Time-Motion Efficiency Maximization Corporation to ferret out waste, corruption and inefficiency and develop a more **streamlined** approach to education. The Bechtel team has finished their study, presenting us a comprehensive proposal to overhaul CCSF operations and cut costs.

The Bechtel team began with a macro-economic analysis of CCSF's role in the local economy and concluded that the yearly capital outlay is not fully paid off by future dividends accrued from increased alumni productivity in the economy at large.

Glaring inefficiency was uncovered in the usage of time/space by CCSF students. For example, the average number of class hours per student is 2 hours. This means the 75% of the student body which commutes via public transport spends as much time on buses or BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) trains as it does in class. And students with cars spend the equivalent of 60% of their class time in transport, when parking time is accounted for. Further there is the notorious "down time" expended chattering with other students, cutting classes, sleeping in the library and listening labs, sitting on toilets and in cars, playing huge radio-tape players, and staring into space, walking about aimlessly. The survey found a similar amount of man-hours being wasted by faculty and staff, and an enormous portion of the annual budget devoted to mere physical maintenance of the campus.

Accordingly the Bechtel proposal is to terminate the CCSF campus, converting it into an industrial park, and transfer classes onto MUNI buses and BART trains during non-rush hours, all coordinated through an advanced computer system. Students and staff could be provided with daily scheduling data wherever there is a conveniently located BART station, bus stop, computerized bank teller or Pac-Man machine. By placing a magnetic ID card in a local computer, a student/staffer could receive its bus or train route for the day in 15 seconds. There can be rest stops at fast food chains, shopping centers, Consumers' distributors stores, bookstores and Army recruitment centers as a part of the daily program. Childcare services would be moved onto buses also. (Note: This is not an eccentric Rube Goldberg scheme. The Bechtel team has already constructed a working model of the "Orange Blossom Special Plan" based on their 15 years of work on the mobile MX missile system.)

Further, CCSF, with its motto "We Do It All For You," cannot ignore the psycho-social aspects of modern academic life. Currently, students with full-time jobs who take only one or two classes adapt well, since CCSF appears to be a recreational activity next to their family/job routine. It is the full-time student who induces real problems. The average full-timer complains of drifting alone in a sea of 15,000 other day students, often going through an entire day without a single personal conversation. One rather emotionally-disturbed youngster scrawled on the Bechtel team questionnaire that CCSF should be re-named "Market Street University" and claimed that the cafeteria resembled a Greyhound Bus station.

The survey found faculty had little time for personalized interface with students, burdened with from 50 to 350 students per semester. This was found to be the main cause of low student productivity, manifested by frequent lapses into "pupulus catatonus" during class. This phenomena was found reaching epidemic proportions (Symptoms: Student stares blankly into space for hour intervals, smiling and nodding, scribbling as if he were taking notes). The extreme 10% of

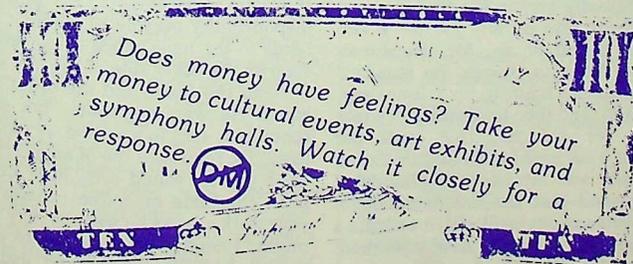
these cases sleep mainly in CCSF classes and do schoolwork under heavy doses of amphetamines between 1 and 6 a.m.

Could the stop and go of a bus or train be disruptive to reading, lectures or class discussion? Research has found students to be more alert on buses, watching card tricks, for instance, than in class. The stop and go of the bus can be a stimulant to the student's sleepy demeanor. The scenery, light breezes through the window, and the professor strolling up and down the aisle lecturing can be expected to produce even greater student attentiveness. The changed atmosphere of the mobile school should also ameliorate numerous complaints over the "anonymity" and "loneliness" of the CCSF campus.

Bechtel deduced that greater savings can be made by combining the job of bus driver and professor. Bus drivers who are inclined toward conversation can be tutored on a given subject and will be able to chatter intelligently to students through a microphone while driving. On the other hand, many professors who have been repeating the same lectures for 10 to 25 years can be trained to drive while lecturing. Certain popular classes could be held on 5-car BART trains or broadcast to other buses over closed-circuit TV. These video-equipped buses could also be utilized by students on their breaks, who could eat lunch and watch soap operas.

The Computer Science Department will be the only one to remain fully-based on the old campus, given that this semester the department will encompass 67% of the student body. The first two floors of Batmale Hall will be converted into a silicon chip assembly plant, manned by that sector of the student body with a 2.0 grade point average or lower, to encourage them to pursue a career where their manual dexterity can be more efficiently employed. The more advanced students will run the computer of the CCSF itself, the first college on wheels!

The major objection that we foresee is that our streamlined approach to education won't be conducive to the creation of the so-called well-rounded student. Let's get down to brass tacks: aren't there enough English majors, second rate "artists" and failed football stars on the city's welfare rolls, driving cabs or washing dishes? In what sense do these "well rounded" individuals contribute to the progress of our nation? The Orange Blossom Special plan will synchronize CCSF's curriculum with today's job market. We all know that the average student attends community college to give his career a little boost. Under our plan local corporations will be searching out CCSF graduates the way law firms look for Harvard or Yale graduates. They'll know that CCSF graduates can be counted on to be loyal, productive employees. The change would not be as great as you think: is walking through CCSF at midday any different from a BART station at rush hour? In all candor, this plan can cut CCSF's budget in half, and modernize its teaching methods **without lowering City College's high educational standards one iota.**



PIECEWORK

I worked as an office temp upstairs, above the workshop factory, in what was euphemistically called a "sheltered workshop." It was a mezzanine, with open window space through which you could look down on the workroom floor. My job entailed logging in the hours of each production worker down on the floor, figuring out their individual piece rates per hour, according to a predetermined piece rate standard that Gretchen, my immediate boss, would give me. The rate would be established by Mr. Hershman, the stern Austrian-born director of the workshop, after the beginning of a job, after taking a one or two week set of figures on what each worker did per day.

The various jobs were contracted out to the workshop by different companies. A typical job might consist of stapling two flyers together, or maybe inserting forty pieces of literature into pockets of a plastic folder, then inserting the plastic folder into a polybag and stapling it. The two regular jobs were shrink wrapping books from a printer in a sort of Saran Wrap in order to keep them undamaged in distribution, and assembling snake bite and hypodermic kits for clinical laboratories.

Whenever the workers would start consistently surpassing the standard per hour rate on any job for a two week period or so, Mr. Hershman would have us change the standard quantity per hour, to up it from, say, 20 to 25, and then lower the piece rate pay. For example, 15.8 cents per might be dropped to 14.2. Calculating the pay was my job, and although I suspected that this manipulation of pay rates might be illegal, it took me a while to understand how it worked. Then too, I was grateful to have

gotten the job because I had few sophisticated office skills, no experience in accounting, and I had no one looking over my shoulder, so whenever I needed to type one of the few and basic letters required I could struggle with it a couple of hours unnoticed.

Gretchen, a soft-hearted Hungarian, told me that she'd tried berating the workers for habitually waiting at the workshop door to get in to work before eight in the morning, explaining to them that they were defeating their own purpose by it. But they would be eager to make the "standard" by starting early. The majority of them were of foreign origin, old, with varyingly serious medical handicaps, and had nothing but loneliness to shut the door on when they left home in the morning, so they looked forward to coming to the workshop where they would argue with each other, with Gretchen — even though she had good rapport with them — with Mr. Hershman, and with his Filipino foreman, Marcel. And with Darwish, the shop steady man, although arguing with him often proved to be a one way street, if he didn't have his hearing aid turned up at the time.

Darwish was in his mid-seventies and wore a pacemaker. His primary responsibility outside of running errands to the main office of the workshop on the other side of the city was to clean the floors and the office upstairs. He was gregarious, but self-contained, spry in a serene way that I liked. He reminded me of an elf. If he liked you he would drop little European chocolate or coffee candies on your work area as he went by. Try as I might, I could never manage to pronounce his name right and usually

called him Darwish. Darwish introduced himself to me with a question. "You know how many years I'm here?" Eighteen years I'm here." Whenever anybody asked, "How are you, Darwish?" he would answer, "I'm dyink," patting his chest over the area of his pacemaker.

Things were catch as catch can in the office. There was often nothing in the bathroom to use for toilet paper and we would have to resort to using the scratchy hand towel paper which was left on a shelf. I realized after a while that toilet paper was something that Darwish was sent out for upon immediate need, not something to be stocked because of its obvious future need. The same was true of a lot of the other supplies. I often wrote up pay sheets with a one inch stub of pencil, and added sets of five cent stamps to update postage on ancient workshop envelopes. I learned how to enjoy warm, eyeballed instant coffee, unstirred, and to write business letters on a typewriter with no right hand margin. Once when I ran out of white-out, I had to go out and buy a bottle in order to finish a letter I was typing.

One morning, Gretchen had spent the morning downstairs on the workshop floor and Darwish, who was upstairs cleaning, had accidentally locked the office door behind him. When I came to work I couldn't get in. I knocked, then pounded on the door, yelling, "Darwish, Darwish, open up." Gretchen then came up and pounded even louder, yelling for Darwish to come to the door. The Filipino foreman, Marcel, began yelling up from the work floor through the two window openings which looked out onto the first floor. "Darvich, Darvich, open the door!" Then the eighteen workers chimed in. The whole building reverberated with versions of !Darwish! with everyone waving, gesturing, pounding, screaming, trying to get Darwish's attention, in vain. After a quarter

hour of this futile effort Darwish, who by now had finished cleaning, opened the locked door. He looked astonished to see so many people out there at the head of the stairs. He had turned down his hearing aid before he started to clean. That afternoon I heard Mr. Hershman in his office complaining to Gretchen. "If Darwish wasn't here so long, I'd let him go." Shortly after, he took Darwish off the office cleaning job and gave it to a new, young Filipino worker, Elvino, and it became increasingly obvious that Mr. Hershman wanted to fire Darwish.

But Darwish didn't seem to mind losing his cleaning job. He still came in in good spirits, would say good morning to Gretchen and me, hum to himself, and give us our two candies apiece, darting around in his elfin way.

About this time, Mrs. Rugoff got in a big fight with Mr. Morales about his not cleaning up the downstairs bath-

G A S P

They're cutting down the trees to make room to raise cheese burgers, down in the Amazon rainforests. (Check it out for yourself.)

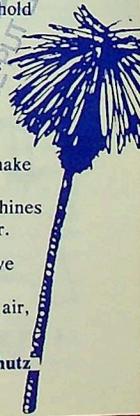
They're eating up the atmosphere. I hope your children don't like air. (Train them early how to hold their breath.)

They're growing buildings miles high, full of people eating burgers raised in vanished forests.

They're magicians, they make trees and air disappear. When they get better machines they'll make you disappear.

They, they, they. They have names and addresses. When there's only bottled air, guess who will be selling the bottles?

by Kurt Lipschutz

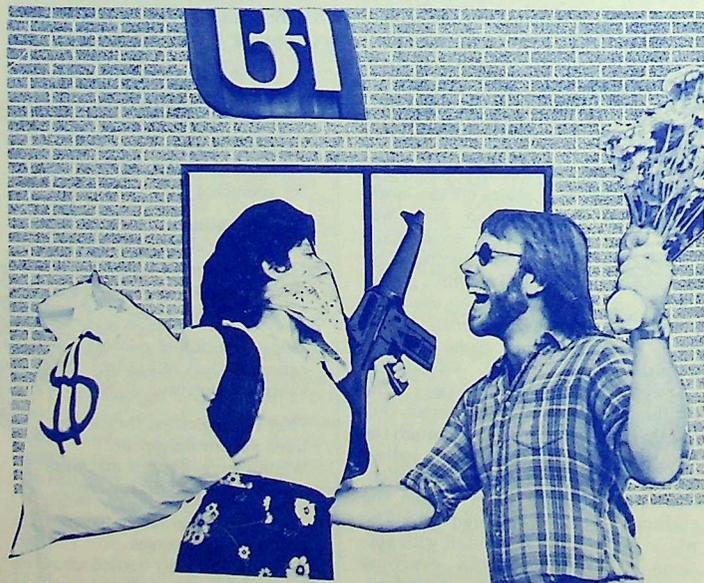


room after himself, not returning the toilet paper and letting the hand towels fall into the toilet bowl. Gretchen had to go down and act as mediator as everyone took sides and it sounded from upstairs like this time there was the possibility of a riot developing. When she came back upstairs, she was exasperated. "They're just like children, I swear, when they get going like that. Mrs. Rugoff told Mr. Bargov to quit staring at her so much. I don't know what's got into her lately. She's so damn touchy."

A while later Darwish came upstairs to get his letters to deliver to the main office. He was wearing a spicy green bow tie with his usual suit jacket and short-sleeved shirt. How's it going, Darwish?" I asked. "Dyink," he said. "I'm dyink." His hand went up to his chest. Then he put two Austrian chocolates on my desk and

winked. "I'm so bad now I got to go see the doctor. How about you callink for my appointment?" I made the appointment for him early the next week. "You. You two. You're two beautiful girls, you," he said, carrying his manila folders and letters out the door. After he was down the stairs, Gretchen confided that Mr. Hershman was planning to let Darwish go in two weeks.

Everyone now and then one of the workers would pass out downstairs. Then there would be bedlam in the building, and even after I realized that this happened on the average of once a month I was always surprised at the frenetic activity it could generate. Both Gretchen and Mr. Hershman would bolt downstairs, leaving me to call the ambulance. Then, while they waited around for the arrival of the ambulance, the workers, Marcel,



"WE GOT THE MONEY!!"

and Mr. Hershman would keep up a commentary on the condition of the passed out. I could hear them from upstairs. "She's coming around." "She's breathing better now." "Her color is comink." Mr. Hershman would meanwhile try to get the others to concentrate on returning to work. (I could imagine him saying something like, "OK, everybody back to work now, it only takes one person to die.")

Across from the workshop was a mini-park that had playground facilities, with swings and monkey bars, but children seldom went in it because the park was well populated all day long with winos. One wino lived there the entire six months I held the job. In daytime he lived in a sleeping bag in the sand and slept there in the open, but whenever it drizzled or rained he would move his sleeping bag underneath the slide. He would get out of his cocoon during the day only to go over to pee in the same place up against the wall of an abutting office building. It dawned on me that that playground was possibly the biggest litter box for male *Homo sapiens* this side of the continental divide. Every wino who walked, stumbled or crawled past that park, it seemed, stopped to urinate against that office building. It took its full share of ammoniac showers.

One afternoon, as I was idly looking out the office window, I saw directly beneath on the sidewalk an extremely drunk man waving his penis about in one hand towards the oncoming traffic as though he were a signalman with a racing flag. An enormous stream of urine jetted up and out into the street, while he grinned foolishly at the oncoming cars as though he were terrifically pleased with this endless hydranting stream which he was capable of producing.

As I was watching this scene, Mr. Hershman walked into the office on his way to his own office which was in back. It was getting close to Christmas and he was having a hard time

organizing the annual party. Darwish had begged off the party, because he said he was having troubles with his pacemaker.

"I haff a good mind to cancel the party, with everybody sick. It's costink us too much. First Mrs. Rugoff, then Mrs. Berg gettink sick, and Darwish. I should let him go." Then he looked at me. "Are you comink to the party?" I tried to be polite about turning him down, telling him I had errands to run.

"Well, just tell me. It doesn't matter if you're comink or not, but I got to know. It's \$7.50 a person for this."

"Good, I'd appreciate the day off," I admitted. I was relieved that he was being so blunt about it.

"Good." He walked back into his office and I went back to typing out the paychecks, a new chore I'd been given as I had mastered the books so well that I had large amounts of obvious free time by then. Then he came back in. "And another tink. If you don't want to hire on permanent, we're goink to haff to lay you off after Christmas because it's costink too much with this agency." I didn't want to hire on permanent and told him so, and that settled it. Then he went back downstairs (It was then that I decided to cook the books on the big Copy Copia shrink wrap job we had gotten in. Nothing big, not so it would be noticeable, but just enough so that the last checks I typed out would have a small bonus in them.)

I heard some sort of noise, I guess, but I was thinking so hard about what I was going to do about a job after Christmas, and on typing the paychecks, which had to be perfect, that I was completely absorbed. So it was a good fifteen minutes later that the yells registered. I rushed down the stairs and saw that the place was empty — everyone had gone home early, Gretchen was on her break — except for Darwish, who was in the back doing some piece work — he was

paid a straight salary and he often filled in his time doing some of the piece rate work — and Mr. Hershman, who was on the floor by the workshop door, holding his side, writhing in obvious pain. I called the ambulance from the downstairs phone, and was relieved to see Gretchen get back by the time they got there. The ambulance driver spot-diagnosed a cracked or broken rib (it turned out to be three). Mr. Hershman said a drunk with his fly open, exposing himself, had wandered into the workshop. They argued and then Mr. Hershman had tried to evict him and they tussled until the drunk had swung him around hard onto one of the pallets. The drunk had then wandered away. Mr. Hershman had tried to get Darwish's attention, but couldn't. Even as he was telling his story for the second time, Darwish was still there, oblivious, in the back at one of the work set-ups, methodically melting down the tips of glass laboratory tubing over a Bunsen burner. He just happened to turn around and see the ambulance attendants getting Mr. Hershman onto a stretcher. He looked startled to see all of us there.

Later, up in the office, after the ambulance had gone and we had called Mrs. Hershman to let her know what happened and had all calmed down a little, Darwish told us he had turned his hearing aid down in order to spend the rest of his work shift in peace and quiet, so he could think about where he and Mrs. Rugoff were going to go on their honeymoon. She had agreed to marry him the next Friday, on the day scheduled for the Christmas party. He said they had argued it, but he had finally given in to her demands for a Russian Orthodox ceremony, while she in turn agreed that he should get to pick where they would go on their weekend honeymoon. "And the kids," Darwish gave us one of his pixie glances, "we already decided. They should be Russian Orthodox or go to

Temple, however they want to do it." Gretchen gave Darwish and Mrs. Rugoff two paid vacation days as a wedding gift on the spot, and Darwish then insisted that we join him in a taste from the bottle of Slivovitz that Mrs. Berg had given him for a Christmas gift.

— by Penny Skillman



THE GARBAGE CAN LUNCH

Trash can eater suffers hunger fits.

Sick to the stomach for a super garbage dish.

Look, I'm not a dog without any sense my food is carefully inspected by the F.D.A.

The food hunt and my taste for lunch, the garbage can menu doesn't offer much.

High minded people nose in the air little green bucks think they're going some where.

New York steaks roast lamb luxury living puts me to shame.

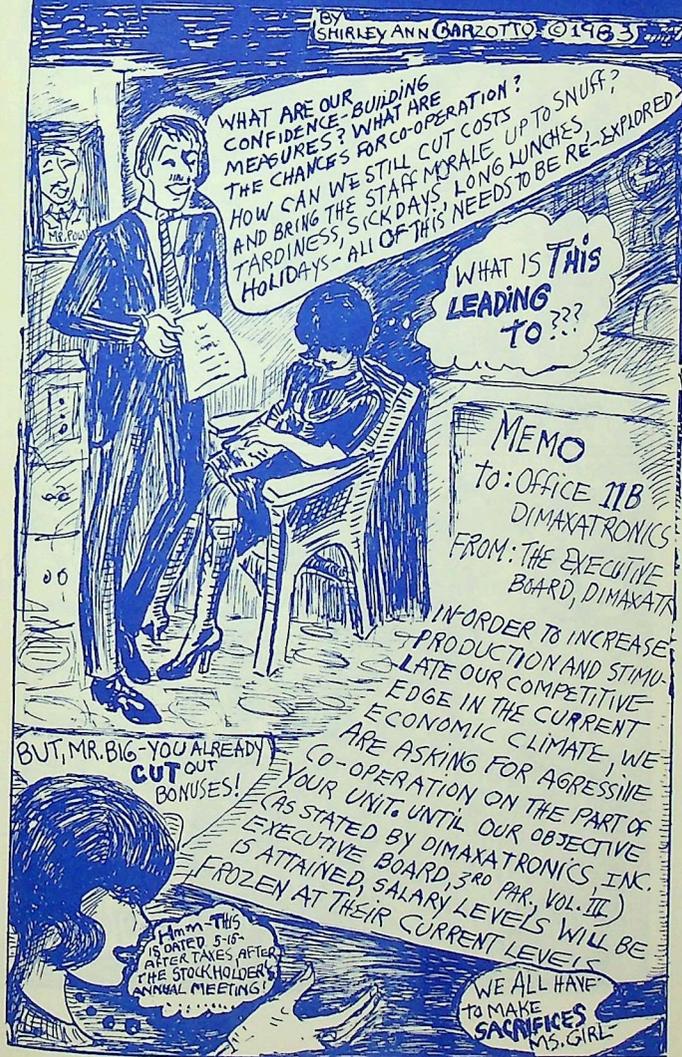
Education, can't spell anything. But when it comes to my garbage can lunch, I hunt, hunt, until I find me something to munch.

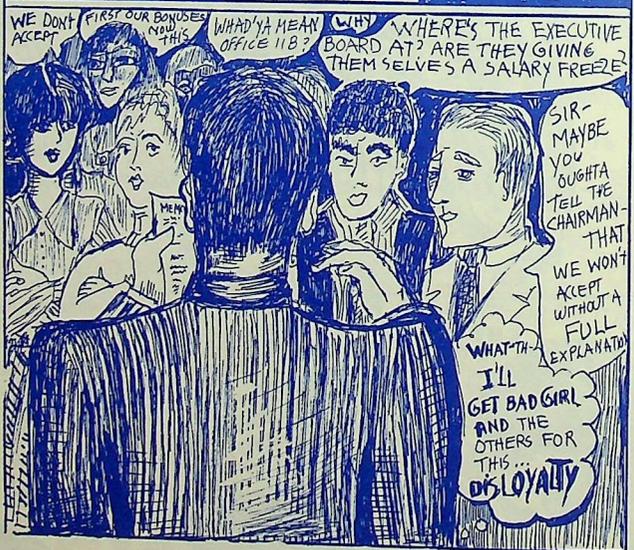
Concerned about people I'm no fool hearts are cold money, the golden rule.

by Henry Calhoun

BAD GIRL II

BY SHIRLEY ANN GARZOTTO © 1983





② AS YOU HAVE OBSERVED SO ASTUTELY, THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE IS CURRENTLY UNWIELDY FOR EVERYDNE, INCLUDING THE RECEPTIONIST, THE SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR, THE THREE CLERKS, THE TWO PRIVATE SECRETARIES, THE JUNIOR ASSISTANTS, THE SR. AND JR. ACCOUNTANTS AND THE TWO WORD PROCESSORS, WHO ALL, LIKE THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, HAVE WIVES, HUSBANDS, LOVERS, CHILDREN AND UNCLES, AUNTS AND COUSINS WHO DEPEND ON THEM. BECAUSE THREE POSITIONS HERE HAVE BEEN LEFT VACANT FOR THE PAST YEAR, OUR WORK LOAD HAS INCREASED 19.2% WITHOUT THE COMMENTARY INCREASE IN SALARY, THUS WE-





to be continued . . .

AGAINST "FAIRNESS" & FARES

"No Fare is No Fair" proclaimed the billboards sprouting all over San Francisco's streets and buses in the summer of 1983. In an absurd (and for all practical purposes ignored) attempt to turn "average bus riders" into vigilantes for the Municipal Railway, Mayor Dianne Feinstein launched a \$50,000 public relations campaign to improve receipts for SF's beleaguered and underfunded public transit system. It is widely assumed that fare evasion has skyrocketed along with the more than doubling of fares in the past few years (from 25 cents to 60 cents). Though statistics aren't available, MUNI (SF Transit) estimates put unpaid fares at five million dollars each year.

In the past two years, as the Financial District has exploded in size, more people have crammed on-

to the already overcrowded transit systems to get to work. A grass-roots campaign to force large downtown employees to help pay for costs of modernizing and expanding public transportation in SF was approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1981, but vetoed by Feinstein. Other attempts to tap corporate coffers have floundered in the courts.

Mayor Feinstein had to develop other means of raising funds for public transit. The \$50,000 publicity campaign indicates her strategy: appeal to middle-class sensibilities of "fairness" and civic responsibility and scapegoat the poorer people who have developed ingenious methods of fare evasion.

Presenting fare payment as a civic responsibility reinforces widespread



mystification about the primary function of public transit, and obscures the unequal benefits derived from it. The obvious primary beneficiaries are employers and merchants. The obvious function is to bring people to and from work and shopping. In S.F., as in many other cities, the public transportation system is designed specifically to facilitate commuting to the downtown financial district from any part of the surrounding metropolitan area, whereas routes which do not pass through downtown are far less available or frequent.

Governments tax people to create transit systems (Dallas and Los Angeles are just beginning multi-billion transit systems at taxpayer expense). Then people have to pay again to use

these systems, usually suffering incredible discomfort, degradation, and frustration waiting for and riding on the vehicles.

In fact, transit systems are the means of *last resort* for assuring a mobile workforce and mobile shoppers. The automobile culture has served to thoroughly transfer costs of mobility to individuals in the form of car, gas, repair payments, and highway taxes. The transit system serves as a backup for millions, and as a primary means of commuting only for those who cannot afford a car, or parking . . .

Commuting itself represents a transfer of costs, too. Business could not function without workers coming to work, hence commuting is actually

COWORKERS

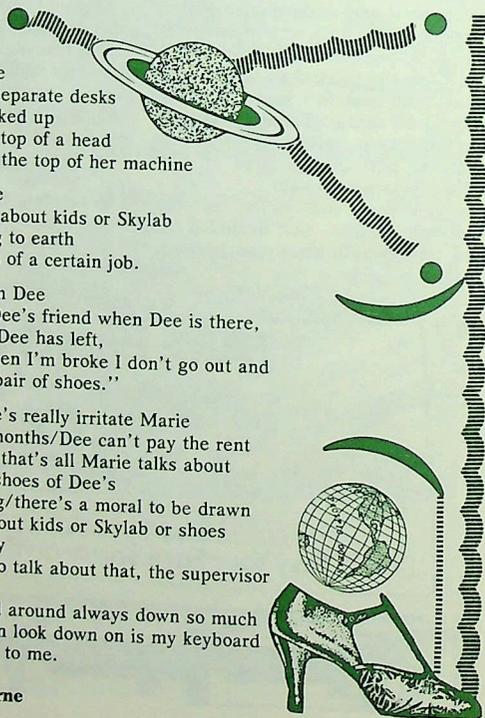
They sit around me
Each of us at our separate desks
If anyone of us looked up
She would see the top of a head
A turf of hair over the top of her machine

They sit around me
Sometimes talking about kids or Skylab
The satellite falling to earth
Or the crumminess of a certain job.

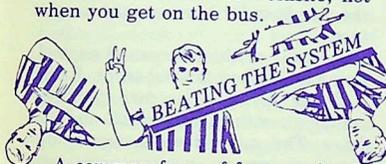
Lack of money from Dee
And from Marie, Dee's friend when Dee is there,
From Marie when Dee has left,
"I'm broke and when I'm broke I don't go out and
Buy a sixty-dollar pair of shoes."

Those shoes of Dee's really irritate Marie
Dee saved up six months/Dee can't pay the rent
For the last month that's all Marie talks about
Those sixty-dollar shoes of Dee's
It proves something/there's a moral to be drawn
But I don't care about kids or Skylab or shoes
I care about my pay
But no one wants to talk about that, the supervisor
is in the room
We've been shoved around always down so much
The only thing I can look down on is my keyboard
Or the women next to me.

by Dorothy Shellorne



a crucial part of the workday. But capital doesn't pay the cost of that mobility; instead workers pay to get to work, increasing both their own cost of living *and* the rate of profit for business, as a cost of (re)production becomes part of the "cost of living." The owners and managers who benefit the most from the transit system's *function*, already faced with declining profit rates, refuse to acknowledge this underlying reality. As a result, they won't pay for the transit system, and the paid workday begins when you enter the office or worksite, not when you get on the bus.



A common form of fare evasion in San Francisco has been the use of expired transfers. SF MUNI attempted to defeat the recycling of flimsy newsprint transfers (good for unlimited rides in any direction except reverse) by developing a new, random and unpredictable symbol-number coding system. Whereas people had been saving transfers for use in the following months (the old system merely had numbers matching the date without any indication of month) and could eventually gather enough transfers to cover any ride in any direction on any date, and never pay again, the new system required a transfer matching the days' code and color. This new system has made it harder to "abuse" transfers, but not impossible.

The transfer system requires bus drivers to scrutinize transfers for date/time validity. Luckily a large number of SF bus drivers refuse to play cop, and generally avoid taking a close look at transfers. As a result, expired transfers are usually easy to use. It is also possible for people to pass on valid transfers to waiting riders as they get off the bus.

Equally dependent on vigilant bus drivers is the use of the monthly "Fast Pass," good for unlimited rides in any direction on SF MUNI. Four years ago Fast Passes cost \$11/month, then they were raised to \$16 and now they cost \$24. The new Fast Passes were also redesigned with a magnetic machine-readable strip for use in computerized fare gates in the underground Metro/BART stations downtown. But for the majority of rides, Fast Pass use still consists of showing it to the driver. As a result, uncoordinated counterfeit Fast Pass circles have sprung up (usually among small groups of friends), depending largely on the use of color xerox machines. These machines create a reasonable facsimile of the original, though since MUNI started using hard-to-color-xerox colors, they often require some additional color pen or pencil touch up. Xerox Fast Passes cost about \$1 each instead of \$24.

Another favorite and easy form of fare evasion is paying in numerous small coins, not adding up to the full fare (e.g. 40 cents in nickels instead of 60 cents). Of course no driver can count the jumble of coins as they clatter to the bottom tray of the fare box — many don't even try. A vacationing family from Spain using this method never once paid full fare during their recent trip to SF, and once were given good transfers to replace expired ones by a sympathetic driver. Yet another technique was tearing dollar bills in half and crumpling them up and dropping in only 1/2 for each ride across the Bay.

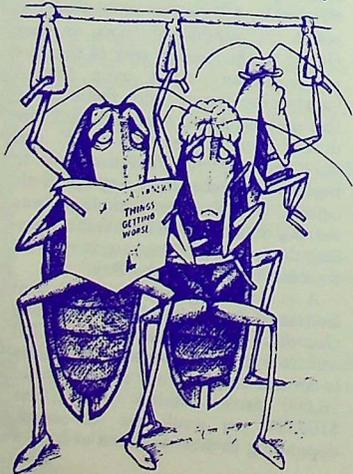
A local investigative journalist, Tim Redmond, has pointed out in his *Bay Guardian* articles that if the MUNI estimate of annual losses of \$5 million is correct, then there is an average of 16,000 fares evaded weekly, or \$100,000 per week lost (or *saved*, depending on how you look at it).

COMPUTERIZED COUNTERMEASURES

AC Transit, which serves over a million people in the eastern areas of the SF Bay, has spent several million dollars during the past two years to install computerized fare boxes. These new machines give the driver digital readouts of how much money was dropped in the box, and require the face-up feeding in of dollar bills. While the investment in these boxes probably far exceeds any actual losses due to evasion, they have been specifically installed to eliminate the aforementioned and other forms of cheating. Methods of fare evasion that worked in the old open top fare boxes are impossible now.

The new computerized fare boxes are not presently adapted to accepting the magnetic-strip monthly passes, but presumably they will be adjusted to do so later. For the time-being however, human enforcement in the form of driver scrutiny is still required to assure proper fare payment in the monthly pass system on both major transit systems in San Francisco and the East Bay.

Full scale computerization of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) sys-



tem seems to have defeated most of the common forms of fare evasion. The rider buys a computer ticket from a machine in the lobby, and the fare gates read its magnetic strip to charge the passenger for the ride. Most transit systems in the U.S. only require fare payment up front to get in, but no further examination or authentication of payment occurs past the initial fare box. But BART monitors passengers at both ends, charging different fares for different distances, and requires computerized reading of the ticket at both ends of the ride in order to assess the correct fare.

In spite of this increased control, fare evasion has flourished on BART and has spawned its own publicity campaign with threats of jail and \$50 fines. The method used, again, depends on human, not computer controls. Disabled and seniors are entitled to purchase special discount tickets at banks and certain offices — a \$10 ticket costs only \$2 with disabled or senior identification cards. Naturally a black market in discount tickets has sprung up, since the machine cannot tell what kind of person is using a special discount ticket. Statistics aren't available but the investment in the publicity campaign alone is several thousand dollars, so clearly the transit authorities feel threatened.

Another increasingly common sight on Bay Area transit systems is the camera continuously videotaping the passengers on a bus, in a station, etc. BART stations are famous for the closed circuit TV monitors in the station agent booth, where s/he can watch the entire station at once. More recently, MUNI and AC Transit have begun installing these cameras on buses, but since they scan back from the driver's partition they are irrelevant to the fare collection process. Their ostensible purpose is to "deter crime," but since many people don't believe they contain film, and if they

Against "Fairness" & Fares

did, it would be too labor-intensive to actually look at all of it, they are of dubious use.

The role of new technologies has proven to be rather ambiguous in the ever-simmering battle over fares. While improvements in rapid reproduction technologies (color xerox) have given fare evaders an important tool in circumventing the payment system, computerized fare processing has generally served the authorities well, at least so far. It is equally clear, however, that magnetic media too can be duplicated, and as such technologies become more available and better understood, new methods of counterfeiting will develop. Some closet technologists have suggested the possibility of duplicating the magnetic stripe with regular recording tape after analyzing the electronic impulses recorded on tickets with a tape recorder. Ultimately, human control over the information about how the computerized systems work is the Achilles Heel of these "foolproof" methods of fare collection.

MAKE IT FREE!

When the concept of "fairness" is used around public transportation, the only sensible interpretation for most of us is to demand that all public

transit be made free to the users. The fact that the individual can occasionally use the system to visit friends, or for other private purposes, is the sole benefit for the average person. Let the *real* beneficiaries, the employers and merchants whose abilities to make profits depend on the existence of working public transit, pay the *full* costs of creating and maintaining these systems. And while we are at it (short of the abolition of wage-labor), let's demand to be paid for the *full* working day, including the hours of our lives wasted on public transit. Commute time is *work*, and it's time the employer paid for it!

P.S. to transit workers: The next time you're fighting the transit authorities and want to press grievances or wage demands or anything in a direct and powerful way, take a hint from the bus drivers in Milan, Italy, who have successfully used the strategy of keeping the transit going (thereby serving popular needs) but have refused to collect fares. Such a social strike can bring the managers to their senses much faster than any traditional strike (it will also generate a lot of popular support) . . . Warm regards to all you who "neglect" to enforce the cash nexus on your vehicles.

— by Lucius Cabins





Once in a great while Hollywood producers exhibit a keen sense of historic opportunity.

Spring 1979. Weeks before the nuclear blow-out at Three Mile Island, *The China Syndrome* exposes the industry's vulnerability, bringing life-like glimpses of the Harrisburg terror to the curious. Motivated by surreal news coverage of meltdowns, radioactive plumes, and other strange and threatening phenomena, millions of Americans look to Hollywood to see what the nuclear power industry was really like. The accident made *The China Syndrome* an overnight sensation and fed growing distrust of nukes.

Summer 1983. In Pentagon war rooms, a debate rages over how deeply the U.S. should rely on computerized weapons systems and how much to invest in fifth generation computer R&D. Deviant computer hobbyists — "hackers" — from Milwaukee (the "414 Gang") penetrate a computer network at Los Alamos Labs (one of two labs that design virtually every U.S. nuclear military device). Meanwhile, twisted, tax-fed minds tinker with nuclear lockwork. Chiefs of Staff and mad engineers rush to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe and MX "peacekeepers" at home, perhaps not fully conscious of the hairtrigger they set for global

nuclear war.

Along comes *War Games*. Here is a Hollywood movie that powerfully projects an anti-nuclear war message, plausibly features a fifth generation computer in control of NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense [sic] Command), and a computer whiz kid who (less plausibly) finds a backdoor to the computer's "War Games" directory. *War Games* makes a bundle for producer Leonard Goldberg and UA/MGM — but suggests that unlike coin-operated video games, "the only way to win nuclear war is not to play."

War Games recounts the story of a clever, unwitting breach of a fictional NORAD computer by a deviant Seattle youth who, thinking he has found a new video game, inadvertently ignites WWII. Generals and civilian technical managers have recently assigned the computer — named WOPR — control over the continental air and ground nuclear delivery system, an assignment prompted by the refusal of enough human beings in the military to launch nuclear missiles at other human beings (during tests). The controversial step to "take humans out of the loop" actually places a fifth generation computer — WOPR — in command.

Uncanny timing is not the only fas-

ination with *War Games*. 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, *Failsafe*, *The Forbin Project*, and even *Dr. Strangelove* have presented similar themes before: sinister computers seizing control over human affairs, nuclear weapons accidents waiting to happen, mad scientists and generals with state power, etc. *War Games* recombines these and other themes into something of a celluloid Rosetta stone for the future. The anti-war message is apparent; others, embedded, are reminders of the techno-dilemmas that both underpin and stalk civilization.

DEVIANTS WITH A CAUSE?

HIGH TECHNOLOGY awakens new meaning in the tired cliché "the present holds the key to the future . . ." Today, barely perceptible parts per trillion of many compounds (such as PCBs) maim and poison human tissue and threaten the unborn. With deadly persistence, enriched uranium contaminates everything for tens of thousands of years. Aerosol commodities perforate the earth's protective atmosphere. We simply are not accustomed to thinking realistically about the raw power of modern technology. The damage may be irreversible, but the trend is not. The question is who will control technology and how will it be used?

War Games portrays some of the

frightening implications of HIGH TECH as well as its reliance on technical workers — the creators and achilles heel of HIGH TECH. *War Games* also asks if "hacking" — the deviant probing and sabotage by curious computer programmers — is constructive.

Like literature and movies that explore similar themes, *War Games* pits people against their Frankenstein creations: much of this movie is a race against a machine-imposed deadline by human minds struggling against exquisitely executed military logic. To its credit, *War Games* suggests that HIGH TECHNOLOGY is not monolithic, but is vulnerable. *War Games* points to a modern, practical solution to all techno-dilemmas: revolt by those who really create technology: technical workers.

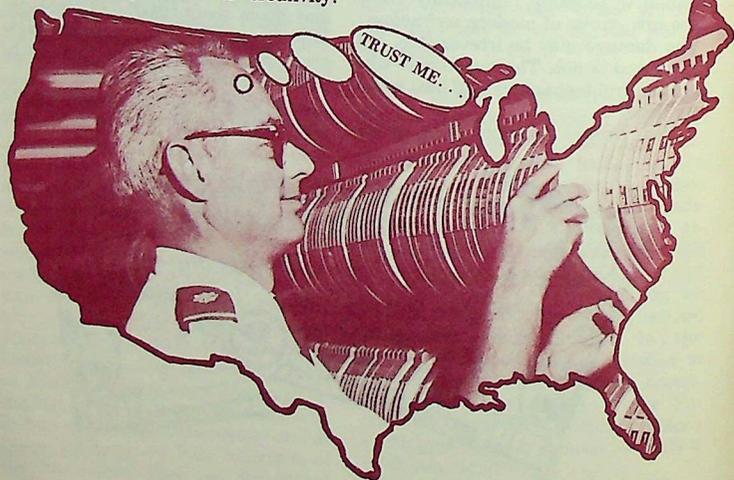
In *War Games*, both the young hacker and the retired architect of the NORAD computer use their technical skills and deviant ways first to threaten and then to consciously save humanity by "teaching" the computer that global thermonuclear war is like TIC TAC TOE: a game that no one can win. In a time of growing paranoia and gloom about HIGH TECHNOLOGY, *War Games* delivers a hopeful message: where there are deviant technical workers, there is a way.

In real life, deviant programmers and technical workers like those por-



trayed in *War Games* populate computer labs and military outposts. This cannot be comforting to managers and generals. But is hacking — technical sabotage — constructive? Not when it takes on such anti-social directions as mixing blood types in a hospital. But when it wipes out consumer billings at major public utilities? Or fouls programs that postpone a new missile deployment? Individual deviance is not the constructive social act that collective rebellion can be. But it does indicate a raw, subversive potential. And for those of us not technically-employed or -inclined, it is a subversive potential that we must rely on, however uncomfortably, if we are to safely dismantle a lethal civilization.

TECHNO-FASCISM, the encrypted title of this review, suggests the alternative emerging in the vacuum of revolt by technical workers and the rest of us. TECHNO-FASCISM is the evermore powerful and dangerous technology which the state and private capital deploy against us *but cannot safely control*. Its ideology is the supremacy of human creations over humanity and over creativity.



Our submission to it greets the Orwellian New Year.

A final note: *War Games* clearly was the stuff from which Hollywood blacklists were made in the early 1950s. How did it slip through? Because it looked like — and was — a good investment to UA/MGM. And also because it contained or implied its share of Hollywood confusions, including our military leaders' rationality, good intentions and willingness to learn from mistakes. Films such as *The Day After* do not fare as well. *The Day After* is an ABC-TV film that graphically depicts what Kansas City looks like after a nuclear attack. In the film, the attack is provoked by the American deployment of missiles in Europe. Apparently, and certainly plausibly, the Reagan administration is pressuring ABC not to air the film, which also has had the devil's own time trying to find a corporate sponsor. The 3½ hour special was ready to run last May, and now is tentatively set to air on November 20.

— by Melquiades

Check 'em Out!

Magazine (mag'-a-zen, mag-a-zen'): (n.) 1. seeds waiting to be spread or propagated (fr. Arabic for granary); or 2. a space in which explosives are stored

Midnight Notes (\$4 for 3 issues, P.O. Box 204, Jamaica Plains, MA, 02130) A very readable theoretical journal. Latest issue — "Posthumous Notes" — features analyses of the Freeze campaign, the global crisis, and an account of pre-revolution class revolts in Colonial America. Highly recommended.

Bulldozer (P.O. Box 5052, Stn. "A", Toronto, Ontario Canada M5W 1W4) This original publication for inmates proclaims that a bulldozer is "the only vehicle appropriate for prison reform." The magazine is free for prisoners and provides them with an opportunity to speak for themselves and to others without censorship. Bulldozer's support for the Vancouver 5, charged with bombing the Litton cruise missile factory in Toronto, and other "crimes," led to a police raid on the *Bulldozer* members' household, which had been under heavy electronic surveillance in previous months.

Global Electronics Information Newsletter (\$5 sub., 867 West Dana St., #204, Mountain View, CA 94041) This 4-page newsletter contains updates about happenings in the electronics industry and especially about 3rd world workers who manufacture the circuitry.

RE/SEARCH (\$20 for 3 issues, 20 Romolo #13, S.F., CA 94133) The current "Industrial Culture Handbook" features artists such as Mark Pauline, Johanna Went and others whose "impetus in common is rebellion... there is no strict unifying aesthetic, except that all things gross, atrocious, horrific, demented and unjust are examined with black-humor eyes. Nothing is (or ever will be) sacred, except a commitment to the realization of the individual imagination." Lotsa nice

pictures, too.

No Middle Ground (\$6 for 4 issues, 495 Ellis St., #781, S.F., CA 94102) Providing "anti-authoritarian perspectives on Latin America and the Caribbean," it takes its name from the belief "that the models of social change subsidized by the Western and Eastern powers have failed, and that there is no viable people's alternative except that of a self-managed revolution . . ."

Radical Science Journal (\$10 for 3 issues, 26 Freegrove Road, London N7 9RQ, England) RSJ is an analytical journal which looks at "how capital's priorities get incorporated and represented as 'natural' in the direction of research and development." RSJ focuses on labor processes and ideology in science, technology and medicine, in order to undermine oppressive forms of expertise, and to challenge the structure and purpose of scientific work.

Kick It Over (\$5 for 6 issues, P.O. Box 5811, Stn. "A", Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P2, Canada) K.I.O. has recently taken up the "pornography debate" in several articles and a series of letters. K.I.O. tries "to get away from being political in a narrow sense . . . to do less railing against the State and the Right and more talking about what we desire from life and how frequently these desires are themselves political."

International Blacklist (\$2.50, 719 Ashbury St., SF, CA 94117) To find out about countless interesting groups and publications we didn't have space to mention, check out this remarkably comprehensive listing of anti-authoritarian and libertarian groups and projects from around the world. Has great graphics, too!

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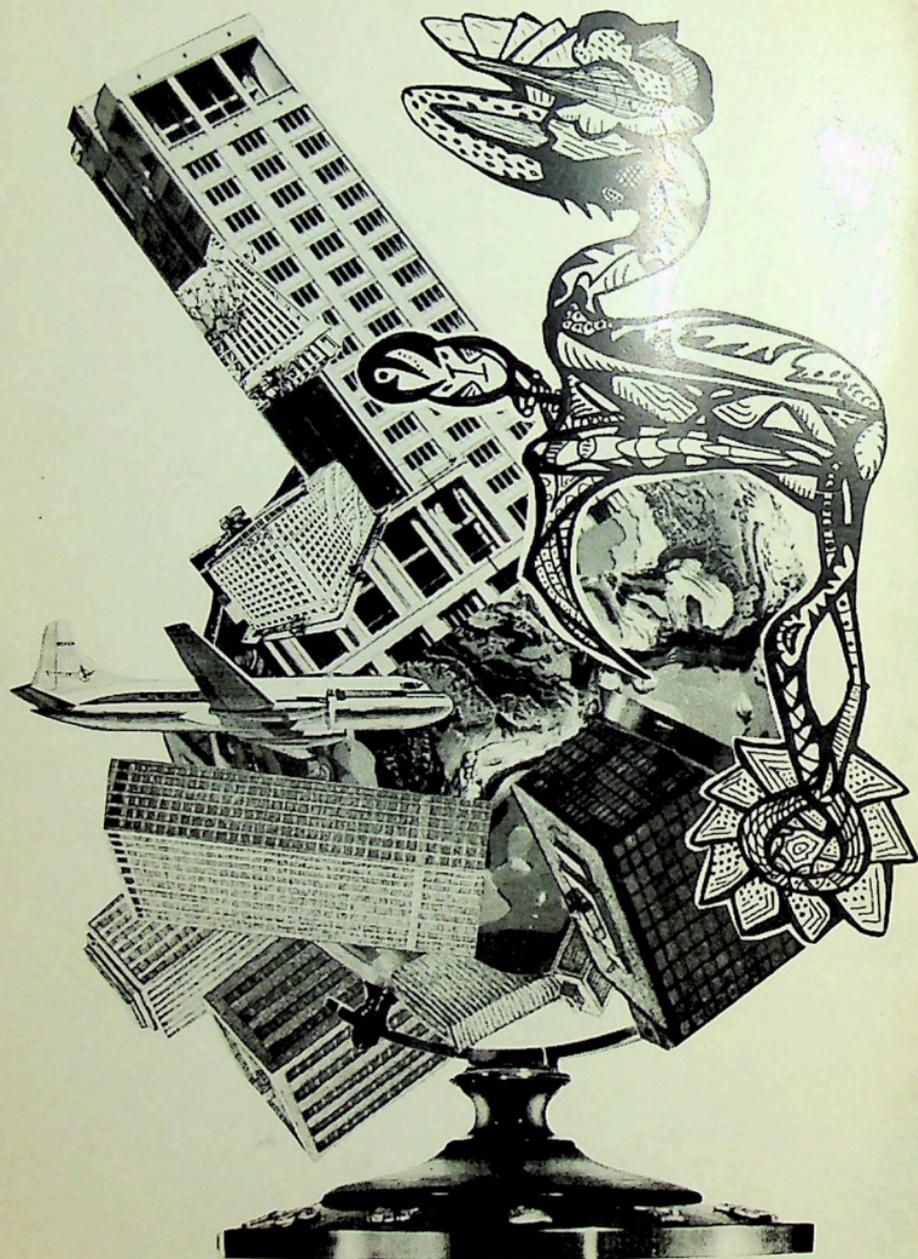
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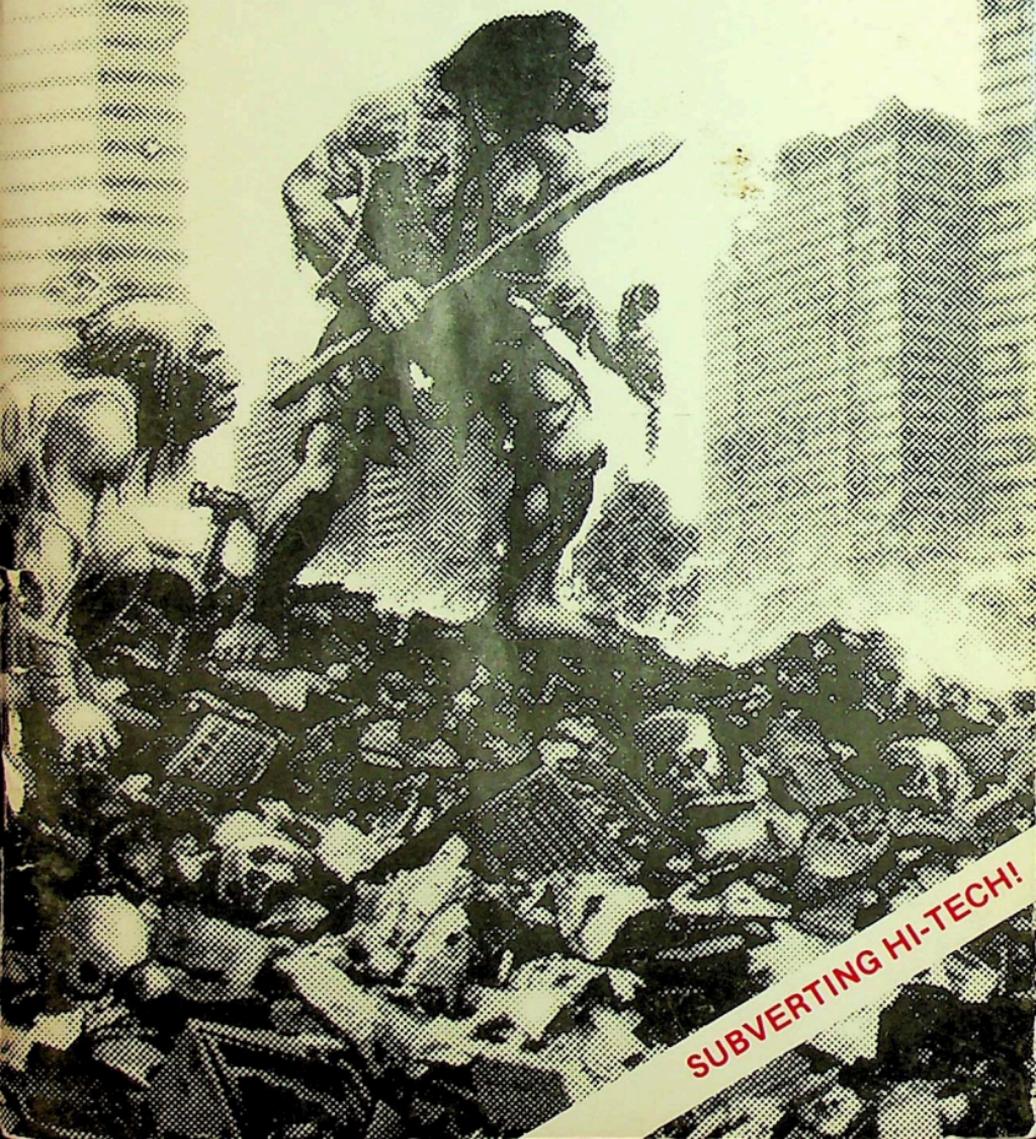
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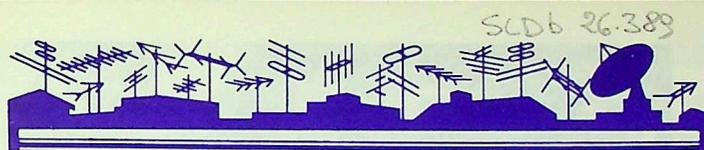
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and not necessarily those of other contributors or editors.

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ISSN 0735-9381

55 Sutter St. #829, San Francisco, CA 94104 USA



Here it is, the issue which begets the double-digit life of *Processed World*. Why do we keep doing it? The project began among a small group of friends, rebel artists, and marginal politicians, most of whom were doing time as office drones. We faced (and still face) the same predicament: useless and degrading work supporting a world system whose trajectory toward mutation, if not extermination, keeps screaming onward and upward. Even less inspiring is the ghetto of leftist opposition (old, new, or otherwise). None of this has changed much since PW first raised its head. But what has changed (to get back to the question of why we keep persisting) is the quality and quantity of responses and contributions to the publication. As the international contributors of this issue aptly illustrate, "we" are no longer a small circle of rebellious friends living in or around San Francisco.

Processed World is largely shaped by its readers and contributors (a separation we like to discourage). It is not difficult to see at least five kinds of people interested: clerical workers; high-tech workers like computer programmers and technical writers; rebel artists, independent radicals, and marginal wage workers (obviously many overlap into some or all of these divisions). This is by no means the total picture but even an analysis of this particular constellation has yet to be developed. Anyone interested?

PW's first 10 issues reflect a broad agreement that the only solution to the varied injustices we endure is a total transformation of the traditional tactics and strategies of change. To that end,

Processed World has devoted attention to: workers' autonomy (as opposed to trade unionism); sabotage; and solidarity between the workers and public users of certain industries (e.g. mass transit, phone service, childcare, etc.).

PW was conceived as a forum for those who can creatively name their misery and contribute ideas on how to change a world based on it. Though we have connected with many new friends, and some have gotten involved in "doing PW," we have confirmed the obvious — there simply aren't hordes of fellow wage slaves who share the same outlook. The lack of a recognizable revolutionary movement leaves us somewhat isolated with our desires. Of course we do think *Processed World* and similar forums *might* contribute to some kind of promising opposition, based in offices, other workplaces, and beyond.

PW as a part of a commodity-dominated world cannot escape the general prison in which our liberatory energy is sucked into the vacuum of stupid work demanded simply for us to exist. Hey! — All you "sugar people," we are looking for YOU to help support our \$300/mo. rent habit!

While by all means, 'today is a good day to fight' all forms of domination, *Processed World* is utterly serious about doing it with a sense of humor. Hey! Joke 'em if they can't take a fuck!

In this issue we feature several articles on the social consequences of high technology. The use of high-tech as a means of social control is being discussed from various angles today, but we have not joined the hand-

wringing over the realization of the Orwellian nightmare. Instead of focusing on the limited prescience of Orwell's 1984 scenario, the articles take up the question of how the dangers of high technology can be exposed, resisted and subverted.

"Don't PIS on me" gives an account of the battle between W. German managers and workers over the implementation of Personnel Information Systems (PIS's) which allow companies to monitor employees' lives in great detail. (We have also just received word from a Dutch group that is investigating the use of these systems in The Netherlands. Although there has been no publicity of PIS's in the U.S., these control systems are popping up in U.S. work-sites, too.

Distinctions between supposedly harmless uses of a PIS and its 'abuse' have guided the German unions in their negotiations on the new technology. It took the agitation of an ad hoc, autonomous group of workers to bring attention to the fact that *any* use of a PIS can be abused, and their efforts pushed the union into a firmer stance against their implementation. The article offers some chilling examples of how even the most apparently harmless information could be turned against workers and our centerfold includes concrete suggestions on ways to gum up the works.

The importance of autonomous workers' action, independent of official union activities, is stressed in Henri Simon's analysis of the computer strikes which took place in England in 1979 and 1981. (This article was edited for PW.) Simon points out that the British unions' interest in keeping close control over striking workers undercut the strikes' effectiveness, and consequently dovetailed with management's own concern for controlling the workforce. More flexible, democratic organization and coordination would allow computer workers to take advantage of their strategic position in production. Contrary to writers like David Noble, author of "Present Tense Technology," (published in the now defunct *democracy* magazine, and quoted in "Don't PIS on Me"), Simon does not believe that workers' opposition can be paralyzed by the dehumanization and centralization of

high technology. Whereas Noble has argued that the time is now or never to resist the effects of automation, Simon is optimistic about the emergence of new ways to fight against whatever forms of social control are devised.

In a sweeping panorama of daily life in Silicon Valley, Melquiades grapples with the question of why there isn't greater opposition to the high tech industry at its most vulnerable point — the "technical workers" who design and implement the new technologies. Melquiades exposes the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that the high tech industry keeps its workers isolated, ignorant and on the defensive. This insider's account of the social consequences of high tech production puts to shame the fawning apologetics for the industry that recently appeared in *Mother Jones* ("Fast Times For Hi-Tech" Dec. '83 issue).

Fortunately for us, the non-conformity of some computer programmers goes beyond the casual attire that so impressed the author of the article in *MJ*. Melquiades goes on to describe the secret life of the "hackers" and "raiders" that stalk corporate centers, cracking a secret code here, trashing a program there. For Melquiades, these "deviants" hold the key to our future, by virtue of the knowledge and potentially subversive power that is concentrated in their hands.

"CLODO Speaks" is an interview with a French group of anti-authoritarian hackers and raiders who have been successfully practicing sabotage for several years. They conceive of sabotage partly as an ideological campaign against the mystique of computer technology, as well as a practical demonstration of its vulnerability in the face of determined programmers.

This issue's fiction, "Grumbles Down Below" portrays a typical SF corporate office scene, with an atypical response by the workers. Information on VDT disasters, a number of interesting poems and letters, and the exciting conclusion to "BAD GIRL" round out this longest-ever issue of *Processed World*. Keep your letters, articles, stories, and "Tales of Toil" coming! *Processed World*, 55 Sutter Street #829, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA

LETTERS

Dear Processed World,

I used to do office work in San Francisco, while I was a film student. Now I am "unemployed" in Boston with a B.F.A. degree. I won't go into all the reasons for the change of location; the point is that I am an 'ex'-office worker. As in NEVER AGAIN!!!

A friend who now lives in S.F. turned me on to PW and I knew this was something I needed — a source of support for my decision *never* to go back to that horrible scene (even if it means living on the streets, which I have done since then). I have read 4 of your back issues and they have helped me to understand better why I had to make this decision. It's certainly good to know there are so many other people who feel the same way. I have spent a lot of time wrestling with my mangled emotions about those jobs; trying to figure out just *how* they messed up my head.

The following piece is an example of my attempts to work these things out; I hope you can also appreciate the irony of the fact that I don't have a workable typewriter of my own to type it on, and that you will therefore accept this handprinted manuscript. (I also had to use both sides of the paper to save on postage.)

In Solidarity,
Bridget Reilly — Boston

Bridget, please write us again if you ever see this — we wanted to open back but you didn't give us an address...

Excerpt from WHY I CAN'T SLEEP by Bridget Reilly:

... I wasn't listened to when I needed to be. That is really the root of it all. Convicted without a trial.

"Give me a CHANCE! for Chrissake! I'm only human! I only have 2 hands! I

can only do things so fast!"

They expected more of me than I could give and they punished me for not being able to give it. They screamed their demands into my ear till I was so nervous I couldn't think straight; my hands were shaking so I dropped what I was carrying; I couldn't do what they demanded because I was too nervous. And they said it was *my* fault. They didn't listen to my defense.

"If you'd be easier on me I could do it better!"

They would just rejoin, "We have no place for softies here. If you're not tough enough to handle the job, we'll find someone who can. YOU CAN BE REPLACED, YOU KNOW!!!"

Being able to "work under pressure" is considered a virtue in the employment marketplace. How many times do you see that in the Help Wanted ads? "Able to work under pressure."

I was "too slow."

I would give this as a reason why I couldn't remain a member of the proletarian workforce.

And they would rejoin, "You're just making excuses. If you really wanted to work, you could find a job."

I was "just making excuses" for "not wanting to work"! I have news for you people: I NEVER SAID I didn't want to work! I said I didn't want to crawl around on all fours and eat shit and say "Yes Sir" to some jerk with half my intelligence. If that's what they mean by "working," then no, I don't want to "work." But truly, people, I had thought working was something very different from that!

And incidentally, who *does* enjoy eating shit, I want to know?!

"Oh well," they say, "sometimes we have to do things we don't enjoy. Life isn't all a picnic. It's a sign of maturity if you can accept this."

Oh. So now I'm "immature" if I refuse to have my dignity attacked 40 hours a week. No one enjoys having their dignity insulted, of course, but "mature" people learn to put up with a certain amount of this in order to keep a roof over their heads. That's always the bottom line, in their way of "reasoning":

"You gotta have a roof over your head."

20th-century bourgeois logic.

And how many years have I chafed under their accusations of being a "failure" for not being able to conform

to this ridiculous system of theirs?

And look what it has done to my cerebral capacity, my creative power!!

And who cares what it has done?!! I say it is a *crime* to break down a person's psyche this way, Dammit Dammit Dammit!!

PEOPLE, YOU ARE GUILTY!!!!!!

And the blood-sucker known as our landlord is their current representative. You know, the one who is trying to collect the rent I am no longer able to pay. The price of the "roof over one's head." *Now* do you understand better why I fear him and his kind?

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Special classes in Computer Calorie Counting for Overweight Teens, includes the "Plasma Torso Regimen." Seminars in Allowance Budgeting with fun workshops. College credit courses for grammar school students. New "Victims of Pedophilia" Workshop open now. Jr. ROTC Leadership & Citizenship Seminars. Go-Karts & Indy 500 Blacktop track with pitstops, lit for night use. New TV commercial audition audio-video recording studios.

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from *The Culture of Narcolepsy* c/o Valbar, 143 1/4 Mt. Herman Way, Ocean Grove, NJ 07756

They will convict (evict?) me without a trial and feel quite righteous in doing it. Because it is all in the name of the System which their little minds have been trained to worship. Because they don't see ME at all!

"I am a person who cares for *life!*" is my last unheard cry. "Does this count for nothing? !?!!!!!!!!"

lll

Dear Processed World,

Liked the article in PW9, *Against "Fairness" & Fares* by Lucius Cabins.

I don't ride MUNI as much as I used to. When they raised the fare from 16 to 24 bucks I got myself a bike. But when I was using it daily I hated like hell to pay the full fare.

I used to use old transfers before they developed the new random symbol-number coding system. But I was wondering — wouldn't it be possible to have a hip early morning radio personality do the people a service by announcing which symbol and number that was being used that day?

Just a thought,
Ed — S.F.

lll

Dear folks,

Lucius Cabins: Good MUNI piece — I'm glad you did it. A further thought on MUNI: As far as I know, San Francisco has never prosecuted anyone for possession or use of a fake fast pass. In fact, the police say they don't even have a statute under which to charge such an offender; the few times they actually have arrested anyone, the charge has been "possession of a forged steamship ticket," which is the closest thing they can find to a city or state ordinance banning the use of a phony bus pass. I believe the statute is very old. Normally, the charge is dropped.

Keep up the good work,
T.R. — S.F.

lll

Dear Processed World,

As an environmental (and therefore political) lawyer, I read with great interest and satisfaction the articles by Bradley Rose ("Walling of Awareness") and Lucius Cabins ("Against 'Fairness' & Fares") in PW 9. In a slightly different context (the function of "environmental" laws in a capitalist economy) I had arrived at a similar conclusion, and was pleased to find agreement in a source I respect as much as PW. Clearly, any meaningful analysis or observation of why things are the way they are in this country is impossible without a healthy sense of the pervasiveness of our economic system. So what else is new?

Oddly, when I read PW 9, I had just picked up a book employing a similar analysis with respect to American city planning in general. The point of the book, made with appropriate academic flourishes, is that city planning, far from being rational or in the public interest, is really just another way in which society is organized to serve the interests of capital. (This is why most planning consultants are as much whores as are most lawyers.) Of course, we knew that too, but now we have a BOOK that says so. The book is "Dreaming the Rational City/The Myth of American City Planning," by M. Christine Boyer, MIT Press, 1983.

However, the question remains, what to do? Or rather, how to do it? One does one's best against the odds and sleeps well at least, but the best that can be hoped for is a temporary reprieve, and the system stays the same. Maybe, in a historical sense, things take care of themselves, and the time is not yet upon us. Beats hell out of me. If anyone knows, please let me know.

Which brings me, rather clumsily, to something I've wanted to write you about for months. It seems to me that information processors, bike messengers as well as those who sit in front of computer terminals, have a wonderful opportunity to commit really important sabotage, the costs of which will not be

passed on to the consumer. I speak of passing on information to parties for whom it was not intended. Next time you come across some confidential communication between, say, a drug company and a law firm defending them in litigation concerning the effects of some dangerous birth control device or mutagenic drug, remember, you have the opportunity to copy it and pass it on to the other side.

Never having been a messenger or information processor, I don't really know whereof I speak, but it seems to me that the possibilities for infiltration and subversion are endless. Of course this idea has also popped up now and then in PW, but effective action would require the development of an overall strategy for determining what sort of information is worth leaking, how to recognize it quickly, and who to leak it to. One (somewhat unrealistic?) possibility is a clearinghouse for this information, complete with copying facilities and a list of who is on what side of what current issue.

Fred — San Francisco

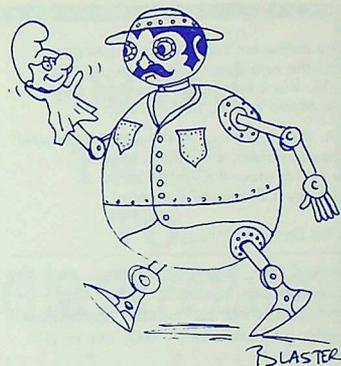
Ed.: *Good Idea!*

lll

Dear PW,

The last FEW months I've experienced with the temporary office work scene. What struck me most about it was the sickeningly sweet etiquette that all agencies employ; from the lilting voice of the receptionist to the saccharin interviewer who politely impresses how valuable you the employee are to the agency, and how very much they care about you (or worse yet they use a videotape machine to tell you the same); to the bloodless purges when they whisk you off a job without ever telling you you're being fired — less brutal than the loud knock on the door by midnight thugs, but no less effective in making sure that you disappear without a trace.

In my journeys through the temp world, I managed to drop loose journal



entries, like a trail to retrace my steps back through the labyrinth. Of the three excerpted here, the first two are unretouched spilling during practice time for typing test at interviews; the third entry was composed without benefit of a typewriter.

(1) * * * What am I ding here, taking a typing test when I hardly even know how to type — I'm up here on the 13th floor with my misspelled words. Can you spell "authority" "management", "success"? Can you pour coffee into the xerox machine till it cooks? What is the true nature of success? Is it taking a dive from the 13th floor to a trampoline below and then parachuting back up again?/

Here I go.....remember a couple of weeks ago. Working at Macy's the kind of terminal boredom that seeps into your bones the way below zero cold does, 5:30 pm came, and as soon as I hit the ground floor I start ed running for the exits—emerged onto the street, gave a whoop and yelled 'I'm human Again!', and all the passersby looked at me and smiled, as if they knew, "he's been working at Macy's today." I went to Telfords to pick up some clove cigarettes before they tured into pumkins, was walking fast up Kearny street, encountered a womanat one corner who

MONDAY MORNING

*The coffee isn't as good with you gone,
and the rain doesn't feel cozy, just cold.
8:35. Work has sucked you down into
the Metro's maw, and I'm next.*

*Oh, this is the way of the world, the world.
Growing older, everything begins
to center around a single word:
Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!*

by David Steinberg

looked like someone I know, and she gave an enthusiastic hello and I responded with an equally enthusiastic hello, and she said, "NO, not you!"

(2) Another fuckin'; Ibm selectric! I thought of using this machine to type my resume, but I don't think I have time, plus by abominable ytyping accuracy 1/2 1/2 I ought to at least by able to start training myself to use bh little fingers more, just like I'm tying to do on the bass guitar.

I like this machine a lot — wish I could steal it I could use the practice. What? Practice stealing or typing? Well, if I stole it, I could get practice doing both%! Such miserable weather outside—I kept dodging people's umbrellas—why can't these financial district types just learn to walk in the rain? It might actually soften up some of that head0processing that's become hardened in there since day 1. Is this a comedy/ in how many unnatura; acts—that this is where I get all my practice typing, here in the life0forsaken fanancial district where I gert to use the typewriters for free. Is anything else in the financial district free? writers for Well. walking is cheap, I don't know if I'd call it free. Gos, this receptionist! (I'm at Volt) Did she learn to talk off of the t.v.? She's like a characature of a syrupy rece1/2tionst, though I bet she can type better than me— better than that—Ishouldn't complain—like this morning in the living room, unemployed Michael, and unemployed me just coming back from Food Stamps, while hippie dope-dealer roommate walks

in, sits plops on the couch, & starts counting his hundred dollar bills, right under our noses—I found it a tad bit insulting, like driving past those Bank of America "We got the money!" billboards thsi summer—why don;t you rub our faces in poverty a little bit0, but just a little bit—I'm not really complaining, just observing—on this, another one of ny typing test/ loose journal entries—call me the Herb Caen of the financial district underground.

(3) People don't like the word "fuck." It's unprofessional, or so my agency counselor told me after I used it while being hassled by a security guard when I showed up for my new job this morning. So I became the first job casualty of '84, pulled off the job less than two hours into the first working day of the new year. Temporary agencies remind me of old style Chinese marriages, where it's possible for a husband to lose face by any wrong thing his wife says or does. In this case, I can cause my agency to lose face simply by opening my mouth at a given moment, and leave the agency scrambling on the phone to save face and arrange a quickie divorce.

G.B. — San Francisco

lll

Dear PW:

I found it interesting the number of letter writers who express the idea that technology is neutral. I'm sure that all agree that nukes aren't — but short of that ... Maxine's response was OK, but I think the point needs to be hammered home that the design of machinery, etc. incorporates the class relations and aids in perpetuating the class relations. It's not that the essential idea of, say, the internal combustion engine, electricity or computers are themselves so capitalistic we must get rid of them, but that when concretized in commodity-form they are not only employed by capital (or sold to 'consumers') but also help ensure capital's power. I'm sure



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Speech Cleaners, Inc.

"TAKING A STEP BACKWARDS TO TAKE A STEP FORWARD"

you know this one — I just think that it needs to be emphasized. It means also that we won't, ultimately, simply be able to appropriate and use, but will have to appropriate, often re-design, sometimes junk, and then use — and this will take some time.

If the technology gets to the point where those transit passes can be replicated using recording tape, I hope

the idea reaches here.

M.N. — Boston

lll

Dear *Processed World*,

I work as a Library Assistant at the University of California, Berkeley. In case you didn't know, practically all of the traditional librarian's work is now

done on CRTs. Cataloging serial publications (what I do in my half-time position) is basically a programming activity now, since one must "code" the "worksheets" for subsequent input into a computer terminal. The traditional card catalogs have been replaced by computer-produced microfiche catalogs, and these in themselves represent a half-way point to a future, and totally on-line catalog. I am responsible for all the bibliographic searching (searching for catalog copy already in the database that has been put there by other libraries) for the material in my division, hence I spend anywhere from half to three-quarters of my time sitting at a computer terminal each day.

I have very mixed emotions about my position. Granted, working for the state is different than working for the private sector (I feel that I am working for the public good, and not for someone's personal gain), but the business element has begun to pervade the library, and there are now not just a few "dress for success" types running around.

Furthermore, I do not feel that computerization of library work is one-hundred percent bad. The time it takes publications from the point of receipt to the patron's hand as a fully cataloged item complete with call number and subject headings has dropped considerably. Since access is the name of the game, as it were, in the library world, this quickened rate of accessibility to the patron is almost worth the associated problems of worker welfare, etc. However, I do resent the fact that the University Administration resists the problems associated with CRTs, and I do resent the fact that people's interactions have been altered to the point of petty arguments about whose terminal is whose, etc., and I do often feel like smashing the terminals at the end of a long session of searching/inputting.

So, anyway, that is my position.

C.S. — Berkeley CA

lll

Dear PW:

Since I met you last July I've moved to New York City, where I am now staff editor of a "consumer computer magazine" for "educational, home and business uses of a new machine... and so I penetrate further into the belly of the beast, and as I go the PW critique/analysis of the world of work makes more and more sense... Of course, I've already tussled with my editor (who is sexist, infantile and a nurd — very sweet but the jokes he makes about Charo...) over style. He's a mother hen who wants to make his baby (this new magazine) a successful offspring of the publishing company's other horribly successful magazine... and where is the room for cultural critiques of computers in people's lives?...

So what am I doing here?.. it is still true that writing articles is inherently less boring than writing software user's manuals, although new products blurbs and reviews of programs that do tax returns at home aren't exactly fascinating. And it's quite remarkable how the editor dumps the routine shitwork on the women on the staff, and leaves the "fun" stuff for the males... I found myself reading *Games Mother Never Taught You*, expertly discussed in a PW a few issues back, just to understand what the fuck was going on around me. An evil book, that...

Of course my bad attitude shows here, and I wonder what outcome my move here will have — I know I'm fundamentally alienated from what I'm doing whereas my editor is happy as a clam about the whole thing — and it can only be a matter of time until he psychs that one out...

But here I am, cranking out copy... my one hope is to slip in my glimpses of another way of looking at the world by trying to get an article I'm working on on the ethics of software piracy published (I see them as the analog to graffiti artists, turning the whole concept of private property on its head), mentioning PW in the publications section of 'my' new products column,

etc...

Living in New York is quite something. The sexism, the money is all that matters, everyone is out for themselves. None of the Bay Area living lightly on the earth/ecological sanity stuff here. It is a city where there is no access to anything without money, and with a class/caste system that rivals anything a medieval city would have to offer. I find myself incredibly resentful that I cannot live on the salary I'm paid (because of my rent and utilities, which are both three times higher than the Bay Area)... I will have to moonlight. Dammit, it's enough that I put 40 hours a week into a windowless airless closet staring at a VDT! I've only been in NYC for about 6 weeks, and am reeling from the culture shock.

P.B. — New York

lll

Dear Processed World,

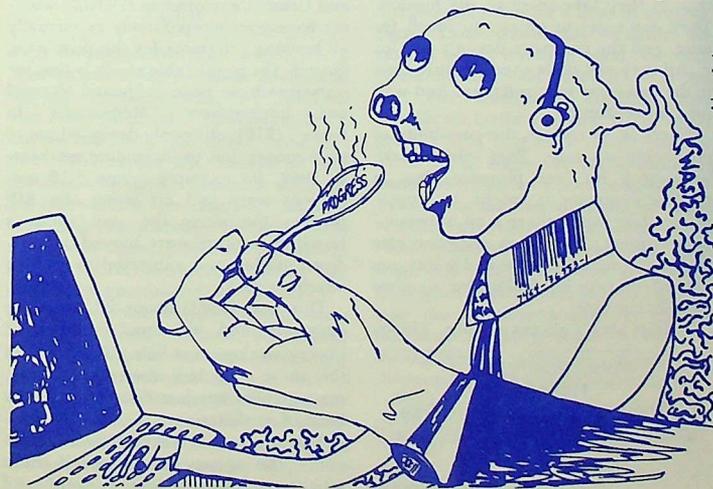
This is a piece I wrote which I distributed via bathroom and inter-office mail to secretaries while working as a Kelly Girl for a big company...

BEING NICE

Almost everyone, unless they're very

lucky, or unless they don't care, experiences some conflict between Good (later to be known as "idealistic") and Crummy ("reality"). There is a conflict between what is moral and what gets the job done. In the world at large women are moral so men can go to work without feeling guilty.

Although women don't stay home and care for the cradle of morality much anymore because they have to make money, the situation works about the same way in the office. Women have a kind word in the morning, and it's expected of them. They make an effort to look nice. They feel bad when things go wrong. They put up the Christmas decorations, which are a little silly, but make amidst the beige feel a little better anyway. Women talk about things like parties and food and clothes, which often proves to men what they thought all along, that women can't really think about much that's serious. But nice words and pretty faces help men through the day. Without them, they might realize how heartless their efficiency and profit-morality can be. And they might not make it to happy hour, and might not be able to negotiate



Alex Igloo

million-dollar contracts for nuclear weapons basing systems without feeling bad.

Men also resolve their personal moral conflict in the office (if they still have one and haven't been completely numbed by company policy) by being nice. They don't have to be nice, and they know it. Sometimes they aren't nice at all and make demands without bothering to say thank you or please. But when they are nice it's really nice and they feel much better for it, even though it's something that's always expected of women. And women are very grateful.

Lots of times women don't feel so much better being nice because they have to be nice. It can take a lot of energy and patience sometimes to smile and say "of course" and do something that doesn't make any sense to you or to the world. And it can be very difficult to do a lot of detail work that the people you're doing it for don't think is very difficult. It's just word processing, and you're a word processor. It can be very difficult to continue to care.

Women don't get much out of being nice. They don't get paid as much, even though they take more of the burden. They don't get to go out to lunch for long, and the company doesn't pay for it. All they can do is spend a little time in the bathroom now and then. And wait for the weekend.

There is, of course, the possibility of not being so nice. That could make working a bit less pleasant, but at certain moments it might be appropriate. Like when there's an unreasonable request. Like when someone else feels like a mean bastard and wants you not only to take his feeling but to come back being nice.

Things aren't always so nice. Things

Public Poetry Part II Headlines

Artists Banned From Universe
"We hired you to paint us a picture!"

by Linda Thomas

that the company does aren't always so nice. Sometimes by not being nice it makes those uncomfortable or upsetting things a little more clear. And makes what you think about them clear, too. And how you feel. Just because women are supposed to feel, it doesn't mean we can always feel good about things. Sometimes it's good to feel that things are really crummy...

And do something about it.

L.F. — S.F.



Dear PW:

US Government office workers are among the most processed anywhere, especially since Ronnie Ray-gun zapped the air traffic controllers. Ever since then the government employee "unions" have been meek as kittens (before that they were only as meek as pussy-cats).

Here at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) workers have watched passively as virtually all housing programs for the poor were gutted. The predictable result is that we ourselves have been subjected to cruel and unnecessary "Reductions In Force" (RIF), obviously designed not to save money but to intimidate workers. In 1982, for example, some 8-10 employees were laid off using the RIF process but along the way about a hundred workers were moved around, down-graded and subjected to terrible psychic stress.

This year (1983) about 20 computer operators and an equal number of library workers are being RIFed. Not that there's any lack of work, of course, management has just discovered a new form of exploitation.

The process is called "contracting-out." The agency offers to sell these jobs to the lowest bidder. A number of

companies compete to see which can offer to do the work for the lowest possible price. None of them employ organized workers, of course, and all of them explicitly promise to browbeat, oppress and exploit their workers to guarantee no "labor unrest." Part of the deal is that anyone the DHUDs don't like will be fired — no questions asked, no hassles, no reasons.

You might have expected the employee's representative (AFGE) to protest, picket, or somehow fight to protect the workers' jobs. Nothing of the kind. The union let out hardly a peep — no voices were raised. Ray-gun has set the stage perfectly.

As a final note — the firings are scheduled to be effective on December 23rd, 1983. Merry Xmas!

On our new collective bargaining this year the only really positive note was the inclusion of a clause requiring some attention to the safety of Video Display Terminals.

Given the atmosphere in DHUD these days I would appreciate your not using my name.

KEEP IT UP!

G.F. — Reston, VA



Dear Processed World,

In an otherwise excellent analysis of the phone strike in issue #9 ("The Line You Have Reached... Disconnect It!"), Lucius Cabins should have gone further. Why expose the "moribund and obsolete strategies imposed by a decaying trade union movement..." without critiquing the pathetic "demands" this union was fighting for. As the article noted, "AT&T overcame union demands for guaranteed job security..." and "No specific job protection guarantees were made." C'mon, the unions (and Cabins) should stop pretending and wake up to the modern world. Guaranteed Job Slavery (GJS) is a dinosaur that is now impossible and never was desirable. Guaranteed slavery at the same demeaning, stupid, dangerous job — forget it! The irony is that the

capitalists in their ceaseless drive for production efficiency strive to decrease human labor. Those fucking unions would keep us working like mules forever.

Regardless of the unions' nostalgic demands or wimpy concessions, new technology and automation are (and should be) obliterating jobs in all sectors. For instance, robotics is replacing people in some of the most onerous and hazardous jobs — die-casting, forging, paint spraying, arc welding, etc. Sure, management is only doing it for the reduced labor costs and quality control, rather than worker safety. But the unions never seek to eliminate such jobs, their business is to reform them to create the illusions that you aren't doing the same old, dirty shitwork. Instead of bargaining for GJS, why not accept the reality of technological displacement and fight for *Guaranteed Income and Benefits*? It is only fair that corporations should bear the social costs of massive layoffs including maintaining the standard of living for its "post-employable" workers.

If such a demand seems too "unrealistic" for you, take a look at the Greyhound strike for a dose of pragmatism. Their thoroughly realistic demands boiled down to good 'ole GUS (Guaranteed Union Survival) — at any cost. For example, no amnesty provision for the strike activists, 100 of whom got the axe. This after caving into the same 7.8% wage cut (14% including benefits) union members originally rejected. For another example of union realism, ask the 15,000 steelworkers recently laid off how conceding to large wage and benefit cuts last year saved their jobs. What a cruel hoax! In neither case did the unions possess enough militancy or imagination to counter management's quest for quantitative concessions with qualitative demands.

Such a strategy of seeking reciprocal concessions was attempted (with partial success) by three unions representing workers at Eastern Airlines. Although workers took substantial wage and

IF YOU VOTE, DON'T COMPLAIN!

there's only one logical direction
IN
The
Global
market:

Government and industry,
working together,
**TO OPTIMIZE FINANCIAL
PERFORMANCE**
and increase bureaucracy...

CHANGE LIFE, NOT LEADERS!

benefit cuts, in return they gained ownership of about one-fourth of the company and effective veto power over the formulation of a new business plan and financial restructuring program. They also gained unrestricted access to corporate financial information but gave up their boldest proposal in which workers would have the right to call managers before a "management review board" to challenge corporate decisions and policies.

Ironically, since unions can't deliver on the bread and butter issues anymore, all that is left are the qualitative issues

over the work process itself. Unfortunately, the most common tendency is toward worker co-ownership of a corporation (often headed for bankruptcy) without workers gaining actual power over workplace decisions. This brings us to the two crucial issues unions should be facing: gaining effective control of the labor process (e.g. how new technology is designed and implemented) and guaranteeing that the growing number of 'post-employables' retain their standard of living. Of course that raises the question of vision. Can unions imagine (much less advocate) a

world with less workers doing even less work? Can they conceive of destroying a system in which real workers' power is inconceivable? Most importantly, how much longer will workers keep believing unions are capable of acting in their interests?

E.C. — San Francisco

lll

Dear PW,

Lucius Cabins' article on the phone strike in PW#9 was interesting and informative. However, I disagree with his attack on unionism. Unions are not "capitalist institutions" as he states, they are clearly "workers' institutions." Unions are simply organizational forms by which we can fight collectively to better our lot. Fighting collectively obviously gives us more strength whether that fight be in a factory or an office.

I believe that the present day union leadership is an obstacle in any struggle between capital and labor. And I believe the unions are inadequate instruments for bringing about a real revolutionary change in society. But, let's not throw out the baby with the bath water. Let's get rid of our unions' misleaders and transform our unions into real class struggle organizations, not get rid of them.

Cabins counterposes "direct action" to "obsolete strategies imposed by a decaying trade union movement." He should read some labor history to find out about some of the "obsolete strategies" that unions can use and have used. He should read about some of the battles of the labor movement in the 1930's such as the San Francisco general strike, the Toledo auto strike and factory occupations and the Minneapolis Teamsters' strikes.

In Minneapolis, for example, the labor movement organized unemployed councils, had pitch battles with the cops — and won. They controlled the city for a time. They conducted traffic, decided what trucks would move in the city and what ones wouldn't. They made al-

liances with farmers' organizations so that the people of Minneapolis could eat. This was all done by the unions.

These and other struggles of that period led to the rise of the CIO and a better form of organization, the industrial union as opposed to the craft union. Millions of workers were organized into unions during this period.

However, after World War II, U.S. capitalism far outstripped its competition abroad, which had their economies destroyed or badly damaged by the war. It was the "American Century." There was a tremendous expansion of U.S. capitalism. This expansion allowed for concessions to be granted to the U.S. workers in an attempt to stop the growing radicalization in the unions. The government, in collaboration with the conservatives in the labor movement drove the radicals out of the unions and consolidated a conservative bureaucratic leadership that still hold the reins today. The rank and file accepted this because during this period of concessions, the "business unionism" of this leadership seemed to work.

Today the situation is different. In spite of periodic, minor upturns, the capitalist system is in a deep structural crisis. Dozens of third world countries are on the verge of default on their loans. A single such default could mean the collapse of the capitalist banking system. The banks are demanding that severe austerity programs be imposed in these countries so that their loans can be repaid. This, and other economic and political factors, have led to a dramatic increase in revolutionary struggles of workers and farmers throughout the colonial world.

In the U.S. the economic crisis combined with the increasing competitive ability of Western Europe and Japan, has forced the employers to go on the offensive against the U.S. working class and especially our unions. Concession contracts, worse health and safety conditions, increased racial and sexual discrimination and slashing of social services are the norm today as

employers try to increase their competitive standing and profits by driving down the living standard of the U.S. working class.

As a result, attitudes in the U.S. working class are changing. There is a questioning, a groping for answers. How do you fight concession contracts? How can we insure job security? Answers to these types of questions can only be given in broad political terms. The answers point to the need to change the whole social system to one where production is organized to satisfy human needs not for profit.

The changing moods in the working class can be seen by formations such as the Labor Committee for Democracy and Union Rights in El Salvador, or the endorsement by the AFL-CIO of the August 27 march for Jobs, Peace and Freedom when 20 years ago they refused to endorse the march whose anniversary this one was celebrating. Or the United Auto Workers opposition to the invasion of Grenada. Or the discussion around the formation of a labor party that has been taking place in the International Association of Machinists, the United Steel Workers and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and other unions. These developments are reflections of the changing consciousness of the U.S. worker, not enlightened positions of the tired union leadership.

It is through this radicalization that the unions' leadership will be changed and the unions can be transformed.

For radical minded people such as Cabins to abandon the labor movement at this point would be a serious mistake. The discussion taking place in the labor movement needs to be joined by people who have a perspective that can help workers draw revolutionary conclusions. In the immediate period ahead, there will be more, and more vicious, labor battles as the employers and their government try to break our unions. We must be prepared to defend our unions and to help the unions move forward to a better understanding of what needs to be done and to organize more workers,

especially in the new high-tech and computer industries.

Those who fail to see this and who attack the unions from the left as the employers attack them from the right may find themselves in the wrong camp in the battles to come.

J.L. — Cincinnati OH

Dear J.L.,

Radicals have been trying to "get rid of our unions' misleaders and transform our unions into real class struggle organizations" for at least fifty years — since the formation of the CIO, in fact. Their results? Countless radicals burned out, "successfully" elevated in the union hierarchy and transformed by the pressures of the situation into bureaucrats in their turn. Your picture of union "conservatives" allying with the government in the 40's to drive out the "radicals" is grossly oversimplified. What is one to make, by this analysis, of such men as John L. Lewis or Phillip Murray, architects of the CIO, who often defied the government or the corporations, but crushed dissent within their unions?

You talk as if "class struggle" were inherently antagonistic to capitalism. Actually, it is a primary motor of capitalist development. The struggle of the 30's, safely contained within the framework of industrial unionism, helped lay the groundwork for the post-war expansion, "shaking out" smaller and weaker capitals and establishing the "Keynesian" system of industry-wide productivity bargaining mediated by the government.

Of course there was another side — the early control won over output and working conditions, the experience of self-organization, solidarity and defiance of authority, and so forth. This is the side of "class struggle" which is potentially revolutionary, because it creates the possibility of a collective challenge to the ruling order. But this kind of activity must either spread and deepen rapidly into generalized revolt, or else disappear, as the radical shop-floor practices of the early CIO disap-

peared. Contrary to fond leftist belief, this disappearance is only secondarily the result of "bureaucracy" and "mis-leadership." Far more important was the simple re-adaptation of the immense majority of workers to the (revised) norms of proletarian existence, in exchange for improvements in wages and conditions. The present state of the unions is largely the result of this re-adaptation. Membership apathy breeds bureaucracy and no amount of "correct leadership" by itself will change this.

A new workers' revolt in the U.S. is certainly possible, but it will have little to do with the unions. In the first place, their entire structure (and the labor laws which they fought for and are defined by) is designed for winning

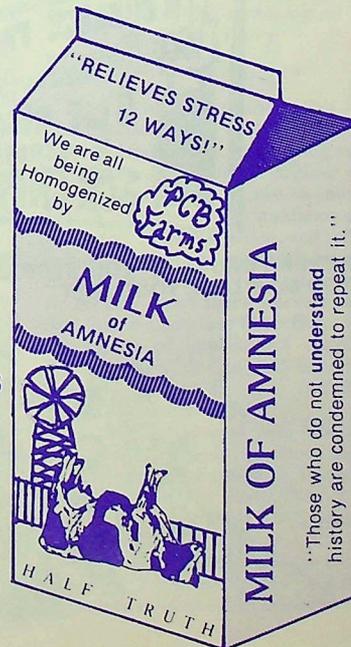
concessions in a time of worldwide capitalist expansion. As you point out, this time is past. Secondly, the new workers' struggles in Europe and elsewhere over the past decade have centered around refusing work rather than winning more money. The stupidity, pointlessness and obsolescence of modern work escapes the unions (and most leftists) completely, but they have been the main flashpoint of revolt, in the last decade. We aren't denying the eventual possibility of large-scale workers' organization; but it won't be "unionist," since it will be the organized expression of a movement which is attacking the wage system and the money economy much more directly.

— Louis Michaelson

PUBLIC WARNING!!



Use of this product is a known cause of
**CONCESSIONAIRE'S
DISEASE**



PW.

'IN CASE OF NUCLEAR ATTACK' [PW#8] of which I made about 30 copies was a big hit around the office and created decent conversation. A burly workman delivering furniture got quite a chuckle (in a very cynical-knowledgeable tone - he caught the absurdity) from it. Others liked it so we taped it in various strategic locations. I left PW #8 around for people to leaf thru. One person made another 15 copies to hand out to friends.

Then when PW #9 arrived I made copies of BAD ATTITUDE which I gave to potential or closet malcontents it

delivered certain sly smiles of clandestine solidarity.

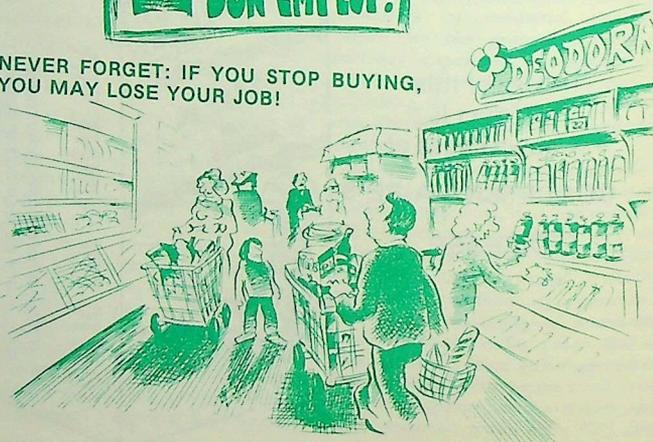
Upon closer reading of #9 I ran across that very informative and thoughtful letter warning of potential CRT hazards. I copied THAT one too and left it on my boss' desk and he was duly impressed and is now going to buy any safety equipment available. But happy as that makes me it still makes me wonder about those millions of others with less sympathetic bosses.

I've thus created a bit of a stir fortified by your informative pages. Thanks for legitimizing my suspicions and my political diatribes from the past.

B.P. - New Jersey



NEVER FORGET: IF YOU STOP BUYING, YOU MAY LOSE YOUR JOB!



J.F. Batellier

SILICON

The Chips of our lives

As we walked along a ridge high above Death Valley, the desert heat rose and filled our pores. We were technical workers from Silicon Valley in search of quiet desolation. Suddenly, a boom filled the sky. A dark blue ("Navy?"), unmarked ("experimental?"), F-14-like craft ("Sure, the China Basin Naval Weapons Center is due west of here!") flew directly overhead at about 1,000 feet. Gaining altitude above the Valley, the craft dipped and spun, performing center stage for us all the amazing things its computer-driven, aluminum-alloyed geometry could do.

We took turns fixing this blue angel in our sights, countering its supersonic roar with the tight pop and lingering echo of our .357. Our bullets fell short of their target, heaving and gliding several miles across the Valley. The craft returned and buzzed us, but our smiles glistened in the late autumn midday sun. Secretly, we toyed with a force far more powerful than ourselves.

What we found at Death Valley was a noisy reminder of the death we thought we left behind in Silicon Valley: the nuclear missiles, the command and control devices, the big brother office automation systems,

and the simulated battlefields that technical workers create there. In the solitude above Death Valley that day, we had confronted one of their products on its own terms. How might we really confront the technological Leviathan in Silicon Valley - on our terms?

Rush hour. A heavy metal San Jose radio station airs "career" slots for Valley corporations. An alluring voice describes the "unique ROLM culture" where "the future is now." ROLM workers design guidance systems for cruise missiles and office communication systems with surveillance features. Rush-hour-paced traffic signals inject more workers from San Jose's sprawling FMC Corp. into the queue of late model vehicles. FMC workers design and construct tanks, personnel carriers, and Pershing II launch vehicles.

At IBM, engineers joke uneasily about the next fatality on blood alley, an evil stretch of the U.S. 101 commute south of San Jose. They gripe about roving squads of security guards who randomly enter unoccupied offices to check for papers left on desktops. Too many "finds" get IBM engineers in trouble. IBM has recent-

ly contracted with the Air Force to streamline communications at the "Blue Cube," the U.S.A.F. Satellite Control Facility headquarters along-side Moffett Field near Mountain View. The Blue Cube commands and controls virtually every U.S. military intelligence and space navigation satellite as well as listening outposts from Greenland to Turkey.

Business is brisk at a Valley watering hole that discounts drinks to patrons sporting polo player logos on their shirts. Lockheed Space and Missile workers awkwardly avoid being overheard talking shop. They bitch about waves of security guards, elaborate screening devices, and fatal accidents in Lockheed's massive parking lots. Lockheed makes missiles to order. Most of the orders issue from the Lawrence Livermore Labs (LLabs). The LLabs house plutonium triggers and are nestled on a web of active earthquake faults a few miles inland from the Valley. Technical workers at the LLabs, which is funded by the Dept. of Defense and managed by U.C. Berkeley Board of

Regents, have designed virtually every U.S. nuclear weapons device since the Manhattan Project.

At the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in Palo Alto, researchers speak cryptically about new computers they will requisition to fulfill defense contracts. SRI workers do pure military R&D on VLSI (very large scale integration) computers for missile guidance applications; they also design tedious plans to load maximum firepower into C-130 transport planes for rapid U.S. troop deployment.

At 800 feet and lower over (unaware?) Valley residents, submarine-hunting, nuclear-depth-charge-equipped P-3 Orion aircraft cruise ominously, landing and taking off from Moffett Field every few minutes. At least twice in recent months, huge runway fires have gone unreported. Moffett Field is the Navy's western theater air operations headquarters and a NASA research center site.

The once fertile lands along U.S. 101 from Palo Alto south to San Jose absorb more R&D funding than anywhere else in the world. Silicon Valley

is also perhaps the most military-dependent economy in the country. Additional billions from banks, insurance conglomerates, and real estate speculators fuel the technology engine. The engine fans the practical fascination of technical workers — who build today's office-accounting, intelligence-gathering, and war-making technology.

The worklife revolves around an exchange. In exchange for relatively fat paychecks, skilled people design and develop new (or revolutionize old) technology that less skilled and less well-paid people manufacture and ship. For the corporate keepers of the exchange, the profits are immense, the competition often overwhelming, and the less said about poisoned water, clogged freeways, and military applications, the better. The technology produced by the exchange is some of the most sophisticated and hostile imaginable.

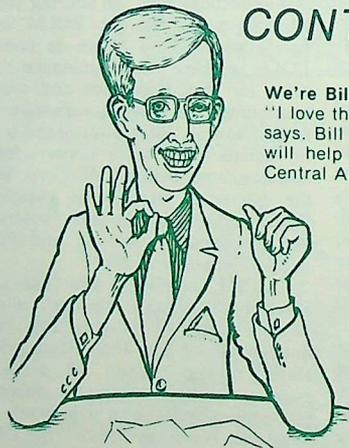
The exchange generates horrible consequences: a mutant culture, a toxic physical environment, and a contradiction: workers produce tech-

nologies that threaten their loved ones, and the rest of us, with imminent danger. Management is responsible for creating the contradiction, for making the "decisions." But the responsibility is shared by technical workers who, after all, design and produce the technology and often collaborate intimately with management in the process.

Technical workers here create useful adaptable technologies, too, but as a rule, only if corporate executives see a clear and sizeable profit. Individuals who can afford these technologies — like home computers — may take amusement or benefit from them. But in design and application, most Silicon Valley technologies reflect corporate and military "needs." And why not? Corporations and the Pentagon are by far the largest consumers of local technology. Its board-room-and-war-room conception intimately influences how all of us can use and are used by it.

The logic of this arrangement depends upon the loyalty of the technical workers who make corporate and

CONTEK SMILE #1

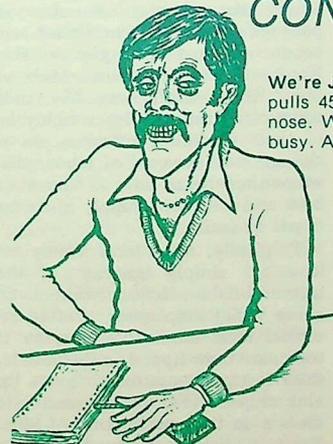


We're Bill Kissit, Senior Systems Engineer. "I love the challenges Contek sets me," Bill says. Bill is currently working on a chip that will help track down naughty peasants in Central America.

CONTEK

"People Like You
Helping People Like Us
Help Ourselves"

CONTEK SMILE #2

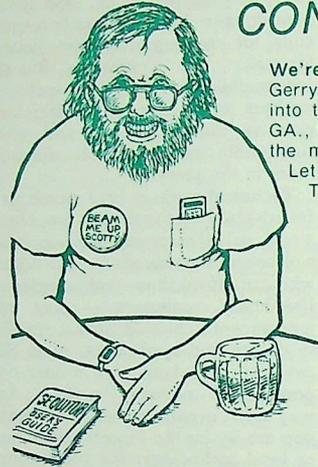


We're Jack Twitchley, Systems Analyst, who pulls 45K a year and puts half of it up his nose. We don't mind, though. It keeps him busy. And when he gets too strung out, we'll fire him. There's plenty more where he came from.

CONTEK

"People Like You
Helping People Like Us
Help Ourselves"

CONTEK SMILE #3



We're Gerry Batts, Systems Programmer. Gerry likes his little joke: last month he broke into the central files at the Fort Benning, GA., Bacteriological Warfare Lab and wiped the memory. "All in fun," smiles Gerry. Let's hope he never makes any serious Trouble.

CONTEK

"People Like You
Helping People Like Us
Help Ourselves"

military pipedreams into practical technologies. The engineers, scientists, and specialists (i.e., technical workers) are the key to understanding the ferment in Silicon Valley. Their labor is in most demand and least expendable to employers. Technical workers are the weak link. Rarely have so few held such enormous potential subversive power.

There are three categories of workers in Silicon Valley: "offshore" production workers, local production and office workers, and at the high end, the technical workers who design and support Valley technology. Locally, nearly 200,000 people work for high technology firms. The largest employers are the military electronics firms, like Lockheed Space and Missile in Sunnyvale, and semiconductor corporations, like giant chipmaker Intel in Santa Clara. Lockheed alone employs about 21,000 people at its Sunnyvale complex.

*Holding It All Together By
Keeping Everyone Divided*

The working conditions for most local production workers are among

the most dangerous anywhere; it is appallingly worse for offshore workers, and generally safer for the engineers, scientists, and specialists like me (I'm a technical writer).

Worst off among Valley workers are the unseen offshore workers — the single women who assemble and package chips for Silicon Valley semiconductor firms in Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia, South Korea, and Taiwan. Most semiconductor firms employ roughly half of their workforce offshore. In exchange for 7-8 years of labor, these women receive as little as 30 cents an hour and a lifetime supply of occupational diseases.

Tragically, most local Valley workers are simply ignorant of their unseen offshore fellow workers. Offshore Valley employers, abetted by a virtual local media blackout on the topic, are tight-lipped on the details of their foreign operations: "loose lips, sink chips." (For background information on the untold story of Silicon Valley's offshore production workers see "Delicate Bonds: The Global

CONTEK SMILE #4



We're Oprimida Menendez, Assembler. Oprimida's a real miracle worker — supports five kids and a laid-off husband on the mouse-droppings we pay her.

CONTEK

"People Like You
Helping People Like Us
Help Ourselves"

Semiconductor Industry," Pacific Research, 867 West Dana St., Mountain View, CA 94041).

The division of labor among local workers reflects the Valley's status quo sexism and racism as well as the ferment peculiar to high technology companies. Production workers tend to be female, Chicano, Filipino, and Indochinese; entry-level pay varies from minimum wage to \$6-7 an hour. Office workers, until recently, were overwhelmingly female and white; now somewhat less white.

Engineers, scientists, and specialists tend to be male and white (including anti-Soviet eastern bloc refugees) with a sprinkling of Japanese, Indian, Chinese, and Middle Eastern graduates of U.S. technical schools. Entry-level salaries vary from \$22,000 to over \$30,000.

Perhaps the most conscious division between Valley workers is how they are paid; production and office workers are hourly wage workers — engineers, scientists, and specialists are salaried workers (many of whom sign their own time cards). The basic

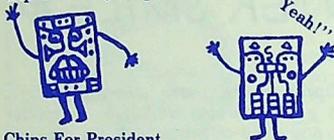
division is known in Valleyspeak as "non-exempt" and "exempt" status. Salaried workers are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act provisions regulating the amount of overtime people can be forced to work. Their salaries theoretically reflect unpaid overtime. Wage workers are "non-exempt" from the overtime statutes. Their wage rates, generally half or less of salaries, climb to time and one-half for overtime.

The tendency is to lump high-salaried, exempt-status "professionals" together with sales and management types. But there is a trade-off. Management exploits technical workers' exempt status, often ruthlessly.

At a medium-sized company that I worked at for a year, management suddenly announced one day that it was now expecting exempt workers to put in ten hour days for the next six months. Many of us simply ignored the dictum, but others unquestioningly obeyed — initially.

At Intel, exempt salaried workers are informally coerced by management into working over 8 hours daily

"Elect me and there'll be
Dip for every Chip!"



Chips For President

and on weekends. IBM and Hewlett-Packard boast about job security, and a formal no-layoff policy. But IBM and HP demand regular intervals of overtime from their employees.

Self-Destructive Production: Why?

Why do technical workers often eagerly consent to design and produce the hostile and dangerous technology conceived by their corporate and government employers?

Part of the answer lies in the isolation that corporations build in to the exempt technical workers' environment. Pay, benefits, expendability, and exposure to physical danger divide hardware and software engineers, technicians, and technical writers from production and office workers. Many medium to large Valley firms maintain one set of buildings, lunchrooms, washrooms, and recreation facilities for exempt technical workers and another, less desirable, set for production workers. ROLM maintains its "MILSPEC" division at one site, and its office automation division and headquarters at another site.

The hierarchy created by the division of labor adds to the isolation. Salaried workers have access to scarce technical knowledge; they design the commodities that make production workers' jobs an empty, alien process — deciphering blueprints, fitting mysterious chips onto mysterious green boards. This contributes to a subconscious relationship between production and design workers that takes familiar forms: out on the line, women's jobs depend upon higher-paid men who deliver the work.

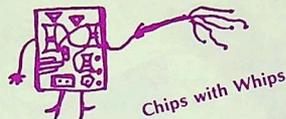
The separation of a product's application from the workers who design the product imposes another crucial isolation. More and more, electronic and mechanical engineers and computer programmers are genuinely ignorant of the precise application of the products that they design.

It is now standard practice to divide design work on a task by task basis; hardware designers work on one board, or often one chip, at a time, unmindful of the application. A new, "structured" approach to programming formalizes a similar practice in computer software. Programmers write "slave" modules of code that perform relatively simple tasks, like counting transactions and storing the total in a certain file. Project leaders can assign an entire computer program design without explicitly mentioning that, for example, the Pentagon will use the software to refine an experimental missile. A project team can thus fully derive satisfaction from the intellectual challenge of successfully designing a product, yet not know what it will be used for. This way, all applications appear equal; there is no need — or desire on the part of management — for more than a handful of project leaders and marketing types to know about a final application.

Management benefits directly from this separation. Many people may not enjoy creating office automation technology and weapons systems that enslave and destroy life. But if the work appears as harmless as a game of chess and offers high pay, stock options, etc., well, so much the better for management. With clever deception, all of us are held hostage to the intimate division and manipulation of scarce skills.

Salaried technical workers are also often deeply divided amongst themselves. Everywhere I have worked, they have been unaware, for example, of each other's salary, since salaries are negotiated individually. At some

"Beating the System"



firms, I have heard that discussing salaries is grounds for dismissal. This makes it easier for management to hide pay differentials for women, minorities, dissidents, and those who are generally unaware of how high a salary they can plausibly negotiate. The mystery is celebrated in the myth of corporate "professionalism" that likens technical workers to lawyers and doctors — competing professional entrepreneurs with secrets to keep.

As a pre-Thanksgiving surprise in 1982, the illusion of "professionalism" was revealed when many of my fellow workers were greeted at their cubicles by grim security guards one morning. In a scene played over and over again in the Valley, the guards announced the employee's "termination," scrutinized the removal of personal property from desks and benches, and escorted astounded workers directly to the door, where final paychecks were waiting. This way, laid-off workers are informally held incommunicado until safely outside the workplace. That corporations relieve their highly paid technical workers in such a manner suggests that power such workers have to inflict immediate disruption and destruction. Before it was all over, 10% of the workforce had been "disappeared."

Strange Fruit

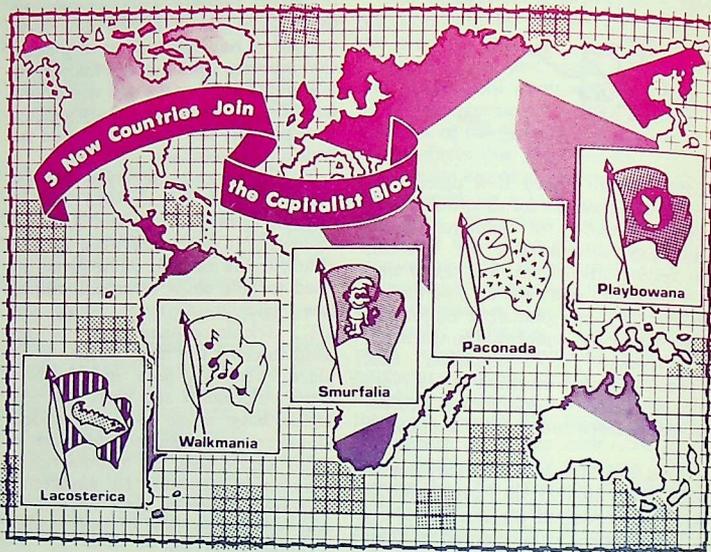
Many production workers are the daughters of migrant farm laborers who once planted, harvested and canned Valley fruit and vegetables. Today most of the fields are paved and the canneries torn down or auc-

tioned off, reminders of the sweeping, destructive power of the new technology. A new generation of production laborers works inside fluorescent hothouses amid gases and with chemicals that poison themselves and the water supply that once nourished the fruit and vegetables.

The chemicals deployed by the semiconductor industry are dangerous and persistent. Hydrofluoric and hydrochloric acids are used to etch chips; arsine and phosphine gases are used to give chips electrical properties; trichloroethylene (TCE) and 1,1,1 trichloroethane solvents are used to clean the chips. Other workplace chemicals here include benzene, chloroform and vinyl chloride. These have made the occupational illness rate for semiconductor workers three times that of manufacturing workers in general; all electronics workers experience a job-related illness rate twice that of the general manufacturing rate.

Valley corporations and private





graphic by Valbar

clinics notoriously understate the extent of human and environmental poisoning. In June, the California Department of Industrial Relations refused to accept occupational illness data submitted by several Valley firms. The state plausibly suggested that National Semiconductor, Signetics, Siliconix, and Fairchild were disguising the effects of toxic chemical exposure on their workers, explaining absentee rates as flu, colds, and non-work-related ailments. This summer, angry workers demonstrated at a local private clinic, claiming the clinic's doctors routinely ordered workers back to work the same day they checked in with on-the-job illnesses or accidents. The clinic collects its fees from local industry. It is standard for many Valley employers to "process" injured or ill employees at such clinics first, before sending workers to the hospitals covered by their fringe benefits.

The very substances that bring the processed sand called silicon to electrical life are destroying a delicate Valley environment and threatening workers at their workplace and in their homes with cancer and genetic mutation. The toll on the once rich Valley soil and environment is probably irreversible.

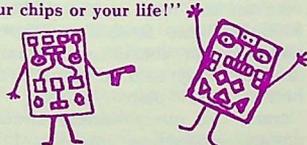
The Valley floor consists of intricate layers of gravel, sand, and clay that hold a precious water supply in underground aquifer. Before the post-WWII electronics binge, the aquifer and rich soil deposits combined to make the "Fruit Bowl of America," where half the world's prunes and a bounty of apricots, cherries and walnuts were produced. Today, underneath the suburbs, shopping centers, freeways, and industrial "parks," waste chemicals percolate through the porous upper layers like tap water through coffee grounds. Dangerous chemicals have been dis-

covered at no less than 56 sites in Santa Clara Valley. By its own admission, the state lacks the resources and obviously the will to make more discoveries.

Valley water is now an ongoing source of gallons humor. Many people no longer drink untreated Valley tap water, at home or at work. Others have learned the hard way. Miscarriages — and only time will tell what else — appeared in the vicinity of a major ground water contamination by Fairchild in San Jose last year. Recently, a private water supply company announced that it would no longer bother to drill new wells in a heavily populated San Jose area, so bad were the results of ongoing tests at existing and proposed well sites. Santa Clara county's outrageous ban on public disclosure of industrial chemical information reinforces the deadly habits of industries here.

Like L.A., many future and existing population centers in the Valley will have their water piped in. Local media and government units react to the news of poisonings by wringing their hands — and by approving vast new parcels of wilderness and agricultural areas south of San Jose for industrial development. (For confidential information on chemicals at your workplace, call the SCCOSH — Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health — hotline number: 408-998-4050.)

"Your chips or your life!"



Corporate Cult-ure

Paradoxes are plentiful in Silicon Valley. In the heart of technological affluence, the largest engineering school in the Valley (San Jose State) has announced it will probably close

its doors indefinitely. The school's comparatively low teaching salaries are not attractive to Valley engineers. In 1983, the Valley's unified county school district was able to successfully claim bankruptcy (a first in post-WWII California) and deny a raise won by district employees.

In recent months, shakeouts in the home computer industry (shortly after IBM and Japanese firms entered the market) caused huge and ongoing layoffs at Atari (1700), Victor (1650), Osborne (almost everyone) and elsewhere; in general, the slump in most non-military electronics companies caused nearly Valley-wide cuts in pay and benefits and layoffs. So tenuous are the good times here that a recent Association of Bay Area Governments study, citing crumbling roads, clogged sewers, contaminated water supplies and growing competition from Japan and Europe — warned of a collapse of Silicon Valley by the year 2000. Strange developments in a Valley that is showcased as proof that free enterprise and high technology promise future prosperity.

Today, the stage is set for many semiconductor workers' jobs to go the way of agricultural Valley jobs. State of the art wafer fabrication and assembly technology is rapidly approaching a point where entirely new automated labor processes are now financially and technologically feasible. Many production workers already experience the eerie feeling of wondering if the chip they package, the board they stuff, or the parcel they ship will be used in a missile, or a nuclear-powered submarine. Now semiconductor workers can legitimately wonder if the silicon they process will transform their job into a lower paycheck, an even more boring routine, or a job search.

The housing situation is literally impossible for tens of thousands of Valley commuters who dangerously clog local highways from mutant bedroom plots that sprout up in outlying



"...and, finally, I want to reassure you that FMC is doing everything in its power to close the Passion Gap."

lowlands or foothills. You must either inherit wealth or pool together two salaries to seriously entertain the idea of purchasing a home. Homes average over \$100,000 in most Valley "communities." Many two-income couples who buy homes instantly become poor homeowners.

Rental "units" in Santa Clara Valley range from \$450-\$575 for bachelor and 1-bedroom apartments — and even these are scarce. What you get is a relatively new, uninsulated set of paper walls tucked unimaginatively into a multi-unit slab. The units are as a rule cold, damp and mildew-infested during the winter, and unpleasant to come home to. Amid the presumed Valley affluence, people crowd into apartments and hand others down to friends and relatives to avoid the leaps in rent that accompany new leases. Landlord associations successfully defeated two recent rent control measures that made the ballot in Mountain View and Sunnyvale. As it is, rents increase 15-24% annually at my complex.

Thanks to the housing situation, Valley commutes are growing longer and slower at all times of the day. Forty minutes to navigate 6 miles of traffic is common. It is an hour or more for residents of bedroom com-

munities, one way! One of the reasons employers offer flex-time to salaried technical workers is simply to ensure that they will arrive at work. The Valley does have mass transit facilities — a thinly spread bus system and a workhorse train line between San Francisco and San Jose that has been in receivership for the last decade. Generally, a bike is dangerously out of the question. A car is a necessity.

The high fixed costs of housing and transportation in the Valley reinforce the attachment to paycheck. The result is tiers of wage and salary slavery; high-salaried workers, for example, who can afford their own home but little else. Valley residents pay dearly for pieces of the prosperity denied many others these days, but which were once within reach of most smokestack industry workers.

Well-to-do Valley youth cruise the streets in 4-wheel drive vehicles; Chicano youth bounce alongside in low-riders. Shopping malls, apartment units, duplex and single family ranch style homes... there is not much variety to relieve the senses in the Valley. There is little or no sense of community where one lives or shops. Even if you have money, there simply are not very many interesting things to do with it.

Quite naturally, drugs tend to fill the vacuum. Drugs for work, home, and play. During a recent holiday evening, authorities expected approximately 1300 dangerously drunk drivers on the road in the Valley. In \$300,000-home foothill communities like Saratoga, cocaine and quaaludes are discreetly sold in steak and ale houses. In plant parking lots, "crank" of every variety circulates among production workers. In the Santa Cruz Mountains that abut the Valley, approximately \$100 million in marijuana is harvested twice yearly.

Against a drab cultural and social life, "perks" like corporate-sponsored Friday-night "beer busts" and pastries and coffee every morning

create a semblance of warmth and friendliness. More than a few corporations are building country club facilities on premises. At ROLM, you can play racketball, tennis, basketball, volleyball, swim laps, lift weights, enjoy a steam bath, sauna, and shower, without ever having to leave work. For recent emigres, and there are many, a corporation can become something of an oasis from a hostile and racist Valley culture. The desired effect here is a company lifestyle that sinks a hook into technical workers whose scarce skills are indispensable to meet the competition. ROLM's is a calculated investment, and its executives are probably onto something: Valley job turnover rates are a notoriously high 29% to 35% annually.

Subversion

It's Friday night. Four exempt technical workers have gathered in a motel-style apartment with a computer terminal, a modem, and the acquired instincts and phone numbers we could muster. On similar occasions, we have "owned" computers at universities in California and New York. My friends recently had their way with a small computer at a giant Valley chipmaker, finally trashing it just the other evening. Some of us also have lines to the computers at our own workplaces.

Tonight is special. We have just successfully connected to a huge computer belonging to a software lab of the world's largest corporation. I watch while professionals acquire privileged status, probe, and write several backdoors for future access. No trashing tonight.

Like most people, Valley technical workers grew up with little, if any, immediate exposure to open, collective rebellion against established authority. They are accustomed to taking risks — like drinking the water at their workplace — and to occasional individual rebellion — like quit-

I SWEAR THAT CLOCK

Just as an animal is trapped
I swear that clock is standing still
If death is peace, then let it come
If this is life, I've had my fill
If sleep means dreams, then give me some

Someone still must play the slave
And I sit bitch under my breath
They steal my time and dig my grave
While like a robot I behave

We work to live, and live to work
We see the world through the tv set
Never once letting loose to go berserk
They praise us, thinking, "They're no threat"

The boss is just another link
He tells us what is told to him
He feels it as we start to smooze
Beneath his slime, the skins turn white
The Light shines from

By metal teeth, with no escape
We bleed quite slowly through the days
But this time man is trapping man
And no one knows just who's to blame
For all the iron claws have snapped
And all the virgins have been raped

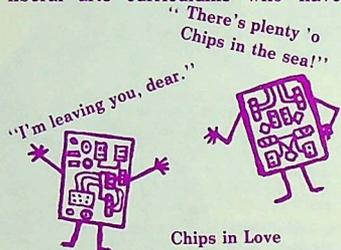
by Kurt Lipschutz

ting a job because of an unreasonable workload or boss. But they are largely unaware of the far more effective tactics of collective rebellion — tactics which generally reduce individual risks.

There is much truth to the stereotyping of engineers as conservative nerds with little or no social consciousness or overt human feeling. During the anti-Vietnam war movement, many of today's Valley engineers were cloistered in technical institutes or mathematics and engineering departments of universities. Others willingly accepted draft deferments in exchange for a classified job at Lockheed or Boeing. Today, many of these people are electrical and mechanical engineers who design anti-social technology and honestly believe

in a strong American defense against a heartless communist evil. After all, engineering grads have been conditioned to accept government technology requirements as their bread and butter since their school days.

There are also workers here who actively rebelled culturally and politically during the ferment of the late 60's/early 70's. Many were student radicals in high school or in university liberal arts curriculums who have



Chips in Love

since found a living in computer jobs through retraining or self-training. Today these people tend to cluster in occupations such as computer operators and programmers, graphic artists and technical writers, and are generally open to subversive ideas. Then there is a whole new generation of youth, once again subject to draft registration, who are suspect of any kind of authority. It is from these latter groups that sparks of rebellion have begun to fly.

Hacking and raiding — illegal probing and sabotage by computer hobbyists — is a revealing phenomenon. Computer managers cringe at the thought of raiders breaking in. But there is generally no defense against it. The people who write computer software — including security protocols — are a deviant lot. Most programmers that I know either learn a system they've worked on well enough to break in at will, or install backdoors — private entrances — to systems. And the comradeships that develop naturally among programmers at work spill over into play. It is

commonplace for programmers to exchange the telephone numbers, passwords, and if necessary, backdoors to one or more of their corporation's computers. Often such gifts are in exchange for an illegally gotten source code to an operating system or some new program under development. Thus, on and off the job, many programmers have secret access to each other's systems — a kind of underground network.

The thought of high-tech sabotage repels some people because it can take anti-social directions that are terrifying. But the responsibility for hacking lies firmly within the system. Corporations who condemn the social irresponsibility of hacking but manufacture nuclear missile guidance systems richly deserve what hackers often give them: trashed disks, tape-worms, nightmares, and migraine headaches. Hostile technology is breeding strange rebellion, of which hacking is one obvious form. It is not the open, constructive activity that social rebellion can be, but it is an accessible form of rebellion around which a kind of counter-culture may emerge. That counter-culture can create a needed independence from the sterile and dangerous corporate culture that dominates the Valley.

It would be wrong to characterize all Valley technical workers as a complacent lot. The large and growing corporations that employ them tend to impose an increasingly irrational and rigid division of labor that makes even intellectually challenging work boring. The long, military-like corporate chains of command are natural breeding grounds for discontent.

Technical workers, especially exempt technical workers, have been spoiled by the many benefits and high salaries that they can individually negotiate due to the current high demand for their scarce skills. Technical workers may not give up these spoils easily when a greater supply of engineers and programmers makes

today's favorable labor market less so. They may even begin to discover their collective power. As it is, small, collective rebellions are already an unpleasant fact of life for Valley management. Increasing technical worker militance could clear the blurred line that currently divides and overlaps many technical workers and management here. But the prospects for battles between employed and employer cannot be confined to such one-dimensional workplace issues as salaries and benefits.

Another dimension is how conscious technical workers can become of the real social impact of their technology — not the glossy fairy tales depicted in trade and business magazines. For it is the technology here that makes the social power of dissident Valley technical workers potentially explosive.

If technical workers' loyalties continue as they are, there may be little hope for much of the rest of the world, so concentrated has the control of

technical knowledge become in so few brains. The technology itself has become so powerful that control over technical knowledge is crucial to the outcome of any sweeping social change. After all, who is better qualified to safely dismantle a missile silo, a breeder reactor, a chemical waste dump, or a Pentagon super-computer than the people who design, build and maintain such technology?

Society has endowed technical workers with concentrated power to liberate technology from the logic that currently dominates it. There are cities to rebuild and lives to remake. We have the power and practical imaginations to make lasting contributions to a new society of less work and more play for all; or we can play a tremendously destructive role in stacking the deck against these opportunities. This is not Death Valley — or doesn't have to be. Not if we begin to take responsibility for it — not if we begin to challenge the logic.

— Melquiades



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 SAN FRANCISCO AND SONOMA COUNTY RTD

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Different destinations for each end

SPEED ACROSS the Golden Gate Bridge
Six lanes northbound
(No toll, except human)

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On presentation of pass, bearer is entitled to board and ride any remaining Municipal Railway passenger vehicle, if less than 500 people are on board. Use subject to condition of roads and existence of bridges. San Francisco Public Utilities Commission reserves the right to supercede other passengers. Use will be no longer subject to any rules or regulations, other than expiration date. Time Zero plus two milliseconds.

WARNING: DO NOT EXPOSE THIS CARD TO RADIATION.
Magnetic strip will not function.



ON FINDING THE WORD "NIGHT" IN A LEGAL DOCUMENT

Before a kind of TV screen with buttons to push, all unrelated to the beloved alphabet, and with a printer going nearby and much clucking and whirring and the steady hatchet of electronically and mechanically coordinated activities, I see words like "activities," "restrictions," "committee," "commission," "employer," "employee," "employee benefit," "evidence," "value," "determination," "burden,"

going by, going by.

The same fifty to sixty words, by my estimation,

going by

in myriad variations over and over again.

In the middle of the page as the sun is setting outside of windowed I cannot see, the word "night" appears.

I do know and truly understand that

opinion evidence is the weakest and least reliable form of evidence. If it is relevant, however, it is for this Commission to determine its merit. Unless it bears a discernable relationship to the factual evidence presented in support thereof, substantiation of which is part of the burden of respondent, it is of little probative value.

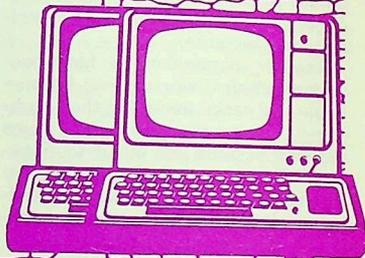
for all I know this, the word "night" still provokes an illegal shudder of delight.

It is very real evidence. Night falls across the page; the stars begin to glow and a light rain falls from low clouds.

There is a crackling of leaves beneath the feet. Drops of rain slap into those leaves and make a growing thunder. The angel of my heart walks quietly beside me. No words are spoken and none are typed in on the horizon.

It is a special night of due process. I leave it for the proofreader to catch and give to someone else for attention and correction.

by N.M. Hoffman



Sporadic acts of sabotage against companies involved in nuclear plant construction began to take place in the region of Toulouse, France in mid-1979. This occurred at the height of vigorous, broad-based regional opposition to the construction of the GOLFECH nuclear power plant on the Garonne River. But the local anti-nuke movement reached an impasse in early 1981, when it became clear that GOLFECH would continue unabated. Despite, or because of this impasse, sabotage became more frequent and the targets more diverse.

In June 1983 a stolen bust of Jean Jaures, famous Socialist of the 1900's, appeared hanging by the neck from a tree in front of city hall. A "suicide

note," signed by Jaures and "edited" by the "Association of Mischief Makers," denounced the current Socialist government for repressive, authoritarian policies. According to the note, Jaures regretted a life wasted on the futile path of advancing the social-democratic cause, which had come to such an ignominious end.

In the following months, several attacks on Catholic bookstores and religious statues (including the bust of Pontius Pilate near the famous religious shrine at Lourdes), signed by a "Stop the Priests" campaign, protested the visit of the Pope and the "Vatican Multinational Corporation." That same summer a number of companies and governmental offices that

were directly or indirectly involved in the GOLFECH construction suffered serious damage by explosion and fire.

While different groups, often with humorous names ("A Heretofore Un-

known Group") and punning acronyms, have claimed responsibility for these actions, the tone and content of their communiques reflect a common perspective. The "Committee for the

Liquidation and Subversion of Computers," known by its French acronym



CLODO (an untranslatable slang term which means something like "bum") has claimed responsibility

for six actions over the past three years, most of them involving torching or otherwise destroying computer centers. The most recent action occurred in October 1983 when the offices of SPERRY — a U.S.-owned computer manufacturer — went up in flames. Nearby, graffiti read "Reagan attacks Grenada, SPERRY multinational is an accomplice."

Though CLODO's emphasis on computer technology reflects a specific area of expertise and interest, they are ideologically close to the other saboteurs of the region: they claim to work as an ad hoc grouping, associating around particular actions and interests, and eschew the notion of themselves as a formal organization. They have no rigid rules and principles and tolerate considerable diversity among individual participants; they distinguish themselves from traditional left groups by their rejection of a "vanguard" role, their explicitly anti-authoritarian playfulness and a sense of humor that they wield as an ideological weapon.

One French newspaper described the saboteurs as part of an "anarcho-libertarian" movement that is based in Toulouse. In another "interview" with a group that conducted simultaneous "fireworks" at two sites of nuclear-related production in August 1983, "Groucho" explains:

"People talk a lot about the silent majority and it gets a lot of press. But there is also a muzzled minority that can only express itself through political and social rejection, because it rejects the sham of democracy. It doesn't demand the right to free speech, the right to justice, the rights of man — it takes these rights, or at least it tries to. This minority exists, be it organized or disorganized, atomized in the social fabric, revolutionary or deviant. In our practice, we affirm its specific character. We have no illusions about the propaganda of ideas, but we support everyone who can no longer stand injustices and

contributes their little recipes to subvert a capitalized daily life."

French authorities denounce the saboteurs as deranged and inhuman, always pretending that it's only by chance that no one gets injured. In fact, the obvious caution demonstrated by this particular brand of sabotage (there have been no human casualties in the acts described here) is clearly distinct from the bombs in trains and other public places worldwide that continue to claim innocent lives in the name of this or that "liberation organization."

The following "interview" was sent to the French magazine Terminal 19/84 (1 rue Keller, 75011 Paris FRANCE) and appeared in the October 1983 issue.

(In PW #5, Gidget Digit mentioned CLODO in her article "Sabotage, the Ultimate Video Game." Limited information on their activities and ideas led to what I believe to be false, or in any case, premature, conclusions about the group's ideas and practice (e.g., there is no evidence of an "authoritarian internal structure" in CLODO, as far as I can tell) — MH

An End To Myths

Why did you accept this interview?

We've always felt that acts speak for themselves, and we decided to write a communique only because of a (presumed?) member of a so-called armed, and in any case ephemeral, organization tried to pass off our acts as something they aren't. In the face of the propaganda of Power, which is particularly stupefying when it is about computers, and to end some myths about us, we felt some explanations have become necessary.

Demystifying Computers

Why do you do computer sabotage?

To challenge everyone, programmers, and non-programmers, so that we can reflect a little more on this world we live in and which we create,

and on the way computerization transforms this society.

The truth about computerization should be revealed from time to time. It should be said that a computer is just a bunch of metal that serves only to do what one wants it to do, that in our world it's just one more tool, a particularly powerful one, that's at the service of the dominators.

We are essentially attacking what these tools lead to: files, surveillance by means of badges and cards, instrument of profit maximization for the bosses and of accelerated pauperization for those who are rejected...

The dominant ideology has clearly understood that, as a simple tool, the computer didn't serve its interests very well. So the computer became a parahuman entity, (cf. the discussion on artificial intelligence) a demon or an angel — but capable of domestication (computer games and telecommunications were supposed to persuade us of this) — anything but a zealous servant of the system we live in. In this way they hope to transform the values of the system into a system of values.

By our actions we have wanted to underline the material nature of the computer-tools on the one hand, and on the other, the destiny of domination which has been conferred on it. Finally, though what we do is primarily propaganda through action, we also know that the damage we cause leads to setbacks and substantial delays.

Doesn't the spectacular, radical aspect of the destruction you cause seem a bit outrageous?

These actions are only the visible tip of the iceberg! We ourselves and others fight daily in a less ostensible way. With computers, like with the army, police or politics, in fact, like with all privileged instruments of power, errors are the rule, and working them out takes up the majority of programmers' time! We take

advantage of this, which undoubtedly costs our employers more than the material damage we cause. We'll only say that the art consists of creating bugs that will only appear later on, little time-bombs.

To get back to your question — what could be more ordinary than throwing a match on a package of magnetic tapes? Anybody can do it! The act appears excessive only for those who don't know, or who don't want to know, what most computers systems are used for.

Then how do you explain the fact that others haven't done similar things?

To tell the truth, it's hard to explain! WE are in a good position to know that most computer workers really participate with their "work tools" and rarely use their gray matter to reflect on what they do (they generally would rather not know about it!). As for those who don't work with computers, they are unconcerned or they passively accept the dominant propaganda.

But that doesn't explain everything, and even those who do resist the soporifics of power are still scared of police uniforms!

Computers Could Be Used for Something Else

Aren't you really a bit retro, like the machine breakers of the 19th Cent.?

Faced with the tools of those in power, dominated people have always used sabotage or subversion. It's neither retrograde nor novel. Looking at the past, we see only slavery and dehumanization, unless we go back to certain so-called primitive societies. And though we may not all share the same "social project," we know that it's stupid to try and turn back the clock.

Computer tools are undoubtedly perverted at their very origin (the abuse of the quantitative and the reduction to the binary are proof of this) but they could be used for other

ends than the ones they now serve. When we recognize that the most computerized sector is the army, and that 94% of civilian computer-time is used for management and accounting, we don't feel like the loom-breakers of the 19th Century (even though they fought against dehumanization in their jobs). Nor are we defenders of the computer-created unemployed... if microprocessors create unemployment, instead of reducing everyone's working-time, it's because we live in a brutal society, and this is by no means a reason to destroy microprocessors.

Attacking Multinationals

How do you situate your actions in the context of France and the rest of the world?

Computerization is world-wide. In the Third World, it helps to reinforce the ideological and economic domination of the West, especially the U.S., and, to a lesser extent, of local power. We therefore consider that our struggle is global, even if that sound exaggerated given the pin-pricks we actually accomplish.

What are your projects for the future?

Little by little the theory of computerization that we have been developing for several years is getting fleshed out. On the whole, though, it remains unchanged since computers are still basically being used by the same people for the same things. So there is no reason not to continue in the same direction. With more imagination, and at our own pace, even if the result is less spectacular than our previous actions. The rapid pace of automation and the forthcoming explosion of telecommunications opens a wider field of action and revolt. We will try to fight in these areas, knowing that our efforts are partial. There's room for all rebels!

What are your chances of success? Aren't you afraid of getting caught?

Our chances are fine, thank you.

We've got the motives and the ideas, and among the blind, the one-eyed are kings.

For more than three years a security court of the State (may it rest in peace) and several dozen mercenaries have been looking for us: their material resources are sophisticated but pretty insufficient and our last action against the information center of the Haute Garonne municipality must have shown them we know more about them than they know about us!

We are nonetheless conscious of the risks we run and the scope of the arsenal we are running up against.

May our next interview not be with a police magistrate!

Toulouse — August 1983

Translated & Introduced by Maxine Holz

Oh Clodo!
I don't think
we're in Toulouse
anymore!



NEIN

to Personnel
Information
Systems

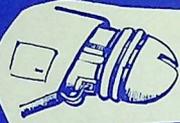
Translator's Introduction

In Western Europe and North America, automation technology is putting a lot of people out of work. For the ruling class, it's decisions, decisions: Who to retain and who to lay off? How will discipline among the workers who are retained be maintained? How will large populations of unemployed be kept under control? What will be the relationship between employers and the state in the development of these control methods?

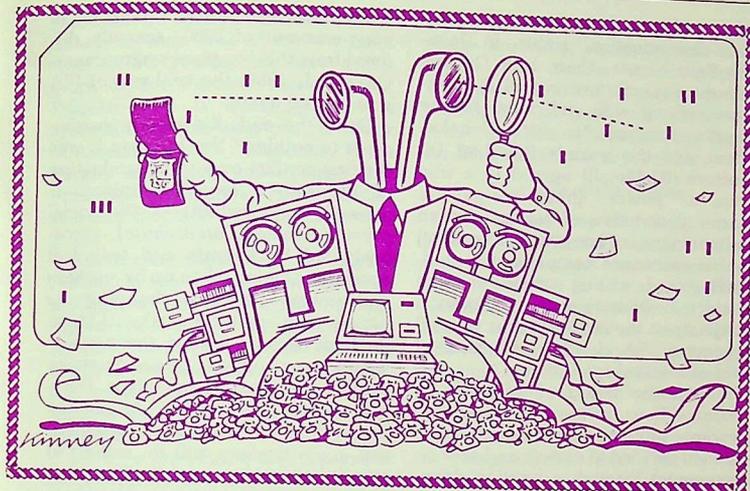
Computer technology used to automate offices and robotize assembly lines is being adapted to these problems. Information collected by the state, financial institutions, and employers is being computer processed into forms that can be quickly summarized, transmitted, compared and shared. Indeed, a whole new control technology is being developed alongside the automation industry.

In the U.S., the ramifications of this control technology have yet to be widely discussed, let alone acted upon. This is not the case in West Germany. Stopping the intrusion of control technologies has been an issue of public discussion and action there for several years. They even have a word — *Datenschutz* — to name as an issue the importance of preventing computer technology from robbing people of privacy and freedom. Many West Germans have already experienced the consequences of computerized state snooping. In the mid-70's a security net, cast ostensibly to crack down on the Baader-Meinhof gang, created a police state environment that few opponents of the status quo escaped (this theme has preoccupied German filmmakers, e.g. "Germany in Autumn," "Knife In The Head," etc.). In 1972 the government legislated the "Berufsverbot" policy, which barred anyone with oppositional political views from employment in the government or in education.

One focus of the W. German struggle against control technology has been stopping the introduction of 'Personnel Information Systems' (PIS) by employers. PIS systems are databases containing work-related and personal information on each employee. The following article is liberally compiled from three articles ("The Consequences of Personnel Information Systems," "Open Senses," and "Unions and Social Privacy") that originally appeared in the November 1980 issue of the West German magazine *Wechselwirkung* (Verlag Reinhard Behnisch; Mehringhof; Gneissnaustrasse 2, 1000 Berlin 61).



DON'T PIS ON ME!



The Case of ISA

ISA is a Personnel Information System (PIS) designed to classify employees and workplaces. For every employee and workplace, an array of specific facts is gathered and stored. ISA, in its initial form, was intended to cover 300 characteristics and criteria for each workplace and employee. Data collected and stored on employees include:

- Employee training and education
- Intra-company career tracking
- Personnel Deployment and Development Planning
- Medical data

ISA provides profiles on groups as well as on single individuals and workplaces. But ISA is only the tip of the iceberg. A more extensive creation is being developed by Daimler-Benz [large auto manufacturer] and carries the acronym PSI. PSI integrates ISA data with information previously held by personnel departments. To do this, all available collections of personnel data are restructured and copied onto modern storage systems in order to be instantaneously accessible. This more

comprehensive system has the following additional capabilities:

- Payroll
- Personnel Capabilities Analysis
- Personnel Research
- Punctuality and Performance Reports
- Health Monitoring

A quick human-language software called CULPRIT is being developed for use by executives with no data processing background (requirement for using CULPRIT: knowledge of English). Access to PSI functions and databases is hierarchically organized: the higher the rank in the company, the wider the view.

In 1978 a union representative was informed of the development of ISA. In subsequent negotiations, the Daimler-Benz Board of Directors justified the system as a means of finding suitable, easier jobs for older, "proven" employees. But in order to find those jobs, they argued, they needed to perform an analysis on every job and every employee.

In the second half of 1979 the real story began to unfold. While the General Works Council [A factory workers advisory board, elected by

the workers themselves, with some "co-determination" rights. In Daimler-Benz's case, there is a General Works Council covering all D-B factories along with individual factory works councils.*] for Daimler-Benz and the union's Board of Directors (IG-Metall) agreed to a trial run, a "poster" group [A general term, descriptive of tactics, for an autonomous, ad hoc group of workers] led a resistance campaign. By leafletting and writing articles for the factory newsletter, they convinced a majority on the factory Works Council to oppose ISA, chiefly on the issue of use of medical information.

When the Board of Directors of Daimler-Benz refused to grant the workers any voice in the matter, the council decided to protest and seek an agreement through a petition drive. Even with the summer holiday underway, around 9000 signed. As a result of this drive, the firm halted further implementation of ISA and agreed to negotiate.

Under pressure from the poster group, the Works Council sought the following conditions of agreement:

- That the system be restricted to the goal originally put forth, namely the deployment of workers with so-called "reduced capabilities."
- That the council's agreement [*Mitbestimmung*] be secured for every collection and use of personnel data.
- That medical information not be fed into ISA.

The conditions presented in the temporary agreement of February 1980 were almost exactly opposite those sought by the Works Council:

- No restriction to the original goal; rather, the company would have free reign to use ISA as it wished.
- The council would not be consulted for agreement [*Mitbestimmung*]; rather it would merely be "instructed and informed," even if the system was changed and the amount and type of information gathered was expanded.

The final agreement, settled on in early summer of 1980, scarcely differed from this temporary agreement. On July 1, 1980, the trial run of ISA was started again.

So in the end, did the opposition come to nothing? No, because it was the first conflict over the introduction of PIS into a large workplace. It showed the possibility of the social privacy debate [*Datenschutz*], previously led by liberals and technical specialists, being taken up by workers and unions, thereby changing its nature. The company pushed ISA to the limit because it knew the workers would be unwilling to go out on strike against an unknown quantity. However, when ISA's effects do become perceptible and as PSI is implemented, more workers will be willing to take strong counter-actions. The banding together of autonomous workers groups, technical specialists and media workers was an important, promising move towards more effective action in the future.



Worse To Come

Further developments in control technology contribute to the potential for explosive conflicts:

Automated Monitoring of Movement: Machine-readable identity cards can function like keys. These

cards can be used to control workers' access to each area of the worksite. Another PIS routine can draw a diagram of the workers' movements... Daimler-Benz is installing such a system at its computer center. [Bank of America, Pacific Telephone, Wells Fargo, and many other large San Francisco companies have similar systems in place in their data centers.]

Automated Cafeterias: on paying the check, the worker sticks the identity card into the cash register, a clerk registers the control numbers for the food and drinks, the system calculates the total and issues a cafeteria spending record, and the amount of the meal is automatically deducted from the next paycheck.

With no problem, a diet report can be issued on the employee — very interesting for personnel specialists, company doctors and insurance companies.

Most workers like to eat with their friends and acquaintances. A PIS computer routine can take the time registered on checks and calculate the order of entry into the cafeteria. This routine is known as KOMSART (Communication Structure Data — Employees) — in plain words: How often does who talk with whom?

Automatic Work Monitoring: workplaces are being equipped with machines that monitor work output. Time-study men and fat managers are a thing of the past: surveillance is continuous and approaches the thousandth of a minute in precision.

The Role of the Unions

Quietly, one step at a time, a new kind of authoritarian control is being imposed on workers and on society at large. Complicit in this are the West German unions and their leaders, who like to be thought of as 'statesman-like'. Union policy on social privacy is snagged on distinguishing between 'normal' and 'abusive' uses of personnel data.

The 'normal' use of personnel data is permitted by law. This is the ordinary business use of information on the employee under the accepted conditions of wage labor: information on the employees, their activities, their wages, the concrete products of their work.

The 'normal' use of personnel information is distinguished from 'abuse' — such as the unauthorized transmission of data to a third party. This is the sort of activity that the law attempts to hinder, but usually in the interest of private enterprise, and



rarely in the interest of the employee.

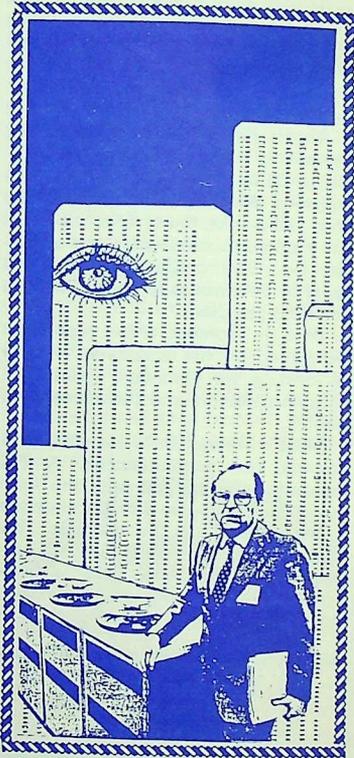
The line between 'normal' and 'abusive' use is fluid and in practice arbitrary. It fluctuates with changes in political conditions. In the Nazi period, information would be kept on whether someone was an alien worker, a prison or concentration camp detainee, 'Aryan' or 'non-Aryan' — normal data under the specific wage-labor conditions of that period, data the employers kept without any qualms.

Instead of such brutal distinctions, today's firm uses far subtler data. Of course information will be collected on whether a worker is German, Turkish, or Yugoslavian. Just as "naturally," firms have a strong interest in their employees' state of health (as the events at Daimler-Benz prove). Such information is relevant given the actual conditions of wage-labor in our time.

All data records commonly isolate and extract discrete characteristics from the personal and social life of the 'recorded' individual. The fact that a record may contain only a limited number of characteristics — e.g. the information needed for calculation and transfer of wages — may make it appear to be a minor problem. But data is being stored by social service administration, personnel information systems, and many other organizations. With the capability of rapid, flexible analysis and comparison of data elements, information processing can in principle draw new pictures of people or things. These so-called 'data shadows' are shaped more by the interests of the evaluator than by those of the evaluatee. This splintering of social and personal life into data elements and their reconfiguration for alien purposes parallels current industrial dissection and restructuring of the labor process. This restructuring is also generally accepted as normal and inevitable.

More and more, published statements by top union leaders maintain

that companies should only use personnel data in the course of the normal practice of work. But what is the normal practice of work except exploitation?



The DGB [national industrial trade union federation of W. Germany] has published a Social Privacy Manual which documents a series of abuses of personnel information by companies:

- A program allows the computer to print out a list of areas in which the women over 35 who work for the company most commonly live. The business discontinues its commuter bus service to these areas. The result:

most of the women quit "voluntarily" because they don't have cars and can't switch to the poorly-planned public transit system. In this way, the firm protects itself from anti-dismissal laws and gains the "co-participation" of the Works Council.

- Blacklists, naming workers who have made themselves unpopular with their employers by being active either in the union or in other kinds of opposition, are transmitted from company to company via computer. The employee, until now relatively protected by the practical difficulties of doing this, has been caught in the omnipresent net of data processing.

- Candidates for election to Works Councils, one of the most democratic institutions in West Germany, have for some time been watched by the secret police. This surveillance has been entrusted to commissioners who in the "Great German Period" before 1945 worked at deporting and murdering millions of people from all over Europe, including many unionists. How often have these officials dreamed of how much more effective they would have been for the Third Reich, if only they had had the new technology at their disposal?

The DGB has offered ideas for practical measures, too; for example, the appointment of privacy commissioners for individual companies, over which the Works Council would have veto rights. But the central point is still ignored — that is, that the exceptional ability of the new control systems to strengthen surveillance and manipulation stems from the present organization of work itself.

The unions try to defend "social privacy" against abuses from the new technology, but without acknowledging that the domination of work and workers by capital will always lead to such abuses. In other words, the union position refuses to recognize that relatively minor abuses lie on the foundations of a larger, more fundamental abuse. The unions try to

doctor 'data shadows' and leave the real patient and her condition out of consideration.

Beyond Good Behavior

The unions are caught in their usual morass. They appeal to the state and eschew doing anything themselves. They refuse to initiate learning processes for the masses of employees and avoid aggressive public discussion on the problem of social privacy. Most important, they renounce autonomous action by the workers themselves. In their struggle against increased surveillance and control by the state, the DGB and the independent unions cripple themselves by 'behaving.' Only a few independent unions have managed to protest the monitoring of candidates to the Works Council by the secret police.

The establishing of "new technology"-based means of control and surveillance calls for new, enlightened responses by the unions. In that regard, political discussions should posit that the unions' prevailing trust in the State is naive. A different

at the control point

stop
he calls
checklist at hand

find my dreams
lined up
in these books
stories from Time

proceed carefully
note
longing grief hate
for the data bank

every distortion
corrupts the vision
of my unstoppable
future

by Gerd Unmack (translated from
German by Mark Leger)

attitude must be developed, in which the workers themselves must defend and win back their democratic right to organize and their right to strike.

It is also absolutely necessary to build a 'second flank' of technical specialists to do research on behalf of workers, to have discussions on the significant dangers of these new developments, and to help mobilize workers in defense of their rights at work and in the 'political' arena. It is especially necessary to demonstrate the connection between political and workplace repression and the new technology. [A group representing a 'second flank' of the sort mentioned here is Forbidt, Eimsbuttelestrasse 18; 2000 Hamburg 50; W. Germany.]

Translator's Conclusion

From these early conflicts and analyses, awareness of the dangers of PIS systems has grown. David Noble, in an article in democracy magazine, outlines some of the high points of the struggle's history:

"The resistance to technology from below has forced the union officialdom to adopt an unprecedented stance of opposition to PIS. In 1980, the Public Services Union demanded that PIS systems be prohibited; in 1981, H.O. Vetter, former DGB president, acknowledged that 'we must not admit everything that is technologically possible.' Finally, in 1982, the Federal Congress of the DGB in Berlin, in a dramatic turn-around for this progressivist union, issued Resolution #7 demanding that PIS systems be forbidden by the state. But workers throughout Germany understand all too well that such union declarations, while important and indeed historic, will not in themselves suffice... Thus, the rank-and-file has begun to invent its own strategies. At the printing firm Bauer in Hamburg, for example workers have refused to distribute or sign information cards required by the company to build up its PIS database. (They realize, how-

ever, that such refusal is itself data that will find its way into the management machinery.) On the docks in Hamburg, workers have filed a class action suit against the company to try to get an injunction on the installation of a PIS. While realizing that this is only the beginning, the organizers of this action are using it to raise consciousness about the need to resist the technology (eight hundred workers signed the suit) and to question both the liberal and Marxist myths of salvation through technological 'progress.' "†

Another thing that undercuts the credibility of union leadership is their own use of PIS systems. Using company databases, unions confirm wage rates of their members to make sure that they're not 'cheating.' Labor lawyers have also used these systems for research. In fact, Volkswagen even provided the Works Council with a terminal for their own use and on several occasions, IG Metall actively cooperated with the installation of PIS's. Union-owned companies have even installed their own PIS systems. Disgruntled workers are stuck with the usual predicament of fighting their 'official representatives' along with the company.

In America, we don't have quite the same fresh memory of totalitarianism that the Germans do. But totalitarianism can be subtle as well as unabashed. With its increased speed and accuracy of analysis and ability to efficiently compare and share information among employers, government agencies, and schools, the new technology could become the most insidious, hateful dictator the world has yet known. Now is the time to take steps, both small and large, on behalf of our freedom.

— Translated, compiled, and edited by Mark Leger, with editing help from Lucius Cabins & Louis Michaelson † David Noble, "Present Tense Technology: Part 3," *democracy* (Vol. 3, #4) p. 83.

IN CASE OF DIOXIN CONTAMINATION



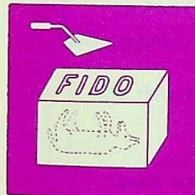
1. Wash thoroughly. Rinse eyes, ears and nose with sterile water. Scrub body with wire brush or steel wool.



2. Take vitamin C; eat fresh fruits; save your apricot pits.



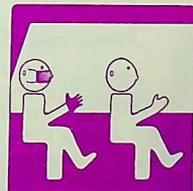
3. Stay away from rural swimming and camping areas. Drink bottled water. Avoid unnecessary breathing.



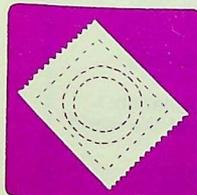
4. Destroy contaminated pets and dispose of safely (six inches of concrete on all sides).



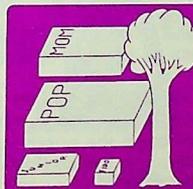
5. Avoid releasing dioxin molecules into the air. Do not burn your home or other possessions.



6. Do not get too close to other people. Wear a surgical mask and rubber gloves while at work.



7. Use a condom for intimate contact with an uncontaminated other.

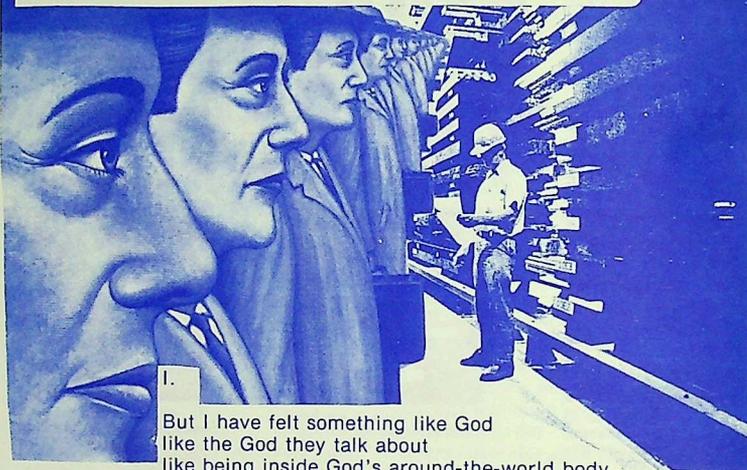


8. Purchase family burial cement.



9. Remain calm and pleasant. Remind everyone that chemical plant owners are having a nice day.

Disclaimer: There is no guarantee that following any of these precautions will prevent slow death from cancer after dioxin contamination. If you do all of the above, you may or may not survive. This geographical area may or may not continue to be inhabited. Life on this planet may or may not continue to exist. But the chemical companies will continue making profits until the very end. Remember: WITHOUT CHEMICALS, LIFE ITSELF WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, WITHOUT THE PROFIT SYSTEM, LIFE MAY VERY WELL BE POSSIBLE.

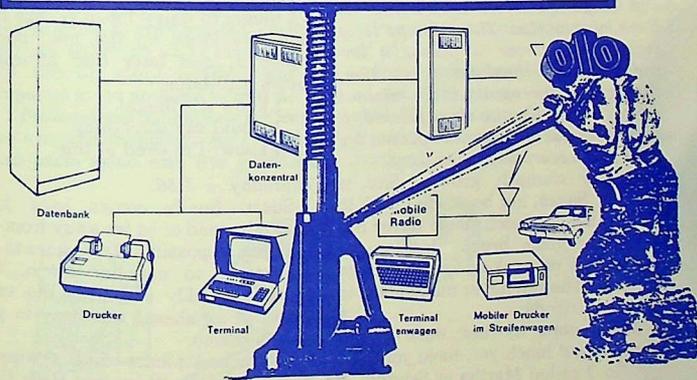


I.

But I have felt something like God
 like the God they talk about
 like being inside God's around-the-world body
 Once out on the loading dock with my clipboard
 the packages were sliding into the vans
 the invoices feeding through
 ahead of schedule for once
 everything was going like a quartz crystal watch all
 smooth quiet / shiny like it does sometimes
 I felt it all come together
 the whole order and purpose of it
 Headquarters way across the country in New York
 crawling with light / a glass wasp's nest above Fifth Avenue
 and the plant down South
 with those big black presses eating themselves
 clackety clackety clackety
 and the warehouse behind me
 and all the other offices and plants
 and warehouses all jammed with product waiting
 to go out
 Right then all of it dissolved into pure information
 this shining colorless message moving round the world
 I felt it slide through the purchase orders
 I felt it clack through the adding machines
 I felt it flash through the key entry
 I felt it zap through the invoices in my hand
 and all that just one little nerve-signal
 in God's around-the-world body
 money / blinking into product / into more money
 all of us making it grow / shining and colorless
 enormous / and grow more / forever and ever
 that must be what we're supposed to be doing
 making God grow

II.

He's all wrong about Hell
 Hell would be the warehouse on a cold wet afternoon
 the shift loading as usual / vans in and out
 the phone rings in the office / the forklifts
 whine backing up
 but nobody says a word / nobody says a goddam word
 everybody goes nonstop / flat out / right on the money
 and all total strangers
 No Charlie to piss blue about the schedules
 no Beth to snap wise-ass like her gum
 no Julio to smoke up the men's room / laughing
 like a gone vertical hold
 no bitching and fuck jokes over machine coffee
 no baseball talk / strike talk / flashing out of the beer
 after the shift
 No after the shift
 Just two in the afternoon / it's raining
 and I can see my breath out on the dock
 vans in / vans out / the phone always ringing
 Nothing but that / forever



RESPONSE λ2

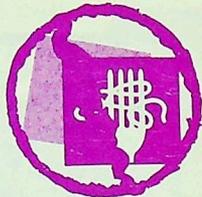


Figure 5 Earth features in two dimensional observation space.

Grumbles

Down

Below



Wednesday — 2:12

A corporate information center at Bank of America. The attempt is to control: the decor is plush, it impresses and stimulates production; the light is fluorescent, it illuminates evenly and flatly; the air is filtered, it whooshes out of ducts; the people are paid and supervised, they work.

Lupe's stomach growls. She is hungry. Susan, her boss, isn't back to relieve her for lunch. Lupe never has a regular lunch break. Besides the discomfort of working on an empty stomach, she can never make plans to eat with friends.

Mike stops by her desk. "You haven't had lunch yet, have you?"

"No. I called Martha at Schmidt & Hein. That luncheon thing that Susan went to was over at one. The bitch is probably out shopping with Irene for another dress to cover her ugly body."

"That's awful. How can..."

Lupe raises her eyebrows — office code for 'the boss is coming.'

Mike shuts up. "Well, I gotta go pay some bills."

Lupe grabs her coat and bag lunch.

"I'm out of here!"

Mike is outraged. He knows that it's illegal to delay lunch breaks that long. He looks up the law, photocopies it, and later that afternoon shows it to Lupe.

"I know it's illegal."

"I would say something."

"I know. I'm tired of this."

Thursday — 1:56

Susan finally comes back from lunch. Instead of as far away from the building as possible, Lupe goes to the breakroom to eat her lunch. She finishes quickly and uses the typewriter of an absent secretary to prepare a memo.

"Attached please find a copy of section 9 of the Wage and Hour Code as well as a copy of section 5.4 of the Corporate Policies Guide. Please note



that..."

Thursday — 3:15

Susan reads the memo and immediately buzzes her boss, Irene, the Directing Information Network Specialist.

"Don't worry. Come to my office. We'll talk to Employees' Assistance and get their advice."

Mike hears the bleep of the conference call 'squawk box' in Irene's office next door and listens.

Thursday — 4:46

"Lupe, Employees' Assistance dictated a response to your memo that Irene is going to present to you tomorrow. She's going to say that Susan has professional obligations that frequently require her to be out of the office between 12 and 2 o'clock. You are her support staff and have to work around her schedule. Since you, in their words, 'expressed an interest in having the meal policy clarified,' they're going to offer you two choices. You can either go at 11 everyday, or you can be more flexible and be prepared to go anytime before 2."

"Professional obligations my ass! If she's not out shopping, she's giggling over pasta salad with her girlfriends

or fucking Tom Provost. And they're still breaking the law. It says that a worker gets at least a half hour meal break after completing between four and five hours of work. Since we start working at 8:15, the latest they can keep me is 1:15. And what do you have to say to the fact that everyone else in this department can plan their lunch hour except me, even though there are people who can stand in for me?"

Friday — 10:20

"Lupe, Sam Walks at Employees' Assistance is an expert. How can you sit there and try to tell me that you know more about wage and hour law than he does?"

"But Irene..."

"Susan has a very busy schedule. Information specialists have many professional responsibilities. You either have to adjust or you'll be stuck with a solution that is inconvenient for all of us."

Lupe cannot speak an uninterrupted sentence. Irene is red-faced and shrill. She resents Lupe's "insubordinate" demands, — and she carries grudges.



Tuesday — 11:23

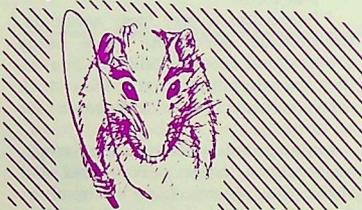
Lupe is out sick today. Mike walks past her work station. Irene is going through Lupe's cabinets.

"These should have been distributed two weeks ago! My god, if Mr. Prushing found out that we have been sitting on these, he'd have a fit!"

Wednesday — 8:21

"Lupe, Irene went crazy when she found those FB regs. She found some other backlogged mail, too. She's gonna come down on you today, some shit about 'corrective counseling' and probation."

"Shit! They cut the staff, pile on more work, ignore me and my problems, and now this! They've never gone through my work station before, why now?"



Wednesday — 3:56

"If at the end of this thirty day period, Lupe still has not improved, procedures will be followed to remove her from her current position."

Throughout the reading, Lupe stares disgustedly at Irene.

"Do you have any questions?"

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"Are you suggesting this is retaliation?"

"I'm not suggesting anything."

"If you have any questions about the content of this document, you may bring them up now. Before you go, though, I need you to sign at the bottom."

"I'm not signing this."

"Your signature merely indicates that this discussion took place."

"I don't sign my name to lies."

Friday — 10:20

A lawyer's office, a room in a renovated house in a still mostly seedy part of town. The walls are decorated with the usual professional credentials and a Nicaraguan poster depicting striking workers.

"They have improved on my lunch hour, but they're still erratic. They're watching me like a hawk — it's like working in a concentration camp. Even the other workers say they're getting harsher treatment."

"Unless they actually fire you, we don't have a very strong case to do anything. My advice is that you find another job. Certain aspects of the law may be on your side, but they've got the real power in this situation."

Monday — 9:05

"That was a big help. 'Find another job.' The market is tight. I'm not going to get a good recommendation from this place. And the next set of bosses is likely to be as bad as these."

"I talked to Roxanne in the archival center this morning. Their new boss, Earnest, is pitchin' to graduate Asshole Cum Laude from the Irene Frank School of Management. We should all meet and talk this stuff through."



Can you name these famous TV personalities?

Wednesday — 5:26

The staff from the library and records center are sitting around a booth in a downtown gay bar. Other similar groups of people, mostly gay men and straight women, are scattered around the black, silver and smoky pink room. None are talking with the intensity of the seven people here.

"What gets me are the little personal privileges that they demand. Alone, they're nothing, but they add up. They've learned not to do something blatant, like ask us to get coffee, even though some of the secretaries still do for the attorneys. It's the petty stuff — like when we're all sitting down, doing our work, and Earnest asks us to close his door because a private phone call has come in or something. I mean, he could get up and close it himself, but Nooooo!..."

"I hate how Irene returns files to me to put back in order after she's read them. It's not that much trouble to try to keep them in order as you go through, but she just can't be bothered."

"Yeah, Earnest does that, too. If we were to take a file that he had looked at and put it back on the shelf 'as is,' he'd get all mad the next time he looked at it, saying it wasn't in 'logical order.'"

"When I first came on, they told me that line 8 was my personal line. Irene took it away, saying she needed it for her own use, and I was making too many personal calls, anyway. So I use Mike's line, but if I'm on it for more than a minute, or if it looks like I'm having fun, Irene comes on and interrupts. But then she turns around and talks to her boyfriend or this or that other person for a half hour, hour at a time."

"What about those meetings?! Those things are fucking tea parties! Silea says that they'll talk about cooking or dogs for hours, ain't that right Silea? And they get pissed at us if we're not working every minute."

"Yeah, it bugs me how Earnest is always looking over my shoulder to see if I'm really working. When I come to work, I work, and he knows



that. Sure, I could work harder. But I don't want to go home so exhausted that I don't have energy to do anything else. And I don't need some asshole looking over my shoulder all the time!"

"When I was hired, they told me I'd only be filing for six months at the most. By then a legal secretary job would be opening up and I'd get that. Well, it's been a year and a half, and the only thing that's been promoted is that turkey op officer who made me that promise."

"Me, I don't give a fuck about getting ahead in this stupid corporation. I just want to do what I have to do to get my paycheck and go home to live my own life."

"Really! What kind of person gets into New Ways for Filing Papers!"

"I would like it if we could plan our own work. Or if they started training programs for us like the supervisors have."

"Train us to do or be what? Corporate ditz queens? What good is this work anyway? They don't make anything anybody could really use. At bottom, it's about keeping track of some rich peoples' bank accounts or stock portfolios."

"No. Silea has a point. I mean, you're right, but it never hurts to know what they're up to. And it can make the work more interesting."

"Training programs are OK, but we gotta push for the more immediate stuff..."

"Like the least work for the most money!"

"I hear that!"

"No, I mean like Lupe's situation. Having a lunch at 12 or 1 is basic. Keeping her waiting till 2 or 2:30 is wrong. I think we should try to deal with that."

* * *

The tactic was chosen by common agreement. If Susan was late getting back from lunch, the workers would take turns covering the information

center. Irene would probably forbid individuals from doing this. In this event, the individual would ask, "Well, when is Lupe supposed to get her lunch?"

The workers would continue to relieve Lupe until the matter came to a head by Irene threatening disciplinary actions against them. At this point, all available workers would sit in for Lupe. (Mike would later buy a bottle of sparkling cider to keep in the breakroom fridge for just such an event.) Under no circumstances would the workers leave the worksite until Irene agreed to regular lunch breaks with no retaliatory actions against insistent workers. Instead, they would take a sit-in, sit-down, keep-cool approach.

They also decided not to let 'little things' pass uncontested. A file would remain disorganized after a boss had looked at it. Doors would not be closed at bidding. Attempts to interrupt telephone calls would be firmly rebuffed. Snoopers would be told to back off. Such contestations would by nature be spontaneous: everyone agreed to support each other as occasions arose.

* * *

"But what if I ever want a recommendation from Irene?"

"Would you trust her to say something nice about you? Not me. Anyway, that's maybe and in the future. We've got problems here and now."

"Aren't you scared?"

"Yeah, but after a while, there's just so much shit you can take."

The events and conversations of this story, except for the mechanics of the organizing response, are reconstructions of real happenings.

— by Paxa Lourde

AREN'T
YOU
HAPPY?



Aren't you thrilled by your challenging, well-paid job?
 Aren't you ecstatic about your personal relationships?
 Aren't you deeply secure about our nation's leadership?
 Aren't you overjoyed with the comfort, safety,
 and friendliness of your home and neighborhood?
 Aren't you just like the happy family in the picture?

NO?

If, on the other hand,

- your job would put a speed freak to sleep,
- your pay barely keeps you in instant mashed potatoes and cockroach repellent,
- you live in a shoebox but pay enough rent for Hearst Castle,
- you and your husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend take turns having the headache,
- you get cold chills every time "our" troops score another stunning victory,
- you think the government is being run by maniacs with cash registers for brains,

Then JOIN THE CROWD at the

End of the World's Fair

MAY 12, 1984

U.N. Plaza, parade to Dolores Park
 in San Francisco

Costumes, floats, theater, music, dancing, conversations
NO POLITICAL SPEECHES!!

Dress Wildly and come and protest/celebrate whatever you want

THE UGLY TRUTH ABOUT... VDTs

BIRTH DEFECTS

In 1980, 4 out of 7 babies born to VDT operators at the Toronto Star over a 3 month period had foot, eye, heart and throat deformities. In 2 years, 7 out of 13 Air Canada VDT operators miscarried. At the Federal Solicitor General's office, not one of 7 pregnancies of VDT operators in 3 years has resulted in the birth of a healthy, full-term baby. Four women had miscarriages, 2 babies had bronchial ailments and one was born premature. At the Defense Logistics Agency in Atlanta, GA, 3 birth defects and 7 spontaneous abortions occurred in 1 year among 19 pregnancies among Sears Roebuck VDT workers in Dallas, TX. These "statistical clusters" are extremely unlikely in the population at large. The US Center for Disease Control reported the chances of the Sears "cluster" at 6 in 10,000.

CATARACTS

In 1977, two New York Times copy editors developed cataracts after using VDTs for one year. US National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health confirmed that the cataracts

Pandora Pennyroyal sent PW this VDT information. Being three months pregnant, she tried to limit her VDT work to 1 to 2 hours daily... and was fired. Her story has a "poor but happy ending." She was hired at a natural foods cafe, for "a bare bodkin above the minimum wage," slinging vegetarian hash with "all the right people," close to home. Good luck... and thanks for the info!

were radiation induced, but refused to link this to VDT use. Radiation-induced cataracts have occurred more frequently among copy editors, clerical workers, air traffic controllers and programmers than among the general population.

and MORE

Listlessness, headaches, muscular tension, high stress, skin rashes, eyestrain, insomnia, dizziness, indigestion and loss of appetite and depression are frequent complaints of VDT operators.

ABNORMALITIES

The primary form of radiation from VDTs is in the extra-low frequency range. Studies of this type of exposure report interference with the growth of young animals, changes in blood composition in human and other animals, bone tumors, abnormal bone healing, and nervous system dysfunction. In addition to the low frequencies, VDTs emit radio frequencies, infra-red, ultra-violet and soft x-ray radiation. It is known that the eyes, reproductive organs and brain absorb radio frequency waves more quickly than other parts of the body.

SAFE LEVELS?

Government has set "safe levels" of radiation exposure from VDTs based on the risk of fatal radiation-induced cancer. In other words, adverse health effects which are not fatal are a socially acceptable cost of this technology. The occupational exposure standard in the Soviet Union is 100 times lower than in the



Some suggestions for reducing the risk to health:

1. Try to get metal shielding around the cabinet, especially if the cabinet is plastic. They cost your employer approximately \$20-\$30 per shield, and they significantly reduce the leakage of low-frequency radiation.

2. Insist on regular rest breaks, and try to set a maximum operating time per shift, filling in the rest of the shift with more varied work. Make sure you take your breaks away from the terminal. Look away from your screen every half hour and focus elsewhere. Get up and walk around, to the restroom or wherever, every hour or so.

3. Make sure your machines are tested regularly for radiation leaks. Different models and different units vary greatly in the amount of emissions they produce.

4. Report any health effects, such as skin rashes, vision problems, or others mentioned above, immediately.

5. Pregnant women should try for reassignment during pregnancy.

6. If you have company-provided insurance, make sure it covers annual ophthalmological exams. Have a test before you begin your

VDT work so you can document any changes which develop. A "slitlamp biomicroscopy" is the test used for cataracts.

7. Try to get a machine with a detachable keyboard. Exposure decreases exponentially for every inch of distance you put between yourself and the machine. Varying the position of the keyboard also makes work easier on the wrists. Get the best lighting for minimum glare, and insist on a comfortable chair.

8. Avoid VDT jobs in large rooms with many terminals, such as at newspapers. The fewer VDTs around you, the lower the exposure you receive.

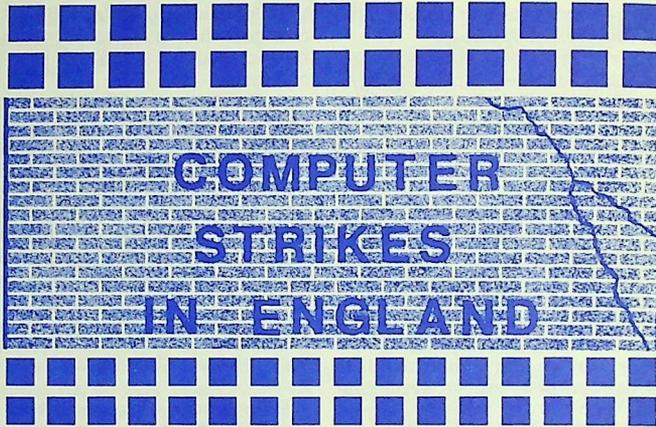
9. Organize with co-workers to resist productivity monitoring by keystrokes per hour, which is made possible by this technology.

10. Successful suits have been brought against employers by VDT operators, but accurate records of machine model numbers and time spent on them, as well as any symptoms you notice, greatly increase your chances of winning a court case, should that become necessary.

Write **Processed World** for other sources of information.



Processed World, 55 Sutter St. #829, San Francisco, CA 94104 USA



In 1979, and then again on a larger scale in 1981, government workers in England went on strike for higher wages. Generally referred to as "civil servants" strikes, only a small percentage of government employees actually stopped working. These strikes were among the first significant collective actions by computer workers. In the 1981 strike, 3600 computer workers withheld their labor, striking on behalf of the half-million British government workers.

The '79 strike differed from the '81 strike in that the earlier one was against a Labour government supported by the TUC (the British union confederation — which was closely linked with Labour in trying to impose a "social contract" with a low ceiling for wage increases) and the latter one was against a Tory government apparently opposed by the unions. Therefore, the 1979 strikes were more often wildcats, whereas the 1981 civil servant strike was a well-organized union affair. Nevertheless, in both cases, the unions acted as good auxiliaries of the government (and of capitalism).

To understand the situation in England (where computer staff is often unionized) we have to consider

two crucial relationships:

1) the unions' attempt to include computer staff in their general strategy, i.e. to have tighter control over a too-autonomous rank and file;

2) the capitalists' attempt (via the government) to draw up plans to reduce or eliminate the impact of possible industrial actions.

In 1978, prior to the actual computer staff strikes, a Labour government report made recommendations to counter this eventuality. This report:

- underlined that "there is a possible threat that our own key computer operating staff could easily cause disruption disproportionate to their relatively small number, by withdrawing their labor."

- investigated standby arrangements in the case of industrial action but revealed that "there are some circumstances in which effective alternative arrangements are impossible."

- noted that computers could be "attractive targets for selected industrial actions in furtherance of a national dispute."

- emphasized the need for "good industrial relations in this field."

A series of local and very limited but nevertheless powerful wildcat actions began to disrupt computer work. The government and unions realized that computerization had vastly increased the potential for disruption by autonomous action. Both the government and the unions recognized the disruptive power of a computer strike. Each attempted to keep control over the actions of the computer workers in order to exploit their power. The government hoped the computer workers would help guarantee stability, while the unions hoped they could be used to pressure the government to concede to union demands.

In a strike, the computer workers could be most effective if they organized autonomously, even if part of a nationwide strike. The computer workers could exert more pressure on the government if they were acting independently of the unions, and if

their action is recognized and supported by other workers who then refuse to handle work ordinarily performed by the strikers.

Such a situation happened in early 1979 during the "winter of discontent," when a big wave of strikes pulled down a Labour government (to keep the balance, five years earlier another wave of strikes pulled down a Conservative government). The 1979 local computer strikes appeared in part as a rehearsal for the 1981 strikes, but were less "organized" by the unions and not centralized, so more autonomous. They involved computer staff in the Armed Forces, the Customs, tax collection, the Foreign Office, Department of Environment, etc. The strike even hit the Polaris nuclear base on the Clyde and blocked the monitoring of Soviet spy satellites and communications. All naval operations were affected because all the supplies, including fuel,



torpedos and missiles were computerized; tugboat use and health supervision were affected. Some sectors outside the government were also affected. A short stoppage by the computer staff in the Midland Bank caused a mess that took three days to clear (Midland owns Crocker Bank of S.F.).

The '79 strike revealed the danger for the system of relying on a small number of workers with access to complicated machines and private or secret data. As the *Financial Times* added (3/21/81): "Computer staff... tend to be less influenced (than other gov't. workers) by the paternalism" of the branches where they work.

The number of computers had grown rapidly throughout the 70's. During the '81 strike the government gave a full report of the extent of centralized computer use. More than 300 mainframes were used to collect taxes, pay benefits and to distribute

and supply services, mainly related to defense, and to the recording and manipulation of top secret information for the police and the military.

One important sector hit by the '81 strike was the tax department. The general aim of the unions (and certainly a strategy for the Labour Party as well) was to force the government to borrow more money, thereby wrecking its monetary policy. It was said that between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the money normally collected did not go to the state during the 21 weeks of selective strikes. It is nevertheless difficult to know the effect of the strike in this regard because the state has ways to get around such problems.

The computer workers strike raised the prospect of other vital industries being disrupted by similar actions: the post office (in '79 a long strike halted all telephone billings in England for several months and it took

six months to clear the backlog), the banks (which use primarily one central computer to clear the checks), the gas utility, and so on.

Nine unions, all part of the TUC, were involved in the '81 strike. The size of the unions ranged from 200,000 to 8000 members and included both professional and non-professional workers' unions. The strike was strongly pushed by the workers. This led to a unique organization, very bureaucratic on one hand, autonomous on the other — what could be called a strictly controlled autonomy.

As the *Financial Times* wrote on 3/30/81: "Bureaucracy is virtually defined by the Civil Service — so it is hardly surprising that when civil servants go on strike the campaign of industrial action should be planned and organized in a highly methodical, bureaucratic manner." This way of thinking was indispensable to the organization because its aim was to manipulate people performing functions in a very hierarchical capitalist system. What bosses and unions have in common is the need to have a say everywhere and at every moment — and the power to impose it.

On the other hand, this organization answered the need of rank and file workers, scattered all over England, for coordination, links, and dispatching. It was a kind of central unit for the elaboration of a common strategy. As the unions were offering such a central unit, all the workers involved in the strike used it and didn't have to build one of their own. Thus, the situation appeared to be fully under union domination. This is always how things are these days: workers can't ignore the unions, and so must cope with them. The essential question in any strike is in the dialectic between the union interests and the workers' interests — in other words, how the strikers use the union-created organization in their own interest.

In the 1981 strike, the nine unions created a national Council of Civil Service Unions (CCSU) composed of top officials of each union. But the operational daily center was a Pay Campaign Committee (PCC) made up of official deputies which met every morning to review action and discuss fresh proposals from the local committees. This PCC had subcommittees in the main sectors of the strike (revenue collection, ports and airports, defense, communications, etc.) and was linked with 41 local coordinating committees through a Central Coordination Room operating in London ten hours a day. The local coordinating committees were set in computer centers and were supposed to carry out the strategy laid down by the CCSU.

What was this strategy? For the unions, the choice was between a rather diluted and ineffective civil servants' strike of indefinite duration and selective effective strikes in limited vital sectors. These sectors were mainly the computer centers all over the country.

For the unions, the selective strike appeared to be the most sensible choice. In reality it was not. The unions were reluctant to display their own weakness, and they didn't want to risk widespread strike action that may have been difficult to control. Moreover, they didn't have the funds to pay strike benefits to all the strikers in case of a general strike. Selective, very limited strikes enabled the unions to maintain control of the strike: the non-strikers appeared to support the strikers, and this solidarity was much touted.

But the real solidarity *in action* was broken from the beginning. Few actual strikers were involved in the day-to-day decisions and implementation of the plans and leadership of the strike. The most "dangerous" workers, the computer staff, were under tight control. As representatives of the striking civil servants, the



unions saddled them with a kind of 'moral liability.' With such a limited number of strikers, even militant ones, it was easier to bring autonomy to a standstill. At the end, after months of actions, even the most militant were fed up. This benefitted both the unions and the management. Fed up workers are less dangerous than confident workers.

In the organization of the strike, the unions kept the militancy of the computer staff firmly in their own hands. The 41 local coordinating committees, because of their local involvement, could have become some kind of autonomous bodies. But because they were rigidly structured by the union, the local committees kept an eye on the only real rank-and-file organ: the selective strike committee.

The computer workers did not rely that much on the unions and their organization of the strike, even if they seemed to follow them. In defiance of the unions, they sent delegates of the selective strike committees all over the country to meet other strikers so as to be fully informed of their actions and ideas. At some locations, militant selective strike committees were able to stop all live work, all program testing, and sometimes to prevent any goods from entering computer centers.

Such evidence of autonomous worker activity was not visible in the organized forms of the strike. The unity of the strike did not extend to all levels of the union organization. (For instance, the most important decision — to use selective strikes instead of an all-out strike — was taken by the unions' leadership.) Such real unity as prevailed was provided by pickets committees, local strike committees, or assemblies where they existed. These took collective votes on a lot of practical problems, breaking the divisions brought about by the unions' formal organization.

During the strike, a journalist wrote

that "the dispute has changed forever the nature of the Civil Service." He was wrong. The large-scale intrusion of computers into formerly protected sectors was the crucial issue. This computerization affected British workers' attitudes in general and those in government jobs in particular. The dispute was only the manifestation of this change — even if it was a revelation for the workers themselves. Though previously they had never thought of going on strike, they found it a "normal" thing from the moment they were out. The computer strike, in 1981 as in 1979, spread into a wide range of sectors where, as the same journalist said, "such action was considered unthinkable." This was another factor which concerned the government during the computer strikes.

Nevertheless, manifestations of autonomy stayed at such a rudimentary level that their effect, repressed by the union apparatus, faded away with time. Meanwhile the government had the opportunity (precisely because of this static strike) to build counter-attacks. The tax sector provides a good example. The two Revenue computers were halted by a selective strike; the Inland Revenue (British IRS) attempted to circumvent the strike by using banks to collect tax payments. Eight clearing-house banks were asked to do the work, but computer and clerical staff of these banks threatened to refuse it. The Inland Revenue evaded the blackmail threat by getting the big non-unionized banks (particularly the U.S. banks) to handle the payments.

In the end the strike was lost. On August 1, 1981, a narrow majority agreed to resume work with 7.5% wage increases instead of the 15% demanded, a very slight improvement over the initial offer. More important is what the strike revealed to the strikers themselves — their power of disruption in a highly centralized state and what they might dare to do

in their own interest.

This is also the important lesson that management has tried to grasp. It recognizes the need to decentralize administration in an increasingly computer-oriented society. Capitalist planners see some hope in this direction with the advent of microprocessor-based equipment in ordinary offices. They think it will, in the long term, reduce the necessity of centralized computer installations. Capitalism always tries to implement new techniques so as to eliminate the resistances developed through the use of previous methods. For now, however, investments are tied to the present centralized systems and it may be some time before the new techniques are fully in place.

The British government just agreed to a big order of 70 large computers,

3000 microcomputers, and 30,000 computer terminals to store and manage all the work concerning social benefits all over England (sickness, unemployment, pensions, disabled, child benefits). This increased computerization will expand state control over almost all the population. But it will also increase the power of the computer workers — not only because of the centralization but because of the possible use of the terminals for unforeseen communications. On the other hand, even if the implementation of microcomputers succeeds in eliminating present computer workers' position of power, new possibilities of struggle will eventually emerge.

— by Henri Simon



TWO BRIEF CONFESSIONS BETWEEN TRAINS

... "Are you alienated," he asked his friend.

"Of course," his friend replied. "And cut off from my real self, and afraid of being subsumed by technology, and uncertain of the existence of a Supreme Being, and horrified by the excesses of modern culture and its vain motivations, sadly uncertain that human beings are essentially good (deep down), and routinely exist in a state of **shocked absurd numbness.**"

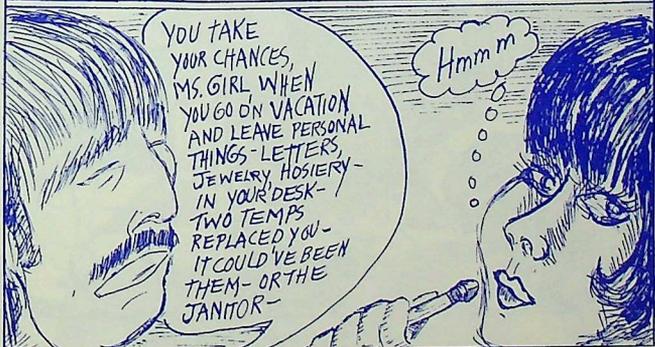
"I see," he said.

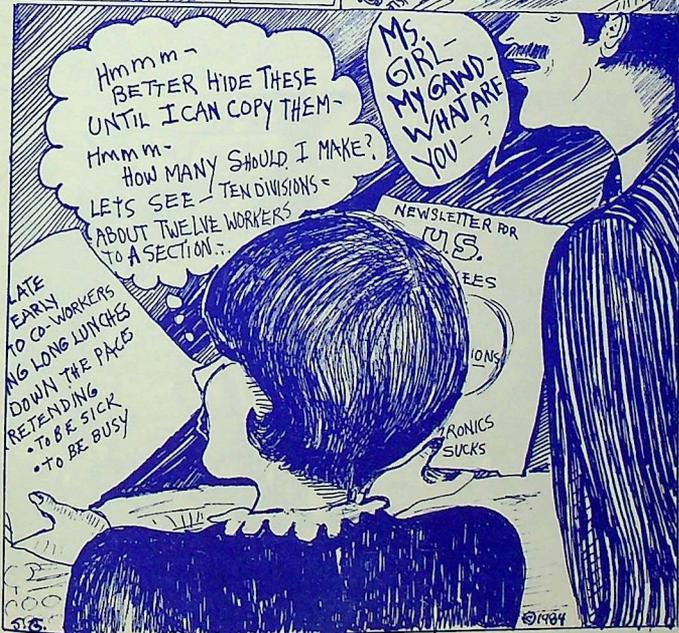
"What about you?"

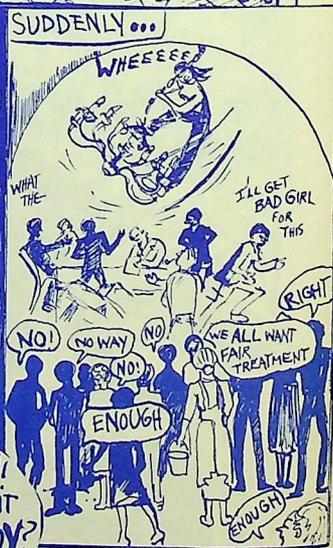
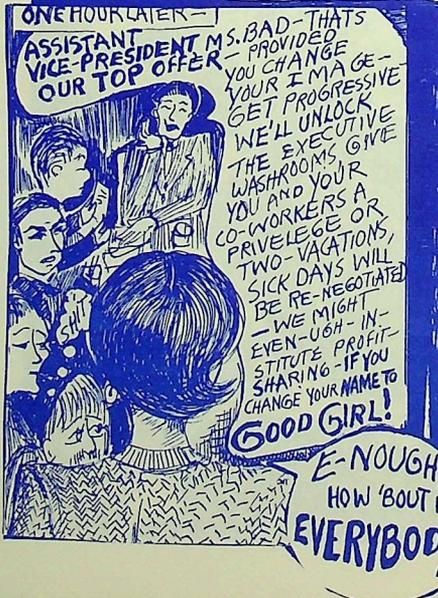
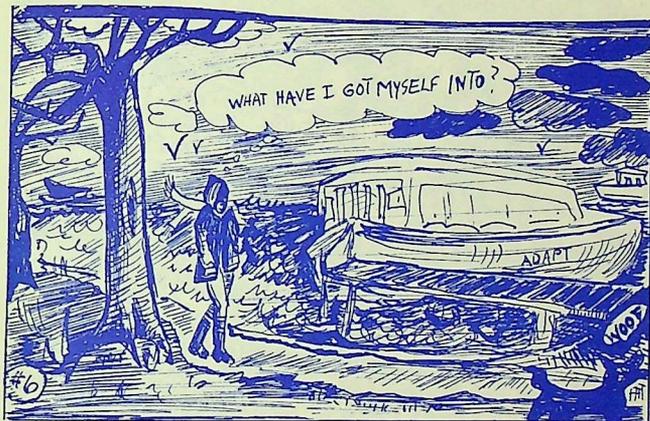
"I'm just like you; but since I'm addicted to alcohol, and am sexually obsessed, I don't feel it."

"That's reasonable," he said.

by Ron De La Houssaye





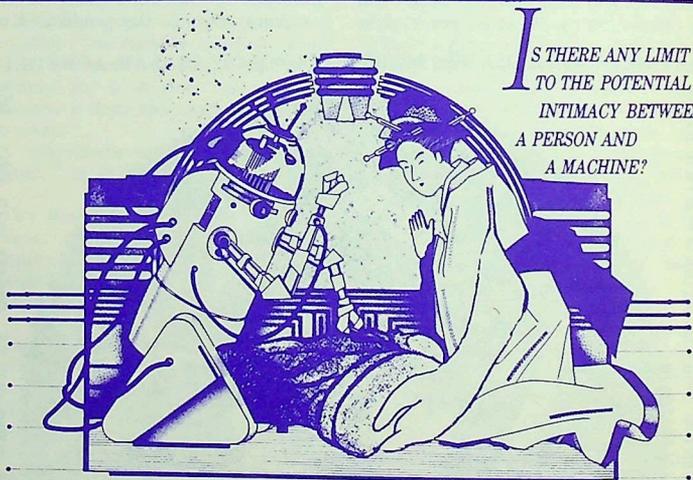


goods that nobody really wants or in the so-called "service" sectors of advertising, billing and collecting for these useless goods, while others are totally unemployed and without income. Russell calls for everybody to work, say, 4 hours a day and encourages the development of non-passive leisure. Morris also favors the redistribution of work, but concentrates on the need to make work itself a pleasure. Morris includes pleasant surroundings, variety of tasks, control over the work processes, and pride in one's results as some of the factors

chosen and self-directed?

Camillo Berneri in "The Problem of Work" notes that for artists, scientists and a few other lucky individuals, "their work brings them such joy as to keep them from feeling weary." However, for the vast majority of people, work is exhausting, chiefly because of boredom. And the boredom is all the more excruciating in jobs, like most office work, that are repetitive and uninteresting and yet require concentration. Berneri concludes that for work to be pleasurable, "the duration of work must be pro-

IS THERE ANY LIMIT
TO THE POTENTIAL
INTIMACY BETWEEN
A PERSON AND
A MACHINE?



leading to pleasure in work.

There is a curious tendency nowadays to see work either as an absolute horror, stemming from Eve's Garden party and our fall from grace into eternal servitude, or to elevate work as our way to salvation, the way we can most fully realize our potentials. Often, the two extremes are held by the same person. When "work" is broadly defined it lends itself to these dichotomies. By "work" does one mean the slavery to machines and bosses inherent in most manufacturing and office jobs, or a project freely

portional to the effort involved" (including the effort to overcome boredom) and "everyone must be free to follow that productive capacity to which they feel most attracted." While an astronomer may work all night with pleasure, caught up in the excitement of a discovery, a bookkeeper may find the job intolerable after a few hours of juggling figures.

It is Berneri's second point which gets a lot of people jumping up and down and pointing fingers at "anarchist idealists." If work is freely chosen, who will clean the toilets? To

leave the toilets dirty for a minute, some of the work which people would probably not choose to do could just as easily be left undone. For example, if everyone at the Bank of America decided they couldn't care less about just how much money Mexico owes American banks and quit tracking the endless permutations of capital on computers, society as a whole would be none the worse. Likewise, the people who currently make shoddy or useless goods could refuse to continue until there was some point to their labor and some hope of pride in their product.

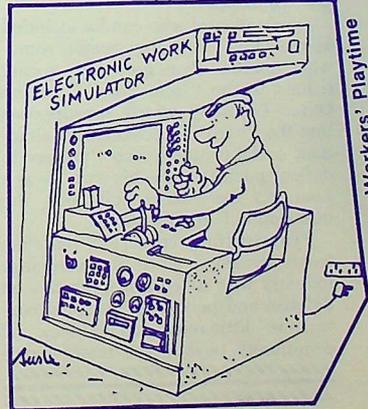
Berneri foresees problems in a transition to a society where work is freely chosen. He quotes Luigi Fabbri on "The Problem of Free Work" who says that "one of the dangers of the revolution will actually be the loathing for work which it will inherit from the society of today." While work may become lighter and less dangerous when workers are able to organize it for themselves, there will still be a need for work discipline and there will probably be some who choose not to work. Berneri believes that forcing people to work spells the end to a free society, and there should be "no compulsion to work, but no duty towards those who do not want to work."

In Tony Gibson's article "Who Will Do The Dirty Work?" we get back to the question of dirty toilets. Gibson claims that "such things as garbage collection, sewage disposal, rag picking, furnace stoking, etc. are unpleasant operations in contemporary society only because the men employed in them have not the power to alter the conditions of their work." With scientific research and technical skills these occupations could actually become pleasurable. Or could they? I think Mr. Gibson is overly optimistic on this point, and even a free society does not change the fact that some work is inherently unpleasant. In my utopia, work which is necessary but

no fun would be divided between everyone so that no one has to do it for very long. Or, alternatively, doing the dirty work could be made a condition for access to scarce luxuries.

While certain improvements in work can be made under capitalism, ultimately they are designed to improve productivity. Amenities such as ergonomically designed work stations and pleasantly lit factories do not change the fact that most people work long hours in total alienation from their labor and its products. To talk about truly pleasurable work, it is also necessary to talk about another kind of world where the profit motive has been summarily banished. Questions about other ways to organize work and society, and how to bring about this revolutionary change are not fully addressed in *Why Work?*, but this is not so much the book's failing as an indication of the depth and difficulty of the subject.

"Leisure in America" by August Heckscher and "The Other Economy As A Social System" by Denis Pym were the most interesting articles on alternatives and futures. Also included were Gaston Leval's article on collectives during the Spanish revolution which was rather dry and limited in focus; and an article on



Israel's kibbutz movement entitled "Reflections on Utopia" which was shockingly silent on problems within kibbutzes and their relationship to the far from utopian Israeli nation. Interestingly, both Heckscher and Pym do not posit sudden revolutionary change as leading to new ways of organizing work and leisure (as was the case with Spain, and to a much lesser extent with the Israeli kibbutzes) but rather point to alternatives that grow out of technological development and the displacement of the traditional blue collar sector.

Denis Pym uses the term "Other Economy" — without fully defining it — to refer to the economic arrangement many Brits have developed in light of their country's crumbling economy and perpetual high unemployment. Especially in working class neighborhoods, some people have dropped out of the formal economy altogether. Using their skills to repair and build, and their neighborhood contacts to find work, they are creating a counterpart to the highly mechanized and automated formal economy. According to Pym, the "Other Economy," which operates through barter and reciprocity, breaks down the now common giver/receiver dichotomy (e.g. doctor/patient, expert/consultee).

Pym's idea of who can be included in the Other Economy seems somewhat limited. Pym goes into a long tribute to the "local 'hero'" of the Other Economy which presupposes that the "hero" — a fixer with abundant social contacts who "prefers to define space and time his way" — is a man. As the editors point out, the description is highly sexist.

Pym rightfully criticizes "the electronic dream," since the computer industry with its current priorities on defense and personnel/personal control has "little relevance for living and community beyond the maintenance

of employment and its institutions." Yet his Other Economy has little to offer service workers who cannot fit the mold of the local hero. Pym calls for the "payment of a minimum wage to every adult citizen" so they could discover "those substantial work opportunities that already exist in the Other Economy." The social wage already exists in Britain. It's called the dole and it comes with hassles and humiliations of its own. Pym pinpoints a new and important development — the growing impetus for people to live on the margins of the cash economy — yet by supposing that the institutions of this society will sanction the Other Economy through the payment of a hassle-free minimum wage, or even that this would be desirable, he detracts from his argument. Likewise, in positing the co-existence of small-scale and highly-industrialized economies, he ignores the necessary antagonisms between them and the need to abolish institutions like governments and corporations and to change the thinking which created them.

"Few people think that 'to be free is to be [at] leisure,'" as August Heckscher explains in "Leisure in America." Indeed, much free time is really anything but free if one includes time spent commuting, dutifully fixing meals, watching TV, and so forth. Yet in leisure, as in some of the work described in Pym's Other Economy, is the possibility of pleasure in freely chosen activity. Through taking control of our leisure and shaping our activities and commitments to suit our pleasures, as well as by perpetually expanding areas of personal autonomy, one catches glimpses of a world free from the coercion to work and open to many possibilities.

— by Helen Highwater

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