beyond '84

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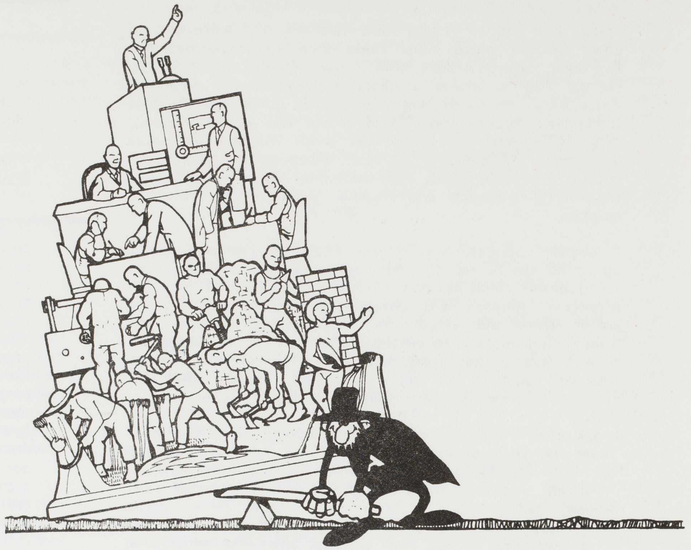


ing. The corporatization of the capitalist economy presents a picture less stark and chilling and "scientifically" managed than Orwell dramatized but not less monolithic and restrictive of human freedom .The process of corporatization has been as gentle and imperceptible as being smothered with a down pillow. And just as deadly.

We have been gradually colonialized by the corporate state as our local communities have lost control over food, natural resources, energy, technology, information, and the exchanges of all aspects of social life. The corporatization of social life has eroded the face to face participation that has been the foundation of community existence. We live in a culture of commodities and consumption. Contemporary social behavior has been engineered so that the main social purpose is to consume. With our lives based on a corporate designed consumer ideology of false needs and desires which demands only marginal participation, we are increasingly alienated from our individual value and the collective purpose of community and society.

Ours is a global economy built on vast transnational networks of production and distribution. Ruben Mettler, chairman of the Business Roundtable, an association of the 200 largest American corporations, declared that the American economy is a sub-system of the world economy. The foundation of this global economy is a capital power structure that is becoming ever more centralized and pervasive. This New International Economic Order is redefining the conception of nationality and the relations between nations. While nuclear weapons proliferation speeds us toward Armegeddon and renders the military power of most nations obsolete, the multi-national corporations and banks have done the same with the political and economic sovereignty of nation states, transforming them into units of production.

For the larger industrial or post-industrial countries such as the U.S. and Britain, with higher-priced labor markets, this means greater unemployment as jobs are shifted overseas to satisfy company policy. The pretext that deindustrialization is necessary because enterprises are not profitable is not in the least borne out by the facts. Despite profits for the 1945-1970 period ranging upward from 15.5% return on investment, disinvestment by industry eliminated 38 million jobs inside the United States during the seventies. By the end of the decade, Britain also wound up with one out of five unemployed, causing massive discontent among the working class, who have not accepted as has the American worker that unemployment is a fact of life.

The tactic of the developed industrial "democracies" is to plead insolvency at home while expanding abroad. General Electric, for example, expanded its world-wide payroll to 30,000 foreign jobs while reducing U.S. employment by 25,000 while R.C.A. cut employment in the U.S.-employment by 14,000 and increased its foreign workforce by 19,000 during the decade of the seventies. Goodyear, Uniroyal and other rubber companies shut down their older plants in the U.S. while expanding overseas. Uniroyal now produces tires in Brazil, Turkey, Spain and Australia.

During the decade just past, Chase Manhatten Bank's investment in Japanese steel rose from $59 million to over $204 million, and Citibank's loans to Japanese enterprises rose from $59 million to over $230 million. While U.S. Steel was complaining about losses due to competition from abroad, it was investing heavily in overseas operations linked directly to its alleged competition.

American corporate management during the '50's and '60's helping to create their own future competition. During that time Westinghouse became the principal stockholder in the Mitsubishi Corporation. General Electric owned the largest single block of shares, 40%, in Toshiba Electronics. Toshiba subsidaries have 24 licensing agreements to make products in Japan that G.E. used to export: radar, generators, boilers, etc., all sold under the G.E. label. In the big 1967 strike against G.E. in the U.S., Tosniba provided its alleged competitor with crucial electronic parts. Japanese capital is by no means an independent force, but operates in many cases as a co--partner of U.S. capital.

Whatever the industrialists say, it's not the wages that cause the poor showing of British and American industry today, rather the facts lend themselves to the theory of planned flight of capital. Entire industries have been systematically dismantled in recent years because conglomerates demand an arbitrarily high fixed rate of return. Viable businesses have been closed down, even though they were profitable because the profit rate wasn't high enough to satisfy company policy.

For the underdeveloped countries of the Third World, the result is further enslavemewnt to corporations and banks owing allegiance only to themselves. For these countries, this enslavement translates into the raping of their ecosystems and the degradation of the livelihood of their people. Western "development assistance" encourages the third world countries to cultivate intensively one or two "cash crops" for export. In the tropical rain forests of Latin America, this means "slash and burn" techniques of clearing land, which is then used to raise a single crop. Feed grains are grown because they are the least expensive to raise. The low-grade beef from cattle grazed on the lands is primarily to large multi-nationals which sell or distribute to fast food chains.

Land is destroyed to produce a crop which most of the citizens cannot eat. Little employment is generated, and the lion's share of the proceeds goes to foriegn investors and/or the ruling clique that controls the country. The final product is consumed along the highways of the U.S.A. This is known to botanists and agronomists as "the hamburgerization of the rain forest."

Our jobs, our environments, and our lives are at the mercy of this powerful corporate empire. This complex structure of power is, however, identifiable and as such not invulnerable. Pentagon, Inc., includes such giants as Exxon, GM, AT&T, IBM, Citibank, Chase Manhatten, Bank-America, and hundreds of other banks and companies linked together through interlocking directorates, holding companies, and controlling interests. It is a pyramidal feudal structure of capital that controls the world's resources and markets and has slowly emerged into a world governing body. Born within the last few decades, the conglomeration of the world's most powerful organizations has ushered in a new era of totalitarianism, all the more dangerous because of the seeming lack of leadership or ideology.

Happily (if we can use the word), totalitarianism in any form,no matter how diffuse, breeds resistance. This resistance takes a myriad of shapes to fit diverse circumstances. An example is offered in the recent industrail action taken by some workers in southern Ireland.

In February of this year, Ranks (a British-based multinational) decided to close down both of its Irish flour mills as a cost-cutting measure. Ranks offered its workers the usual condolences and a handful of peanuts. The workers settled instead for occupying the Dublin mill (and holding its several million pounds worth of corporate flour).

That was almost a year ago. We understand that today, despite jailing by the state, a complete sellout by their union, and condemnation from pulpit and press, the Ranks workers still hold the Dublin mill.

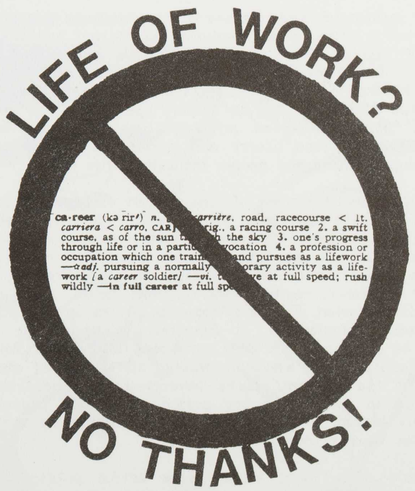
We can draw courage and inspiration from this example and other less dramatic that are occuring all around us. Daily our friends and co-workers are engaging in small, little noticed, but nevertheless determined acts of resistance, and consistent organized resistance occurs, be it by Community for Creative Non-Violence in its work with the homeless, or The Grey Panthers in their struggle for dignity and worth in a society that has no use for the aged.

And this is the way it will have to be. The monstrous power of an interlocking bureaucracy cannot be met head on. Our struggle will have to be multi-faceted and decentralized. We must start to draw boundaries in our social and political lives where non-authoritarian alternatives to corporate society can take root. The imperative of raising conciousness regarding the nature of the corporate state should be made easier by the recent blatant use of "newspeak" and "doublethink" in the mainstream media around the invasion of Grenada and the Lebanese "peace keeping" expedition.

This educational activity, however, must live in the context of a continuing broader strategy of total change. The powerlessness created by corporate society has to be countered by creating alternative institutions; non-hierarchical, collectively run projects aimed generally at worker self management and direct participatory democracy. Everyone needs, by their own self-directed activity, to combat what the corporate state stands for.

Workers, environmentalists, feminists, people of color, and everybody concerned with gaining control over their lives need to examine, question, and struggle against this emerging totalitarianism which, once it is matured, will be unparalleled in its dictatorial control and power over our work, play, minds and manners, indeed over all our lives.

Multi-national corporations have created an impending Orwellian world order and if we have any hope of turning back the tide, we must begin to support non-heirarchical alternative democratic social institutions while boycotting, demonstrating, petitioning, protesting and sabotaging. In this decentralized struggle to bring forth an alternative society, there is room for large group coordinated actions (occupations, for example), small affinity group actions of many sorts, and the range of individual actions that naturally flourish in a free society.

Whatever you do, DO IT.

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