

INTRODUCTION

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou has hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

I. In the Beginning

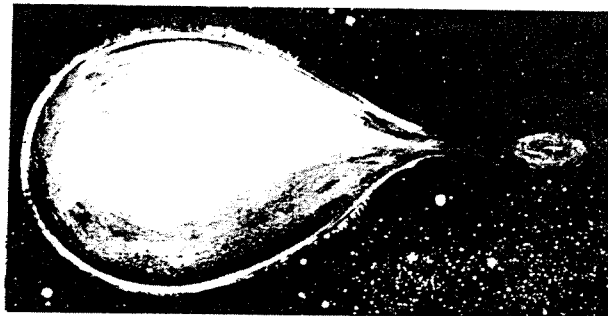
Capital is the process of transforming human energy into work: creating work for the purpose of creating yet more work. For this process to be the human who works must first of all see no escape to the fate of being a *worker* except the usually illusory "option" of becoming an exploiter. But forcing someone to become a worker is a continuous and continuously perilous task. Capital must not only create the worker--itself a paradox--but must also create the *proper* worker and the correct *mix* of types of labor power with past-dead labor in a hierarchy of wage divisions so as to guarantee the accumulation of work.

From conception to birth, through school, children must be "socialized" and "educated" into becoming "productive": a good worker. Mama, father, the school, the "Future" all *must* combine to create the correct mix of death and life. Once labor power in its multifold forms is created, it must be fused--but kept divided in its embodiments--at each workpoint throughout the system in proportions that end up as profit.

Everywhere, the system is resisted. The children rebel, the mothers rebel, the teachers and foremen tire, while the end products of decades of discipline revolt themselves, strike, demand more money, become unproductive and dangerous to the dead labor around them. This has happened again and again, but thus far the system metamorphosizes and goes on. How?

It is obvious that our work is capital's motor and as we recreate ourselves as workers through our work we recreate our divisions and weakness. What should be obvious--but is not--is that our *struggles against capital* are its only motors for development. This is not a picture of some pure defeat in which the harder we struggle the more we perfect capital's dominion; rather, the struggles that develop in one mix of living and dead labor, in one social arrangement of exploitation, force that *specific* arrangement to collapse. A crisis ensues. In the labyrinth of the crisis, capital can only find its way by following the working class and trying to devour it at the exit. For the capitalist relationship to continue, a new social arrangement, a new mix of variable and constant capital must be organized. But this *newness* can only come from the revolt itself.

This is the irony of struggle: at the very nodal point it creates, an Apocalypse appears that seems to make exit impossible, chills the blood, hesitates action and demand, making further struggle seem futile, and suicidal.



II. "Apocalypse Decoded" Decoded

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.
And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
And no man in heaven, nor earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.
And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse (MIDNIGHT NOTES, vol. 2, n.1) explored in detail the collapse of "Keynesianism" brought on by the struggles of various sectors of the working class living at the core of the arrangement: the mass factory worker and the housewife. This struggle came in many colors, e.g., Detroit's League of Revolutionary Black Workers as well as the West Virginia wildcat miners, the black welfare women's movement as well as the W.I.T.C.H.s. This collapse of Keynesianism was immediately interpreted by capital as a dramatic decline in the rate of profit.

In 1973, capital transformed its "crisis of profitability" into a problem of Nature and Arabs: "There is too little energy and what there is, the Arabs have," they cried. But the real mechanism of the "energy crisis" was that the oil, coal and uranium price increases were designed on the one side to fragment anew the too-homogenous working class (in the U.S.) and to reassert a pronounced hierarchy of wages and labor power. The very existence of the Reagan Administration is one proof that this part of the strategy has had some success. On the other side, it was a strategy to ensure a re-structuring of accumulation: concentration of constant capital at a higher level (e.g., nukes and computers), elimination of the "middle" (e.g., robotization of the auto plants) and a vast expansion of the low-waged service and clerical sector. Such a strategy can ironically answer women's demands for income apart from the husband's while simultaneously increasing the over-all social quantity of work so as to pay (create the value and surplus value) for the leap in "high tech" development. The two poles--high tech and low-waged service sectors--apparently so distant capitalistically

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require each other. What unites them is capital's need to create work in one part of society and transform it to another in order to ensure accumulation.

In the "Apocalypse" we began an exploration of the developing shape of the working class. Capital seeks to transform energy into "useful work" on a system-wide basis while stabilizing a given cycle of exploitation. We examined four sectors and transformations within them during the last decade: the factory; housework and the service sector; information and knowledge control; policing, repression and waste removal. These sectors cut across sex and race/nationality lines to some extent, but largely reproduce a hierarchy of those divisions in the new wage structure which once again widen and becomes increasingly dispersed. Each sector poses different riddles:

Production

The new factory will be robotized with fewer workers; the old line worker is dying but the labor power that remains works amidst ever higher accumulations of constant capital. Should these workers get out of control, they pose an ever higher degree of danger for a capital in hostage. What is the price capital must pay to keep these workers "in line"? What social relations on and off the job can keep them working?

Reproduction

How will labor power be produced and reproduced--capital's most dangerous problem--and who will do it? Will the population become increasingly black, hispanic and immigrant? How can "good" labor power be assured in the new model? Will the women in the service sector settle for shit wages? Can a purely monetarized reproduction system for high tech workers work? And how can capital turn it all into a profit to pay for the high tech accumulation of dead labor?

Information

Who will sort out the information sorters? Can dysinformation interfere with capital's need for faster information processing? Can workers be trusted with all the newly concentrated constant capital? How vulnerable is this constant capital physically? What price will capital have to pay to keep it safe, and at that price can it be profitable?

Elimination

The problems of eliminating capital's variable and constant shit: the "troublemakers" (criminals, marginals, hustlers, delinquents, terrorists, etc.) and the highly lethal wastes

of the high organic composition technology. The dumps--prisons and waste-sites-- are "necessary" for capitalist reproduction but no one wants to live next to one. Can the waste be controlled and eliminated or will it find a way to seep out and hold the system hostage? At what price (and in what form) can it be stabilized and isolated, if at all? Will those who must absorb the shit continue to do so, or will they explode as in Love Canal and the New Mexico State Prison?

The Reagan Administration's policies attempt to answer the Sphinx's riddles: who will leap off the cliff?



III. Reagan's Number: 666

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Budget cuts/tax cuts are the blades of a scissor: what are they trying to cut, divide, sever?

The edge of the budget cuts is to most directly cut the whole sector of the working class that has attempted to live outside of the traditional schema of reproduction--the full time Man--without the traditional form of work-income relation--the "full time job". The black-lesbian-welfare-mother and the post-hippy-CETA-brother are to be killed as historical types.

The tax cuts are sharpened for the "good" full time, responsible workers in two-income units with highly monetarized reproduction systems. Their real income will increase while the income of the others will fall thus increasing the gap between them: the costs of "dropping out" are increased while the "dropped out" are squeezed back to a career, to a husband, to prison or the army.

These gaps are crucial, for capital has learned that though massive wagecollapse can elicit insurrectional responses so also can too high an average wage. The capitalist growth path is always poised on an instability and catastrophe. On the one side is the abyss of "price-wage" riots that have pervaded capitalist history from the days of the "Price Revolution" in the 1500's to Levittown in 1979; and on the other side are the rebellions of idleness, of violent disgust with discipline, of the ecstatic revulsion with work. For the class struggle always has two components: one looking back to "past standards" and the other to a post-capitalist universe. That is why these struggles put forth a peculiar combination of appeals to the most archaic, almost neanderthal needs and to almost ineffable utopian desires.

It is absolutely crucial for these two extremes of the working class never to meet in order for this capitalist strategy to work. For what is crucial is not only that more and more disciplined white children are produced but also that the high-tech workers will not be able to escape their work and find in the struggles of the wage bottom a common possibility, a meeting of need and desire.

To see the attack the Reagan Administration directs against the highly articulated strands of demand and struggle of the last fifteen years, consider the matrix below. It summarizes the elements of the Profit Restoration State: the reduction of the costs of reproducing the working class, the reduction of the entropy of the production cycle by the intensification of information and detection instrumentalities, the expulsion of entropically dense bio-social wastes; the creating of more efficient mechanisms for the transformation of the surplus produced in the low organic composition sector into the "high tech" industries.

With this matrix the Reagan Administration will attempt to transform the state of class relation from precarious to controlable.

It is important to refuse, however, the comfortable view of some that the Administration has two separable sides: the hard-core rightwingers (Moral Majority, KKK, Jesse Helms) and the "modernizing right" (corporation execs, CIA, Koch), because they are absolutely essential to each other--and they know it. One is the "tough cop" who with police and para-military powers of violence attempts to control the low organic composition workers while the "modernizing right" is the "nice guy" (the "reasonable" capitalist) who simply states that "everything is permitted...if you have the cash". One is the "irrational" fundamentalist preacher tapping his bible with a shotgun the other is the "cool" corporate climber who will listen to "reason" and wink when you go snort coke in the toilet. But are they so different, are they divisible?

Consider the way these forces attempt to manipulate the gay movement. On the one side the Moral Majority types are calling for capital punishment for faggots while the Reagan Administration is simply saying: "Go fuck in the closet, or if you have the money you can go to Morocco, we don't really care. But don't fool with the children and don't, we warn you, don't be so flagrant!" So

FUNCTION	AIM	PROGRAM
Production	Increase pool of low organic composition labor, intensify the profit magnetism of the "high tech" industry.	Increased military budget, space shuttle, immigration regulation, robotization and computerization of factory and office, attack on minimum wage, free enterprise zones, the end of CETA.
Reproduction	Reduce the costs of reproduction, disaggregate the working class socially and geographically, increase the pressure on "deviants" to get back into the closet, increase the production of white children and the sterilization of black/hispanic women and men, make longevity through high tech medicine possible but expensive.	Family Protection Act that simultaneously "outlaws" homosexuality and rewards high waged white workers to make children, "free market" housing driving blacks to the suburbs, "tax squeeze" on localities, direct and indirect aid religious schools, welfare cuts, anti-abortion laws, attack on contraceptive availability, reduction of medicaid, "high tech" medical research funded, genetic engineering and fertility research funded.
Information	Reduce and control workers in "high tech" sectors, intensify police functions, make the circulation process more efficient and crime proof, intensify ideological control on mass media while fragmenting specialized media.	Tax cuts for capital investments, revival of federal inquisitional committees, registration for the draft, FBI and CIA deregulated, tax cuts to make part of the underground economy to surface.
Waste Expulsion	Expulsion of human and biosocial "impurities", crime control, control of foreign nations.	Capital punishment, new prison construction, end of OSHA, new criminal code, deregulation of the nuclear and chemical industry, militarization, "partial" nuclear war.

in fear of the bible pounding red necks the gay movement is supposed to be forced into a compromise with the more "reasonable" types. This predicament is not unique to gays. This is the model for the political mechanics of the period, for it is important to remember that the carrot would be entirely unappealing to the horse if it were not yoked and continuously whipped on the ass: if it were free, the meadow grass would be more succulent than their dried up tuber.

Capital is neither more nor less "rational", it simply knows that it must simultaneously develop and repress, use violence and compromise, kill and fructify; indeed, it cannot

develop without repressing, it cannot compromise without a violent threat, and it cannot kill unless it creates. Thus the two parts of the Administration cannot fundamentally divide. So our political response cannot be dictated by any attempt to "divide" the "reasonable" from the "crazy" capitalists, for as an examination of this Reagan matrix shows, the long-term transformation of society it reveals demonstrates the apocalyptic tendencies of capital's equilibrium path: "partial" nuclear war, "reasonable" atomic power, sterilization for "the poor who can't afford babies anyway", intensified racial repression, queer bashing on a grand scale, etc. Are we to debate with this?

IV. From Social Democracy to the Detection State

And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are within?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

It is popular now to describe the Reagan Administration as the "end of social democracy", however this is inaccurate. At best it can be seen as an important moment in a process that had its beginning in the struggles of blacks, women and youth in the last part of the 60's to simultaneously *extend* the social contract beyond the fully waged worker and *subvert* it. They were going beyond the "democracy" on which social democracy was based.

For "democracy" in bourgeois society has always been defined in relation to property, i.e., capital. Roughly, the first period of capitalist democracy which ran from the rise of the system to the early part of the 19th century recognized the political person as one who "embodied" *constant capital*. The history of this period can be seen in terms of the slow widening of the notion of property from land to, eventually, money-capital. But a second form of capitalist democracy began to form when there was an expansion of "political rights" from *constant* to *variable capital* in the 19th century. The wage contract became the basic criterion for whether you were or were not a part of the state, whether you had "rights as well as duties" (to put it in the proper bourgeois cant phrase). The crucial question was whether your labor power was indeed a commodity, not only in a formal sense, but whether it was *actually reproducible* and *reliable*. As the complex history of blacks in the U.S. shows, this development is by no means one-directional. Thus black suffrage is directly determined by their wage relation and that part of black history is extremely volatile. Social democracy can be defined formally, then, as the state that incorporates the representation of variable capital--the reliable and responsible workers, the "loyal opposition" of the industrious working class.

The late 60's saw "marginal elements" (though the absolute majority of the population) attempting to force capital beyond the exchange of "rights" for "duties"--work. Those who had

no traditional, fixed relationship to the wage either because of age, sex or race demanded "rights" or "entitlements" independent of *immediate productivity*. This was most clearly seen not in the various efforts to extend the vote (the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the 18 year old suffrage, etc.) but in the gradual transformation of countercyclical Keynesian mechanisms like food stamps, unemployment insurance, and welfare into a package of entitlements that seemed to point to a guarantee of survival independent of paid work. This struggle *to be guaranteed without guaranteeing* could be seen as a generalization of as well as a subversion of the "full employment" social contract.

The budget cuts simply state that the "working class solution" to the transcendence of social democracy is completely unacceptable. As Stockman said, "There are no entitlements." But what is "capital's solution"? Is it the end of state action in the economy, a return to "free market society", a devaluation of Keynes and a revaluation of Smith? Not exactly. For though Reagan promises to take the state *out* of our lives he certainly is not planning to take our lives out of the state.

Let us consider the tendency of the state in this period briefly in relation to immigration. The surge of legal and illegal immigration has been an important element in capital's response to the collapse of the birth rate in the U.S. and the increasing refusal of native-born people to do "shit" work, but on the other side it has been a way for many in the Hispanic and Asian working class to increase their relative wages. But for all its functionality, immigration is now looked upon with apprehension and a debate rages on it. But what is the problem? It is the problem of knowledge. The problem is not numbers per se but knowing who and where the numbers are.

The state is increasingly refusing to assist in mediating the relation between the new immigrants and the economic system. Thus, for example, the program

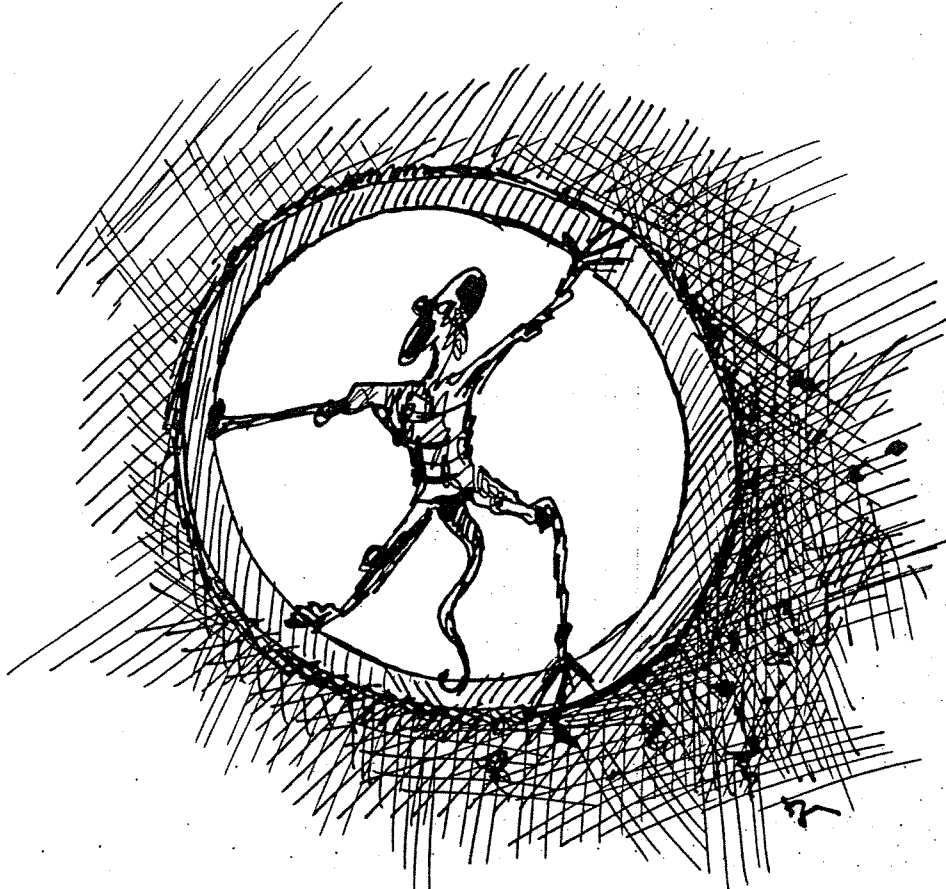
set up for the refugees from Cuba, Vietnam and Haiti in 1980 is explicitly organized to discourage the development of any system of state social services for them. It is to be done through private or charitable organization. But this does not mean that the state disappears. It merely takes on a new role: the detector. For the job of the bureaucrats assigned to this program is not to intervene on behalf of these refugees but merely to chart their moves in their journey into the economy.

Indeed, the formal debate on immigration in general is on epistemological questions and not on social service ones. What worries capital is not whether these people are exploitable or not, for they clearly are. The problem is their "underground" status. Thus the solutions to the immigration crisis is not the increase or decrease of the immigrants' flow but rather center on "identity cards" and "amnesty" for illegal aliens. Both these methods are designed to bring the aliens to the surface, even though they would be costly both politically and financially.

Why can't they continue the noumenal status of the illegal aliens? Because of the very imperatives coming from the

new relation of the state to the economy. State intervention now is to be one of perturbations, i.e., marginal accelerations or decelerations. It plans to use market forces to come to desired state aims instead of literally attempting to carry out its policy in its own name. But this perturbational approach requires alot more information about the market elements and players. This is the state's maxim for this period: *the less you do the more you need to know*. This is especially true of the labor market, and so the existance of perhaps ten million unregistered workers could completely thwart the type of strategy that the Reagan state requires. Thus in going out of social democracy capital must go to a detection state.

The state need not decrease in size at all in the long run, but its functional composition will be different. So the police functions must be intensified not only in the sense of creating new means of violence production but also in the instrumentalities of detection. The social democratic state required too much presence, the state in the future will attempt to disappear behind a one-way mirror. For it now has an absolute need to register all movement: be it movements of people or money, constant or variable capital.



V. Back to Vomit?

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

As capital attempts to go beyond the social democratic state we are confronted with some crucial political choices. On the one side there is an inevitable urge to attempt to conserve the "gains" of the past century of struggle--the social wage; the elementary "rights" on the job; the minimal protection, on a legal level, of the autonomy of women, black and hispanic people and gays--but on the other side there is an equally compelling drive to use this period of transition and re-organization of the class relation to make a qualitative leap in the power of the working class against capital.

These two elements of defense and aggression are not contradictory however. They potentiate each other because the very attempt of capital to renege on the "social contract" hammered out over a century will have profoundly destabilizing effects on all aspects of production and reproduction. For the mere *defense* of "outworn" or "established" demands reproposes the crisis on a higher level of social tension since it meets a capitalist strategy that is attempting to take the initiative to overcome the limits of accumulation imposed by the struggle since the middle 60's. There is no mystery in the forms of defense against the planned and profound devaluation of the working class. As to their success? Who can tell now?

All we can say is that *if* this defense is *not* successful then much more discussion would be academic since the apocalyptic consequences of a new capitalist "stabilization" are obvious. Although workers undoubtedly struggled in the death camps it did not make much sense to talk about a working class strategy in such a situation: "metaphysics", "suicide", "cynicism", and "courage" are more appropriate categories at such a level of working class division and defeat. (Although there were probably many Marxist theoreticians who could analyze the capitalist functionality and rationality of Auschwitz among the vapors.)

Given the progressive deterioration of the capitalist initiative, it is evident that to *settle* for the demands that have their roots in social democracy (however vigorously

fought for) would merely be going "back to the vomit". Such demands can only be effective in starting the process of a counter-attack simply because the very sectors of the class that were most central in destabilizing and going beyond social democracy would still be there if the new Reagan initiative fails. There with a vengeance and an agenda. What will it be?

At this point, the editors of *Midnight Notes* address you, the reader, to a set of themes we hope will be crucial at the juncture we envision. These themes have their roots in the beginning of capitalism, in the initial confrontations of proletariat and capital. We print the following long excerpt from an unpublished work of a Midnight friend to stimulate our collective memories and anticipations.

"The formation of the proletariat is strictly related to the capitalist attempt to *lengthen and radically transform the working day*. In fact the transition to the new mode of production could not obtain without the introduction of a *continuity and regularity* in the expenditure of labor whose absence appears as one of the most typical features of the medieval organization of work. Suffice to think of the great number of *holidays* that cancelled one third of the work year as well as the prevailing seasonal character of work whose immediate consequence was that moments of great intensity of work were alternated with long periods of idleness and that the work day was not *uniform* but more or less long depending on the type of work to be performed. To the irregularity of work habits contributed also in a determining fashion the low development of the division of labor and the lack of any separation between production and reproduction. This meant that not only one performed many different types of work and easily switched from one work to another (from agriculture to artisanal to hunting etc.) but equally easily one alternated work and leisure in a *spatial and temporal continuum*. Against these practices, the first task required of the nascent capitalist class was the

regularization of the work process. To force the proletariat to work throughout the day and every day: this is the first enterprise that capital must face, an enterprise which will require a battle of at least two centuries before having some guarantee of success. For only a complete inversion of social relations and first of all a radical change in the personality-identity of the individual could lead in this direction. The first social 'given' capital had to revolutionize was the very attitude towards work that throughout the Middle Ages had been assumed as pure *negativity*, mortification of the flesh."

There were a variety of attacks on the proletariat designed to change this attitude towards work. Protestantism arises as the most characteristic religious expression of capital's need:

"With Protestantism, particularly in its radical wing, *work is posited as the new religion*. It is not just the most important thing, the very essence of life, the road towards salvation, but *it is by itself religious practice, service of God...* this exaltation and sanctification of work does not remain an ideological fact, a question of principle but has an immediate practical translation into a number of processes whose common aim is the lengthening of the working day. In pursuing this aim capital moves in two directions: on the one side it *represses* all those activities and attitudes that appear unproductive, on the other it *develops new capacities* beginning with the capacity to work. Repression and development go hand in hand, one is the condition of the other. This must be emphasized because too often one only sees the destructive tendencies of capital or, in an apologetic mode, capital is seen as "liberating" an already existing potential at the level of the productive forces. In both cases, one does not see that the destruction of precapitalist elements in the proletariat is functional to the development of new capacities, and, vice versa, that *development is the other face of repression*. The development of the productive forces, beginning with labor power, which is the first and most essential productive force capital develops, is not a bringing to the surface of something that already exists, but it is a form of development that can obtain *only when something else has already been destroyed*. We can accept Marx's formulation--capital develops the productive forces

by breaking the 'fettters' of the feudal mode of production--only if we recognize that to break these 'fettters' meant to break the resistance of the proletariat to a more intensive exploitation and to erase first of all those attitudes and faculties that supported this resistance.

The wave of legislation that from the middle of the sixteenth century began to regulate the work process and more generally the social relations of work was crucial to the 'liberation' of labor power. The initiative starts with the Protestant countries where the religious calendar is reorganized and numerous festivities are abolished. Also, the same day of rest equal for everybody is imposed and those activities that undermined work discipline are forbidden. The regimentation of the time of rest and the relation between work and rest is a central aspect of the new organization of work. The first phase of this process is characterized by the separation between production and reproduction and the systematic underdevelopment of the reproductive moment for the purpose of developing production. What follows from this separation is that *only the time filled with work has value and that the time of work and the time of rest are increasingly regimented into opposite spaces*. The very notion of rest and leisure is changed so that rest is viewed more as idleness than as individual consumption and reproduction. Consequently, rest is reimensioned and reduced. Finally, to the extent that work is now the leading concept, rest is subordinated to it in the sense that it must be *rest for work*, i.e., it must be expended productively to facilitate the reintegration and restoration of productive capacities."

"In play, capital privileges *usefulness against pleasure*: playing must serve to rest the spirit or exercise the body. Play must be congenial to the productive activities and contribute to restore and develop them or else. On the contrary, *drunkenness and idleness* become true crimes. The Puritan would lament that the proletarian considers Sunday a day of revelry and spent it shamelessly drinking and carousing at the alehouse, playing dice or making love. A particularly strong attack is waged against the *dances around the maypole* and against the *maypole itself*, both because of its phallic implications and because increasingly it becomes the symbol of proletarian autonomy and resistance to the new work discipline. In fact, it was around the maypole that since

the Middle Ages the games of May were celebrated which were true sexual festivals welcoming the coming of the spring. The maypole was also the center of the famous 'morris dances' where one danced in circles, *das a das* (back to back) holding each other through ribbons descending from its top. Repeatedly in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries local authorities, particularly among the Puritans, forbid both the maypole and the may games which were accused of always producing a crop of 'bastards'. But the deepest reason is that in the maypole and these spring celebrations some of the most visible manifestations of precapitalist sexuality are attacked and in their abolition crushed. (Not accidentally, in England at least the campaign against the maypole is closely tied to the persecution of the witches)."

"The separation of production and reproduction imposes also the temporal and spatial separation of work and rest and the elimination of every element of sexuality from production work. Or better, sexuality is channelled into two forms of work: in the former it disappears as sexuality qua pleasure-power and is sublimated into labor power; in the latter it is conserved as sexuality but it is itself transformed into a productive process, in so far as it is functionalized to the reproduction of labor power. The leap operated by these two processes can be concretely measured if we think, e.g., to what becomes of the kitchen in capitalism which in the Middle Ages was proverbial for its sexual licence."

"The resistance of the proletariat to the imposition of wage discipline was very vigorous on many fronts. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the bosses continuously complain that the workers arrive late to work, take long breaks and leave as soon as possible. It is important to remember that wage work was considered a true form of slavery, so much so that the Levellers excluded wage workers from suffrage because they considered them "unfree". The proletarian hatred of wage labor is such that Winstanley, the leader of the Diggers, will declare that it doesn't make any difference whether you live under a foreign enemy or under your own brother if you work for a wage. His words are echoed by a character in a work by Spenser (*Mother Hubbard's Tale*) who asks: 'Why should a free person make oneself a slave?' The refusal of work and the struggle for its reduction accompanies incessantly the

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history of the proletariat from its inception. Thus, in the utopian visions which flourish during the Civil War in England returns the promise that 'there will be no need to work.' 'Food grows everywhere,' writes Bishop Godwin in *The Man in the Moon*, 'clothes, houses, everything we wish can be obtained without work or so little that it is as if one played.' In his *Utopia* Thomas More already had proposed *six hours of work a day*, Campanella *four*, and Winstanley had proposed that people should work only until fourty. If the proletarian utopia of the time was the absence of work, the proletarian practice must not have been very different. In a satire written in 1639 we read: 'Monday is the brother of Sunday, Tuesday another one, Wednesday you must go to church to pay, Thursday is half holiday, Friday is too late to start spinning, Saturday is again half holiday.' A typical small entrepreneur of the time, John Houghton, complains in 1681 that the proletarians alternate moments and days of intense work with periods of idleness; moreover *they* want to decide their own work days and all of them worship Saint Monday."

"The capitalist response to this refusal of work was continuous wage cuts intended to incentivize the required work discipline. But still in the nineteenth century the proletarian 'disgust' towards daily work will represent an endemic, permanent crisis for capital. So much that for a long time it will be debated whether it is preferable to have a work force *regularly employed and regularly waged* or whether it is not more convenient to hire workers just for specific tasks. Only in the nineteenth century will it be definitely decided in favor of weekly waged labor. It is true however that still at this time in many areas of England Saint Monday was observed and also for French workers, 'Sunday is the day of the family and Monday that of friends.' Only women and children, it seems, went to work on Monday; but there was an atmosphere of holiday and they went home earlier."

This sketch of four hundred years of working class struggle clearly shows a continuity in the elements of a type of society that the proletariat has autonomously fought for and what capital fought against. It has a simple spatio-temporal character: the reduction of work-time, the increase of anti-work space and the reappropriation of social wealth. However, the utopian visions of the earliest proletarian revolts put our present reality to shame. Here, at the end of

the twentieth century we have not even tested the four-hour day and "retirement" at forty, much less gone further. Even Mr. Lenin himself proposed a halving of the work day and a doubling of wages as the only sensible program for the U.S. working class in 1906. Such a program would be called utopian in sneers by most Leninists of today! Indeed, capital is putting more work on the agenda, for if the Reagan matrix succeeds our work-day and work-life will quantitatively *increase*.

Both the Left *and* the Right agree in principle but not in detail: the demand is for work. But it was exactly the anti-systemic demands for the dramatic reduction of work and the opening up of space for pleasure and autonomous desire that was the most volatile and destabilizing force of the late 60's and early 70's whether expressed by blacks, women or youth movements. These demands have quite systematically been repressed in the crisis but they will form the basis of the second stage of the working class response to Reagan state matrix.

Our problem at this point is not so much the mechanics of agitation and revolution. They have become common mass knowledge and revolutionary examples abound in this

century. Thus even in the last three years there have been three successful revolutions in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Iran which were widely covered in the media. Their results might have been questionable but the tactics of revolt are no mystery to any T.V. viewer. The tactics of agitation are even more widespread. I believe you can hire community organizers at the wage of dishwashers. If anything we are awash in expertise. What we lack is an agenda that would give new sense to the basic drive of class struggle, a vision of social life without work. Our crucial need is the development of a project that would concretely answer the following questions:

- What is the elimination of work-time and work-space?
- What kind of society could be created on the basis of a dramatic reduction of work-time and work-space?
- What are the empirical possibilities, both technological and political, for the realization of such a society now?

To answer our need we are planning to hold a conference in the Spring of 1982 in the Boston area to discuss these questions and take some practical steps in making more public the debate, not about the importance of work which both the Right and Left seem obsessed with, but rather *on the importance of the elimination of work*. Any one who would like to contribute to the shape and content of this get-together should contact us at our mailing address. We will announce further details about this conference in our next issue.

Finally, in preparation of the conference we invite any of our readers to enter a prize essay competition. Anyone who can answer the following question:

Why do we continue to put up with work and exploitation?

in an essay of 3000 words or less should enter the contest. The winner will receive \$100 and the essay will be printed in the Fall issue of *Midnight Notes*.

*Back
No More
To Our Vomit*

CANARY IN A COOLING TOWER

being nailed to your perch
isn't what i call
living

