

**IF WE'RE SO
POWERFUL,
WHY AREN'T WE
FREE?**

White Men,
the Total Wage
and the Struggle
Against Work

by Larry Cox

New York Struggle Against Work

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New York Struggle Against Work
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This pamphlet is an expression of the political perspective of New York Struggle Against Work. We are a group of men developing a new understanding of modern capitalism, especially our "roles" and struggles as white men in that system. And we are beginning to organize ourselves and others to build the power necessary to transform the conditions of our lives. This document is the culmination of many months of analysis of what has been happening in this society and where we must go from here.

The group is also publishing an analysis of the crisis in New York, which illustrates the refusal of work perspective in the context of a specific set of struggles. The piece is entitled *DEVELOPING AND UNDERDEVELOPING NEW YORK: The "Fiscal Crisis" and A Strategy for Fighting Austerity* by Philip Mattera and Donna Demac. It is available for 75¢ a copy from the address above. In addition, we will soon be publishing a pamphlet concerning the situation of teachers and students in the crisis.

The development of New York Struggle Against Work has been profoundly influenced by the campaign for Wages for Housework for all women from the government. The New York Wages for Housework Committee has a storefront at 288-B 8th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11215. It is open from 11am to 4pm Wednesday and Saturday and its telephone number is (212) 965-4112.

IF WE'RE SO POWERFUL, WHY AREN'T WE FREE?

White Men, The Total Wage and The Struggle Against Work

by Larry Cox

This pamphlet is being written in the Summer of 1976. Business is recovering from its recent depression but has failed to eradicate the source of its illness: the demands of those it governs for better lives — more money, less work and greater power. And so its comeback is an uneasy one. Profits are rising but so are wage demands, and wage gains still out-pace rises in productivity. Organized public protests against austerity persist, along with less organized actions ranging from shoplifting to vandalism. The war in Vietnam has ended, but armed struggle from Argentina to southern Africa has not. The revolt of women has reached the point where the number of runaway wives — the rate of absenteeism in the family — is now double that of husbands, while the rate of absenteeism in the factories and offices among waged workers, both male and female, remains high despite an official unemployment rate of more than seven percent.

As the sickness lingers, widespread agreement is emerging on the surest cure. It is called work. The only argument concerns the administration of this miraculous antidote. The Right wants to increase the power of private capital, while the Left prefers capital in its public form and thus demands jobs and increased development from the government. All agree that the solution is the creation of more work.

The perspective of this pamphlet and the group from which it emerges is slightly different. We are tired of working and we are not interested in doing more of it. We want instead to build our power to refuse work — to refuse all the forced activity, on the job and off it, waged and unwaged, which is used to discipline, control and manage our lives according to the needs of capital. The central argument of what follows is that such power can be built not by demanding more work, but more money; not by seeking more jobs, but more money for all the jobs, waged and

unwaged, we are forced to perform to stay alive. We are fighting for a *total wage*, a wage covering the 24 hours of our daily lives that are being turned into work; a wage that will enable us to fight to regain those 24 hours for ourselves.

In trying to understand how best to fight for this, we have learned much from the Wages for Housework movement. This fight by women against their wageless work has uncovered and clarified the ways in which wagelessness is used against us all. The failure of those organizations claiming to represent all workers to see, let alone organize against this wageless work underlines the importance of autonomous struggles. In the campaign to win from governments wages for housework for all women, we see the power generated when people determine for themselves the particular nature of their chains and their particular strategy for breaking them. The deep divisions of race and sex, along with the corresponding hierarchy of power among workers, make it impossible for any one sector to speak in the name of all. For this hierarchy will be reproduced continually unless each sector understands the specific ways it is used by capital, and thereby finds specific tools for subverting that usefulness.

Thus we want to make it clear that this document has not been written by all the workers of the world, or even by a central committee on which they supposedly have representation. It has been written by a group of white men in the U.S., and it reflects our history, experience and situation. Our purpose in making this explicit is not to glorify all that divides us from other workers, but to develop a strategy based on our direct interests which can help end these divisions and destroy the system they serve. Such divisions are based on neither ignorance nor bad will; they are based on power relations which have been carefully constructed to correspond to seemingly natural divisions of sex and race. It is impossible to alter these power relations without first confronting them, and this means confronting racism and sexism. For us, it means first confronting what it means to be white and male.

The Power of White Men

It isn't easy to be a white male and it isn't easy to understand why. For in the pursuit of happiness white men seem to have all the advantages. In a racist society we are the right race. In a sexist society we are the right sex. Indeed, some have tried to portray the movements of women, Blacks, Latins, Asians and others as nothing more than the fight for equality with white men, the fight to share in our good fortune. Statistically, we have become the norm against which others are asked to measure their oppres-

sion.

Our struggles have of course revealed what the statistics do not — that it takes more than whiteness and maleness to join the very exclusive club of those who actually rule. Among the rest of us there are significantly different levels of power, determined for the most part by the kind of waged work we do. Yet there is more linking all white men together than the class bias of government statistics. The struggles against racism and sexism have shown time after time that whatever our differences, there is something we share as white men: power over those who are not white men. This does not mean that there are not, for example, *individual* Blacks or women who have greater power than some or even many white men; it does mean that in practically every social or occupational group one examines — whether it be old people, the unemployed, auto workers or executives — most white men will invariably be at the top of the economic and social scale, with greater power than those not sharing our sex and race.

The benefits of being born white and male, documented as much by social conflict as by social studies, have made it difficult for us, especially those with the added “privilege” of a college education, to admit openly what most of us have come to know too well: that we have not made it, that we are not going to make it, and that in a certain sense we do not even want to make it! Viewed through the prism of advantages and privileges, our failure to find the good life looks like individual inadequacy. And given the place we occupy in the hierarchy of power, any attempt to organize ourselves to fight the life we are faced with seems either ludicrous, a defensive reaction to other movements, or deeply reactionary — an attempt to hold onto or increase privilege rather than eliminate a common oppression. The history of exclusively white male movements and organizations has not been a glorious one. This does not mean that those of us who wished to be neither ludicrous, defensive nor reactionary have never fought for our specific interests. Yet such battles have always been launched not in the name of white men, but in the name of “the working class” or “the People,” with the claim that the organizations used to advance such struggles — unions, parties or mass movements — represented not just our needs and aspirations but those of all. So, not surprisingly, it has not been us but women, Blacks, Latins, Asians and others who discovered that such organizations based on unity in theory, in practice reflected primarily the position and goals of the most powerful group within them, namely the white males.

In building autonomy from the power of white males, these

other groups began to build a new kind of power for themselves, one based on defining their own needs and their own strategy. As white men, we have often seen in this assertion of autonomy the threat of reduction in our power both over those under us and against those above us. We have often fought against these autonomous actions; and although we have lost that fight, the loss has proved to be a gain. The independent activity of women, Blacks and others has not only increased their power, but has opened a new terrain of struggle for us as well. In the process, we have been forced to understand the connection between the power we exercise over others and the powerlessness we feel in our own lives. We have been forced to find answers to the question that never goes away: *If we are so powerful, why aren't we free?*

Sex, Race and the Wage

To understand the limits of our power we have first to understand its basis. Certainly there is nothing inherently powerful in whiteness or maleness. The power of that small minority who control our lives comes not from being white or male per se but from capital, from their ability to make the rest of us work, which stems from their control of money and the means of production we produce. Whatever power most white men have has come from fighting against capital and against those who, in managing it, try to manage our lives. It hasn't been easy, but if we have won more than others it is not because we have fought harder; it is because the terrain on which we have fought is more advantageous. That terrain comes not from our race and our sex, but from the kind of work those of our sex and race have been forced to do, from our particular job assignment in the social factory we all live in. It is this work which has been the source of our pain; it is the fight against this work which has been the source of our power.

Our work has been waged work. To be white and male has meant greater access to, and a greater hold on the waged job. There have been, of course, and there are now growing numbers of white men who cannot find or hold onto waged jobs, but for us unemployment is generally regarded as a temporary condition, an aberration or a tragedy. The government, for example, has traditionally viewed the rate of unemployment among white men as a key indicator of economic trends. This identification of white men with the waged job is not an eternal truth, however. In fact, historically, the first factory workers were women and children. It was not their inability to perform waged work (their bosses regarded them as quite well-suited for it), but capital's need to

create a family structure that would reliably reproduce the working class that led to the forced identification of women with unwaged work in the home and children with unwaged work in the schools. Similarly, it was not race that determined before 1865 that Blacks would be slave workers and whites “free” workers, but capital’s need for a system of control with sharp and easily defined divisions among workers that determined that slave labor would be identified with color. The end of slavery did not end the need for such a system of control. Race, as well as sex, was still necessary to draw the line between those who would be regular waged workers and those who, in addition to doing other unwaged work, would serve as reserves, a steady source of cheap labor to function as a steady threat to the power of those waged workers.

This did not mean that women, Blacks and others were not ever to be used as waged workers; on the contrary, they have been and remain an important part of the waged labor force. But the wage they receive is a special one, both lower and less secure than the one given to white men. The lower wages and the greater job insecurity are not simply reflections of prejudice on the part of employers. They are a function of the vast amount of unwaged work being done on the land, in the homes and in the ghettos of the world, and of capital’s need to reproduce these reserves of wageless workers. It is the importance of this wageless work to the very survival of the international economic and social order that explains the pervasiveness of racism and sexism. Ethnic differences among white men have also been important, even crucial to capital’s planning and control, but the deepest divisions remain those of sex and race — which reflect the deep division between those who have a steady wage and those who have been denied it.

Yet it is important to emphasize, at a time when the waged job is being held up as a form of liberation — both to those who have been denied it and to those who fear losing it — that from the very beginning of capitalism, people have regarded this work as merely another form of slavery, a denial of life and a source of misery, not freedom. Those who needed us for this work originally had to force us to do it, and it wasn’t easy. It was done with violence, the violence of the gallows and the violence of starvation. Vagabonds, those who sought to live off the already visible surplus rather than enter the prisons called factories, had to be hunted down and punished. Any alternative possibility of staying alive — whether it was independent artisanry, ownership of some land or parish relief — had to be destroyed. We had to be forced to accept a new kind of discipline in which the path to survival led only through the factory.

Yet sheer violence was insufficient to get us to work. The money to be had by going to the job needed to be greater than the money that could be found outside it. The development of the wage can thus be traced to our resistance to the job. We were not given money in exchange for the amount of work we did. We were given money to get us to do the work, and the amount was proportional to the amount of power we had to refuse. The Industrial Revolution stripped work of its ties to tradition, custom and religion, and put in their place these naked power relations of money. The wage became the measure of the success of our struggle against work; it also became a weapon in that struggle. More money earned on the job came to mean less fear of immediate starvation should the job be lost or left. Every bit of our money coming back into our hands came to mean greater choice, greater flexibility, greater power over our lives. So we see that from the beginning, our bosses have faced a dilemma: the greater our power to refuse work, the higher the wage; and the higher the wage, the greater our power to refuse work, both individually through absenteeism and collectively through the strike. The writings of the early industrialists were replete with complaints about workers who would stop working once they made enough money to feed themselves, and with warnings that, for this reason, everything should be done to keep wages as low as possible. Our struggles, however, did much to determine what was possible and what was not. While white men have had no monopoly on the fight against work, our position as workers having the power of the wage and confronting our bosses directly and often collectively has enabled us to struggle more effectively than those whose work has been kept totally or largely unwaged.

The Waged and the Unwaged

We want this power to escape work for ourselves and for our children. Every successful strike or job action raises the hope of not only a future of more money and less work, but also one in which we, or at least those bearing our names, will cease to be workers altogether. But while we have fought for the power to escape work, those in charge of our lives have sought to use each gain we have made against us. We have forced them to give us a wage related to the job, but they have given us the additional job of materially supporting those denied the wage. We are forced to be not only breadwinners but bread providers. Our wage is to support the woman doing unwaged work in the home (or to partially support her if she does additional low-wage work outside the home), as well as the children doing unwaged work in school.

In addition, the government (capital in its public form) tries to involve us in its position of having to provide for the minimal maintenance of large numbers of wageless people — those raising children without a male wage earner in the home, as well as those serving as both a source of temporary cheap labor and as warnings to others of the consequences of losing the waged job. It is the normal practice of business and government to attempt to finance payments to one group of workers by cutting the money going to others. In this case, the government cuts our wages by a method known as taxation, taking a large chunk of the paycheck before we even see it, and supposedly uses those funds to finance welfare, food stamps, and other programs intended to provide for little more than survival. We are then told that our wage is paying both for the wageless in our homes and the millions throughout the country who, for some never explained reason, are not getting a wage directly from private capital.

But our work outside of the job does not end there. We are not only expected to use our wage to provide for others, we are expected to use it to discipline them. Just as we have had to depend on the job to survive, so have the wageless been forced to depend on our wage for their survival. And just as those who control the job have power over us, so does our control of the wage give us power over the wageless. We have used that power to discipline the wageless because we depend on their unwaged work to help us survive our waged work.

The work of women in the home is largely the work of repairing the damage done to us on the job. We have relied on women to patch us up physically, sexually and emotionally — to give us back each day some of the life lost in making a living. Our resistance to women doing work outside the home stems not just from fear that they will compete for our jobs, but fear that, with an independent wage, they will no longer provide us with the services we need to survive those jobs. We try to discipline our children to work hard at school, in part so that one day they might help us avert the poverty and isolation of the abandoned old, who are forced back into wagelessness. Yet perhaps even more deeply, we look to our children to realize the dreams destroyed for us each time the alarm clock goes off — above all, the dream of a life not dominated by work. We hope that if we can force our children to work hard enough at school, their achievement may yet give meaning to our defeats.

Because wagelessness extends beyond our immediate families, so does our work as disciplinarians. We have been called on to keep control of those wageless people, both nationally and international-

ly, who serve as a standing reserve of cheap labor, from which capital can draw when it needs to fill those dirty and low-paying jobs which we increasingly refuse to do. During expansion they are used to fill many of the most dangerous, the most difficult and the lowest paid positions in heavy industry. During periods of contraction they bear the brunt of layoffs. In general they have been forced, if they are to get any sort of regular wage, into the least secure and lowest-paying jobs in industries such as hospitals, laundries, restaurants, brothels and massage parlors — where their work often supplements or substitutes for the services provided for free by women in the home. This army of the wageless is created by keeping its members out of steady waged jobs. They are driven to do the work of looking for work — since whatever money has been won from the government is kept not only difficult to obtain, but of such a meager amount that even the worst waged job is often preferable.

The wageless have been kept under control with the help of white men, who have fought their efforts both here and around the world to obtain higher-waged jobs or more money outside of the waged job. We have been enlisted in this fight in the name of job protection, national security, defense of neighborhood schools, lower taxes, or law and order. Sometimes these battles have been fought politically, sometimes militarily, but always white men have been called on to do the fighting. Both inside and outside of the home, capital has depended on us to be its police.

Our Hatred and Our Fear

But if we have accepted this police work, we have also — as with all the work assigned us — fought against it. It is not just that being a cop is not much fun — that it means facing the rage, the emotional and physical attacks of those we are trying to control — it is that when we discipline others *we are disciplining ourselves as well*; when we make it hard for others to refuse their work it becomes harder for us to refuse ours. The price of having power over the wageless is having less power over our own lives. Our role as providers helps to undermine our power. In so far as women and children are forced to depend on our wage, we are forced into greater dependence on the source of that wage — the job. To risk losing the job, through either personal or collective acts of rebellion, means risking the livelihood of our dependents as well as of ourselves. To continue to take such risks can mean losing their support, which we need to survive emotionally. Even when they are willing to accept the sacrifice that comes with our resistance, our love for them and our unwillingness to see them

suffer give the bosses an additional screw to tighten. (It is not surprising that they prefer to hire married men.) So as our responsibilities for others grow, so does our caution. We begin to take fewer chances, accept more shit, learn to stifle more anger. The struggle against the job is slowly transformed into a struggle to control our real feelings and desires — all of this in the name of looking out for our families. And as we give into the discipline of the job, take the humiliations, and learn to live with the defeat, our jealousy and resentment of those who seemingly have escaped the job — or are trying to escape — grows. Often our anger turns against the woman and children who appear to be living off us without giving back enough to justify what we must endure; whose dissatisfaction seems an indictment of our performance as head of the house; whose demands for a better life we translate as demands that we work harder. Because they are so close, we can reach them with the rage not so easily directed at those who cause it. Yet because we need the woman and children to survive from day to day, we are especially vulnerable when they fight back.

Our greatest fury, therefore is usually directed outside of our immediate families, against others who are wageless and against those whose skin color has been identified with wagelessness — Blacks, Latins, Asians, etc., in other words, people not under the discipline of the job yet refusing to die. We are encouraged to see these people as living off our work and showing not gratitude but contempt for the life style the job imposes on us. The stories which the servants of capital dig up and circulate about welfare cheats living well, even luxuriously, stir up immediate anger — for if it is possible to live well without the job, we have been destroying our lives for nothing. Our hatred for the waged job is turned into hatred for those without it. Our defiance of the discipline of the job becomes subordinated to our fear of those who do not share that discipline; fear that their anger at a life shaped by wagelessness will be directed at those of us with the wage; fear that, with little to lose, they might act on that anger.

This diversion of our hatred from those responsible for our misery to those sharing a variation of it not only prevents us from seeing the real condition of the wageless (including their work for capital), but it also tightens the very knot that ties us down. As long as the work done outside the job remains largely unwaged, and as long as the only alternative to the waged job is poverty, our ability to attack that job remains limited, and the power of those who control the job — who can hire and fire — remains decisive. We may still fight against our work, but we will never be able to reject it completely, and that litany of blackmail —

“smaller profits mean fewer jobs” — will retain its power, even in the face of the abundant evidence that the greatest profits are made precisely in those industries eliminating jobs the fastest. The fear of losing the wage and the power it gives guarantees that the deal which first brought us into the factory will never be smashed, only modified. In accepting and perpetuating the division between the wageless and the waged, we make it inevitable that we will spend our days fighting to protect the jobs we hate, rather than joining forces to fight for what we all want: the time and money needed to discover a little of how it feels to be free, the time and money needed to fight for a society in which such a feeling is our permanent reality. The divisions they want us to maintain not only go against our needs, but without them, this system of forced work would collapse.

The Crisis

This is why our activity of the past several decades has caused such a crisis. White men in significant numbers began to refuse their work as police. Instead of stopping the advances of the wageless, we began to use their victories as a springboard for other battles of our own. As struggles spread from one sector to another, in ways often as complex as they were efficient, the effectiveness of sexual and racial divisions as tools of control was undermined. Capitalist society began to come apart.

The groundwork for this cycle of struggle was laid during the previous generations. Capital's strategy for escaping stagnation like that of the 1930s included linking rising wages and the corresponding rising demand for goods and services to rising labor productivity. Its need to get around the growing costs and militancy of living labor with the increased use of obediently productive machine labor led to the creation of such sophisticated technology that the vision of abundance, *with little or no work*, moved from religious utopia to concrete possibility. With this technological power and the plethora of goods and services it promised, the status of work was radically changed. There was some talk about “the end of work,” but it soon became clear that work would not be eliminated, only altered. Thus work became less and less any sort of necessity imposed by nature, and more and more a political imposition dictated by a particular socio-economic system for purposes of control — control over us. The job ceased to appear in any sense as a duty, and was seen to be an increasingly arbitrary and artificial requirement for a share of the vast social wealth. And that requirement began to be attacked. Not surprisingly, the attack came first from those denied any significant share of that

wealth, because they were not “developed” enough for the right kind of work — the kind with a wage. On an unprecedented scale, both nationally and internationally, the army of the wageless started to move.

Once again white men were called on to put down this movement, but also on an unprecedented scale, we began refusing. This refusal came first and most dramatically from the universities. It was not difficult for students to identify with the growing rebellion of Blacks, as it moved from non-violent struggle in the South to armed struggle in the North, from demands for rights to demands for power. Whatever their ultimate destination, students in the university had more in common with the wageless than the waged. They too were doing unwaged work and experiencing the powerlessness that went along with it. The Black movement taught them what couldn't be learned in the lecture halls — that there were ways of overcoming that powerlessness. Student-as-nigger was more than a clever analogy, and the student movement was more than a movement of support for other struggles. The rebellion of Blacks gave students an immediate justification and more power to refuse the work being imposed in the classroom; it also revealed the true nature and purpose of that work and of the university factories in which it took place. Many of us had gone to college as a way out of the working class, believing that by doing unwaged schoolwork we could escape or reduce our work later. In joining Blacks in confrontation with the government and private capital, the realization dawned on us that we were paying out large sums of money and putting out large quantities of tedious labor — all so that one day we could take what would be the increasingly difficult, unpleasant and even dangerous jobs controlling both waged and unwaged workers, including the very people we were allying with. The eruption of these struggles helped to throw off the professional mystique that enveloped such positions as teacher, social worker, middle manager, etc., and revealed the future such jobs promised: an endless battle with very determined opponents and no guarantee of victory.

But we didn't have to wait for the future. There were immediate job openings in Vietnam, where we were expected to go beyond merely working for capital to killing and dying for it. We responded not only with declarations that we weren't marching any more, but, following the lead of the Black movement, with expressions of solidarity with the very enemy against which we were supposed to march. Meanwhile, another front in the rebellion of the wageless was developing, and its impact on white men was the most devastating of all: women began to rebel.

The Revolt of Women

As students, women shared a common situation with men, but unlike the male student, their identification with wagelessness was not a temporary one. It stemmed not just from their position as students, but from the generations of unwaged work that women have done and continue to do in the home. The power relations based on this sexual division of labor did not disappear in the university, any more than they did after graduation. Women learned that college credits would not stop men from treating them as housewives, any more than civil rights had stopped whites from treating Blacks as niggers. And as Blacks discovered with whites, women also saw that they could alter the power relations between themselves and men not through appeals to good will and understanding, but by building their own autonomous power. This growing power of women, which we were unable to stop, began to reveal just how much our lives as men rest on the assumption that we will have the services of women, and how unbearable is the prospect of a life of unending work without those services. The rebellion of women against their work did more than disrupt, and in some cases tear asunder our "personal" lives; it made our work even more intolerable.

Insurgency grew and it spread. Regardless of the point of origin, rebellions circulated throughout the entire society, filtering into and widening every crack in the social fabric. The Pentagon discovered that along with drafting soldiers it drafted the anti-war movement. GIs discovered that it was indeed possible to rebel against one of the most authoritarian organizations in the world, especially when it placed rifles in their hands. And when they were drafted from the army into the factories or ghettos, they took what they had learned with them. Then the Courts discovered that they could lock up the wageless but they could not lock up their struggles, as insurrections broke out and spread from prison to prison. Nor could the rebellion be kept within age limits, shown by the emergence of protest in both senior citizen centers and high schools. Even the deepest and seemingly most natural methods of social control came under attack, as the Gay Movement challenged the limiting and channeling of sexuality into the nuclear family and exposed masculinity and femininity as social, even political creations. The counter-culture emerged as a set of values whose common denominator was a rejection of "delayed gratification" — the sociological euphemism for shitty work.

The media did their best to portray such ideas as the expressions

of rich white drop-outs and young ghetto Blacks who felt contempt for the "real workers" who kept the factories and offices humming; but then the media discovered with astonishment that these "real workers" also enjoyed pot, music and sex more than drudgery on the job. The Health, Education and Welfare Department issued a study, "Work in America," containing the shocking revelation that workers did not enjoy work and were doing everything possible to avoid it — including absenteeism, loafing and sabotage. Not surprisingly, this report cited the deterioration of the family as a principal cause of the deterioration of the will to work. In other words, women were not doing their job, and their refusal of that work not only increased our reluctance to go to our waged jobs, but also demonstrated how much of the job we were bringing home. Men began to see what women in some way had always known: that there has never been an eight-hour day — preparing for the job and repairing after it gives us all a *24-hour workday*.

The more difficult it became to conceal the transformation of almost every human activity into work, the more difficult it became to silence the demands for payment for all that work. Women demanded money from the government for the work of raising children, and when they got it in the form of expanded welfare payments they treated it as a wage; and like all good wage workers, they demanded more. The government also had to give students money to get them to go to school, giving the funds in the form of loans (for the most part). But many students treated this as a wage, refusing to pay it back. Blacks, demanding reparations for their centuries of unwaged work, presented a bill to capital — and when it went unpaid, initiated dispossession proceedings in the form of the urban rebellions. Waged workers fought to be paid for travel time, lunch time and wash-up time; for the time lost to psychological as well as physical illnesses, chronic diseases as well as accidents. There seemed to be no end to the outrageous demands we could make; more terrifying to our managers, there also seemed to be no end to our power to win those demands.

None of the divisions seemed to be working. The white men hired to contain and control the revolts of the wageless used those revolts to strengthen their own demands for more money and less work. Government employees, for example, learned so much from the struggles they were supposed to stop that they became the most militant waged workers of all, winning hours, working conditions, wages and pensions that often surpassed those of the traditionally more powerful waged sectors. Those sectors, however, were also moving, and in significantly new ways. There was, of

course, nothing new about wage battles. Capital has not only accepted such periodic contract fights as a necessary component of overall labor peace, but has incorporated them into its own strategy for continued development, by linking wage increases to larger increases in productivity. As long as the total proverbial pie kept growing faster than labor's demand for a bigger slice, wages could rise, demand for goods and services could grow, and profits could still increase. But it was precisely this link between wages and output that began to be shattered, as workers won higher and higher wages with little or no increase in productivity.

Capital then tried to take back through higher prices what it was forced to give up in wages, but this only opened up a new battlefield. Workers in the factory began winning cost-of-living clauses, while the unwaged in the community began winning price reductions through rent strikes, sit-ins and consumer boycotts. Many people also instituted price reductions on their own by means of shoplifting, use of slugs and looting. Inflation became a dangerous policy not just because of the havoc it inflicted on capital's long-range planning, but also because of the havoc we inflicted on capital's system of exchange.

Capital's Counter-Offensive

Yet the divisions so crucial to capitalist rule had not disappeared; in fact, in many ways, racial and sexual conflict grew more intense. The rapid and widespread circulation of struggles did not imply that the unity of all workers had finally been achieved. It did show that the term "social factory" is more than a metaphor; that the entire society — indeed the entire world — has been transformed into one industry. Waged or unwaged, all of us work for capital; all of our work is necessary for the accumulation of capital, so a refusal to work by any one group of workers in any part of the factory threatens the production of profits, and often the factory's very existence. The divisions in the working class were not undermined by a sudden unity of hearts and minds but by a refusal of work in all corners of the social factory. For capitalism to survive, the divisions would have to be transformed and deepened. The power to refuse work would have to be broken. This brings us to the present "crisis".

The usual tools for creating and intensifying division were now clearly inadequate. The extraordinary offensive by the working class could only be stopped by an equally extraordinary counter-offensive — and it would have to be aimed everywhere that struggle was taking place, that is, *everywhere*. To reimpose discipline on

such a wide scale would take more than your average recession, more than a temporary downswing. It was too late for fine-tuning aimed at continuing economic growth as usual; such growth had proved itself a dangerous catalyst for working class struggle, for the production of enormous social wealth had begun to subvert the divisions in the class by destroying the logic which said that the gains of the wageless would have to come at the expense of the waged. Anyone with access to television, magazines or city streets could see that there was more than enough for all. The technological power that had created the possibility of higher profits had also heightened the expectations of all the producers of that profit for more of the social wealth and less of the social misery. These expectations of abundance had to end, and they had to end forever. For business the recession might be temporary; for the rest of us it would have to be permanent.

So the Age of Scarcity has been proclaimed, limits to growth have been discovered, and shortages have become America's most important product. An uppity working class has been given a practical demonstration of what will happen if people continue to ask for more while working less: gasoline shortages, food shortages, toilet paper shortages, and most importantly, a shortage of money. The government has announced it is running out of money, while the largest city in the nation — the capital of international capital — has been declared near bankruptcy. With the announcement of an official money shortage, an advanced degree in capitalist logic is not necessary to deduce that those to be hit the hardest would be those with the fewest resources. Money has somehow managed to continue flowing to a few groups such as the Pentagon, the corporations and public officials, while the stream that had just barely begun flowing to the wageless has quickly dried up. The War on Poverty has ended, with poverty winning an impressive victory. Community programs are being dismantled, services cut or made more expensive, and welfare payments restricted and reduced. And all forms of income to unwaged workers, as well as waged ones, have been effectively reduced through sharp and steady increases in the prices of basic goods.

None of this can be attributed simply to government insensitivity or irrationality; it is a question of re-imposing control. The programs for developing the wageless, trotted out with so much fanfare 10 or 15 years ago, were clearly being used by their intended clients not to develop their job skills but to *develop struggle*. So new means of control had to be found. However important it was for purposes of division, the "carrot" of a place in the government bureaucracy or aid in small-time business ven-

tures proved effective with only a very small segment of the wageless; to reimpose discipline over the rest required the “stick,” above all the stick of economic repression.

This strategy is built on the fact that to be unwaged in this society means that unless supported by an individual wage earner, one is dependent on a combination of individual hustles and manipulation of government programs to stay alive. It means living on the very edge of economic disaster: the threat of even a small cut in the government money going to the community and the reality of a reduction in real incomes through inflation pose a serious threat to survival. Such cuts in payments and reductions in real income constitute an intensification of the work of staying alive, forcing a diversion of time and energy from political struggle to the struggle for sheer existence. The money shortage in all its forms is in effect a weapon of terror even more crucial for purposes of control than the police or the military.

The Expansion of Wagelessness

While attacks are being stepped up against the wageless, their numbers are being increased. Capital's need to contain struggle among both waged and unwaged workers had led it to bring greater numbers of Blacks and women into the waged workforce. Now, many of those women and Blacks are being pushed out of the factories and offices, drafted once again into the army of the unwaged. But this once-again growing army continues to demonstrate its inability to grasp the finer points of the fiscal theory which explains the necessity for their poverty. Demands for money from the government are growing once again, while all three levels of government insist they are broke. Our elected and appointed officials are willing, nevertheless, to give their analysis of who does have money, namely, those waged workers, powerful and highly paid, who, ungrateful for the privilege of having jobs, continue to win unreasonable wage increases not matched by productivity gains, thus causing inflation and stealing from business the money it needs to keep the economy running well. And so in a demonstration of the fairness which is its trademark, the government in trying to solve the crisis is not “asking” only the wageless to accept less money and more work, it is also asking the waged to settle for the same. This is government of all the people, and since struggles have circulated among all the people, it is interested in destroying the power of all the people, including the most powerful group of waged workers — white men.

Breaking our power has required another shortage involving

another form of terror — the shortage of jobs. At a time when the rise in wagelessness is often increasing the number of those depending on our wage, we are learning that not even a white skin and masculine gender guarantee the security of the source of the wage. The terror is not only of losing income, but of losing the power to fight for it. We don't need to take a tour of skid row to see the connection between our power as white men and access to the waged job. It is on the job that we have won more money, more time away from the job, and the possibility of leaving the job altogether (while retaining the wage) through early retirement and improved pensions. Even when we fought as students or drop-outs, we derived much of our strength from the knowledge that when necessary we could find jobs to supply the money that would enable us to fight even more. The fear of being laid off from the job is thus the fear of being laid off from a lever of power. At the same time, capital's principal lever for controlling us is exactly this fear, so it is now doing everything possible to increase it. White men are being given a taste of wagelessness, as unemployment, always high among Blacks and women, has risen to the highest level for us since the Great Depression. This has been possible because our power may be great enough to prevent capital from moving the wageless directly into our jobs at lower pay, but it is not yet great enough to prevent capital from moving the jobs to areas of the world where wagelessness is far greater and wages are far lower; nor have we been able to stop investments from flowing into capital-intensive industries such as oil and petrochemicals and low-wage-intensive industries in the service sector, while abandoning struggle-intensive industries such as auto.

Even our jobs as police are no longer secure. It has been discovered that it often wiser to have police of the same sex and color as those being controlled, so white men now face competition for police, social work, teaching and administrative posts. At the same time, universities have ceased to offer even the illusion of an automatic route to lucrative careers, as doors slam in the faces of graduating students and lock in the faces of drop-outs who now want to drop back in. And the word is that the doors will remain closed and locked indefinitely. According to the government, it will take years — if not decades — of high unemployment to end the inflationary pressure in the economy (a favorite code word for our struggles). It will take a permanently tight job market to reimpose discipline, to teach us the limits of our strength, to demonstrate that if we press too hard on the levers of power, the waged jobs that give us those levers will be taken away altogether. Capital is employing the strategy of using the club of job shortage to pound

home to white men a familiar message: if we don't want to lose everything we have gained, and if we don't want to be treated like Blacks or women, then we'd better demand less, work harder, stop fighting against the job — and start fighting to protect it from those with less power.

Power Outside of the Job

This is not a bad strategy, but it does have its dangers, dangers which have given birth to the current debate within capital. The problem is that we continue to fail to get the right message. There is concern that the lack of any certainty that further education and hard work will pay off is weakening rather than strengthening our waning will to work. Even worse, some of us appear to be adjusting to unemployment, losing our fear of it, and are often finding it preferable to the waged job (when we can afford the cut in income). In fact, newspaper stories on the strange phenomenon of some waged workers, usually young single men, not avoiding but seeking unemployment and its weekly benefits, have already appeared along with the stories of how welfare payments are making it increasingly difficult to fill many of the most disgusting and lowest paying jobs. It is therefore not surprising that, in addition to the cuts in welfare, some government officials (in particular, Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns) have proposed reducing and shortening unemployment benefits. From the point of view of capital this is certainly a reasonable suggestion. The problem, however, is not reason but power — the level of power reached by those thrown out of, or kept out of the waged job. And this is the source of capital's greatest concern, that that power will grow. White men may very well discover for themselves what has up to now been proven primarily by others — that power can be won outside of the waged job. If we are to be defeated, we have to be kept from building that power. If we are to win, we must both use it and increase it.

But first we have to understand it, and this has never been easy for us, who have always assumed that the road to power winds only through the waged job. Thus it has always been the case that when jobs have begun to disappear for white men, the first reaction has been to raise the demand for full employment. After some of the most explosive upheavals in recent history, we can now see that *there has always been full employment: the problem is that there has never been fully WAGED employment*. If we fail to understand this situation and the struggles of the wageless against it, it is because we have failed to understand the work done by the wageless — as well as our own wageless work — all of which

is essential to the production of this society's only essential commodity: profit. Their power, like ours, has come from refusing work: the more they have been able to refuse effectively, the more money they have gotten; and the more they've received, the more they've been able to refuse work.

The work of women, for example, is to produce and then prepare the next generation of workers, as well as to service and discipline the male waged worker daily. This is the work the welfare mother was not doing. She was not disciplining the male worker, who was often not even there taking responsibility for the upkeep of the children. The children, in turn, instead of being prepared to accept places in the lowest rungs of society, were learning to rebel and make trouble, committing violence in the schools and in the streets. From capital's point of view these families were not working, so it became necessary to give them more money. But welfare women responded by demanding even more money, thus laying the basis for all women to fight for wages for their work.

Wageless men also work. Their work demands that they be on call at all times to take jobs whenever additional cheap labor is needed and that they constantly search for such jobs, thus increasing competition among those without the wage and putting pressure on those with it to work harder. When it is impossible to find any paid job at all, it is the job of wageless men to be victims, to serve as warnings, to play the part dramatized so often in newspaper and television reports: despondent, miserable, grateful for whatever charity is offered but ashamed to receive it — and above all, accepting of this fate with quiet dignity. During the last 15 years, this work has been refused with a vengeance. The wageless have become angry, not ashamed; demanding, not begging; and above all, loud, not quiet. They have stopped looking for jobs and started looking for ways to be heard. They found them in past years in the forms of demonstrations, sit-ins, disruptions of meetings, blocking of traffic and destruction of cities. It was not easy — no fight is — but it got results. Money had begun to flow into those places where this refusal was greatest, such as New York.

The current attacks on these gains indicate the limits to this refusal, limits rooted in the same divisions which have weakened us all. The connections among all the work done in the social factory make possible the rapid circulation of struggles against work; the divisions created by the wage (and lack of it) tied to that work have made possible the circulation of defeat. This fundamental division between the wageless and the waged is the basis for the countless ways a common fight against capitalism is turned into a

constant fight among those who suffer from it. It is the basis for the separation of workers in "developed" countries from workers in "underdeveloped" countries, of the "skilled" from the "unskilled," of those on unemployment from those on welfare.

These divisions are also the foundation of the racism and sexism used to increase work by increasing conflict among workers. But there is more involved here than the old but very much alive story of divide and conquer. The different levels of power created by the wage provide capital with the leverage to move us where it wants. By developing or underdeveloping us, raising or lowering wages, creating or eliminating waged jobs, increasing or restricting welfare, extending or cutting unemployment benefits, they force us to dance whatever deathly dance is called for by this system's profit and control needs. Through the manipulation of wages and wagelessness, capital attempts to make us puppets who can be pulled by the strings that make us work from one government program to another; one job to another; one city, state or country to another; and one way of life to another. This power to interrupt our lives is also the power to interrupt our efforts to transform our lives. Begin to fight while on welfare and be forced to move into newly created jobs, either through the legal pressure of "workfare" programs or the pressure of economic necessity; begin to fight on the job and be laid off; begin to fight on unemployment and have the benefits run out, leaving no choice but welfare or whatever job can be found. As more and more white men are forced into this circuit by jobs that disappear and careers that are restructured, we discover what others have always known: the hustle may be an exhilarating dance, but as a way of life it is a debilitating drag.

The Total Wage

The demand for full employment is the demand to be frozen at one point of this circuit; it is not a demand for the power to smash the circuit. Our problem is not that we are not fully employed, but that we are not fully waged for all the work we do — whether we hold a waged job or not. We have won power on the job by fighting for more money and less work. If we are to increase that power, if we are to be the movers rather than the moved, we will have to fight for more money and less work off the job as well. Every victory in this fight reduces the constant pressure and anxiety that are the working conditions of the "unemployed"; every victory increases our ability to refuse the jobs prepared for us; every victory weakens capital's ability to mold our lives around its requirements, both on the job and off it. The fear of unemployment which keeps us in check on the job is the fear ultimately not

of losing work, but of losing the wage which supports us and our dependents and enables us to fight harder. Our work as well as our needs — including the need to fight — continues when we leave the factory or office. The fight for the wage must continue too. We have to be paid for all the work we do if we are to begin refusing all that work — the work in the factory and office, in the subways and on the road, on the streets and in the home. If we are to go beyond exchanging one form of misery for another, we will have to demand nothing less than a *total wage* for our total work in the social factory.

The demand for a total wage should not be confused with the current schemes now circulating for a guaranteed income or wage. That such plans have been put on the political agenda at all is, of course, a testimony to the threat posed by the growing numbers and power of the wageless. The content of these proposals, however, is testimony to the government's determination to meet that threat by creating yet another instrument of control and division. In the most detailed version and the one that has come closest to being enacted — the Daniel Moynihan plan formulated during the Nixon Administration — we were given a clear preview of how the government will try to use a guaranteed income to guarantee a stable and disciplined workforce. First of all, this not-so-guaranteed income was not to be called a wage — since that would imply that its recipients earned it — but was to be labelled “assistance to the family,” presented as a form of charity for the most “disadvantaged.” The amount of money was to be kept low, limited by the negative income tax form of the scheme; was to be distributed through the impersonal and seemingly apolitical mechanism of the Internal Revenue Service; and was arranged so that a family could rise above the official poverty line only by doing some waged work. The plan was clearly intended to push people into, rather than help them avoid, waged jobs — while providing even greater regulation of people than already instituted by previous Federal, state and local programs. Moreover, the bill for this “assistance to the disadvantaged” would be presented through the tax system to the “advantaged” — those with the higher-waged jobs. In this way, the waged, with white men in the vanguard, could be counted on — in the name of reducing taxes — to keep the guaranteed income low enough so that capital's supply and control of workers would not be impaired.

Clearly, if we are to avoid fighting for a more efficient way of being controlled or for a new program of pitting the poor “who don't work” against those who do, we will have to go beyond a demand for a guaranteed income. There is, after all, nothing

guaranteed in this society except work and the struggle against it. We have seen in the last several decades the connection between the advances we have made in that struggle and the advances made by those without the waged job. If that advance is not to be turned into a complete retreat, if we are ever to end the struggle by winning it, then this connection must be strengthened. It can be strengthened if we understand that the division between the wageless and the waged is not only a division between ourselves and others. It is a division in our own lives as well — a division between the work we do on the job and the work we do looking for that job, preparing for that job, going to that job and recovering from it. It is the division between the fight to escape the job and the fight to have something to which it is worth escaping. Neither fight can be won unless they are fought together. Our work can never be ended unless the totality of it is attacked. The beginning of that attack is the demand for a total wage.

Terrains of Struggle

This demand points to the terrain on which we must immediately fight. First we have to preserve and expand those parts of a total wage which we have already won but which are now under attack: unemployment insurance, social security, workman's compensation and welfare.

Unemployment insurance is in fact a wage from the government for the work of searching for a waged job. It is given on the condition that we will search diligently for that job and will not refuse any "reasonable" offer that is made. But we have used that wage to impose our own definition of what is reasonable, thus thwarting plans to push us into low-waged jobs and gaining breathing space so that we don't have to jump every time capital calls. This has reached the point where government officials are calling unemployment benefits a major cause of "unemployment" and are actively looking for possible ways to break down this "barrier to work." We must organize not only to stop such attacks, but to extend the duration of current payments, increase payment levels and eliminate restrictions. It is capital which plans and brings on this work of looking for new jobs; so it is capital which must pay. If we are frozen out of jobs, we must fight to be very expensive ice cubes. This is not only because we need as much money when we are without a waged job as when we have one, but because our ability to fight on the waged job depends greatly on reducing the fear of losing it.

Workmen's compensation is also in effect a wage, a wage for

recovering from some of the physical damage inflicted by the job. We are not paid this money so that we might prance in the sun in good health; we get it on the condition that we will return to our jobs as soon as we are well. But we have used this wage not only to pay the expenses of being "cured"; we have used it to practice our own preventive medicine by refusing for as long as possible renewed exposure to the source of the illness — the job. By expanding these payments and increasing the extent of coverage, we can both reduce the work of regaining our health and increase our ability to fight against the dangers of work. We can lessen our fear of reporting all injuries and illnesses and force our bosses to pay dearly for the harm done to us on a daily basis.

Social Security is billed as some sort of forced insurance, yet it is actually a wage for the work of the old. In this society that has been defined as the work of dying quickly and quietly — the hardest work of all. Increasingly, however, the old are refusing this work: they are not only living longer and retiring earlier, but they are organizing against the *death factories* (ironically called nursing homes) which they are driven into by the paucity of their wage. They are fighting their working conditions, refusing to wait patiently to die, refusing to be content with whatever tasks can be found to keep them busy. In growing numbers, they are rejecting "death with dignity" and are demanding the money needed to build a life with both dignity and pleasure. And by their fight they are encouraging younger workers to resist being pushed into the same conditions. The old are holding up for all to see the horror that awaits us when we finish our "productive" lives, showing us the reward we will receive for sacrificing our lives on the altar of work.

Old people are becoming unmanageable because they are both refusing their own work and are thereby subverting younger people's will to work — and for this they are being attacked. Inflation is allowed to cut drastically into what the government tells us is social security, while the professional planners devise new means of pushing the old smoothly towards death. We must all push back, by demanding greatly increased social security benefits, better pensions and large reductions in prices. It is crucial to see that the division between young and old is in fact just one more division in our own lives. All of us are getting older; all of us must refuse to die productively. Either we fight to reduce work and increase the real wages of the old, or we have no alternative but to reduce our own standard of living to take care of them, or force our children to work harder to take care of us.

Welfare is the wage paid to women for raising children to be obedient and productive workers. This work has been subverted

to the point where the government is now attempting to raise productivity by cutting these wages and increasing work in the family. One aspect of this is the plan to form a nationwide dragnet to track down "runaway" fathers and force them to once again take material responsibility for their families, thereby increasing the man's work both on the waged job and as policeman of the family. The aim here is not to reduce the woman's work, but to increase her dependence on a man and create more effective supervision of her work than is possible by the government. Men can respond to this by demanding that the government pay all women wages (or higher wages) for their housework — or else we must accept being locked even tighter into our work as "head of the house," as policeman, as breadwinner and face an endless battle with women in the home or in the courts.

By expanding these aspects of the total wage we both reduce our work off the waged job and strengthen our battle on it. But this can only be the beginning. We have to expand the total wage to other points of our work-life. We want to win back every moment of our lives, every minute of the 24-hour workday. Capital wants to use every inch of our being, wants to transform every corner of our life into work. We must respond by transforming every corner into a counter-attack.

For example, life is movement: in this society much of that movement becomes work. We spend hours each day traveling so that we can arrive on time to be used and used up on the job. Or we spend days, weeks and months relocating from one job to another. This travel is not designed for meditation or sightseeing; it is part of our work. Not only must we now refuse to pay for that work, we must demand to *be paid* for every minute of our lives consumed by it.

Similarly, life is play. But in this society play is re-creation, the re-creation of a more productive worker. We are given vacations and the weekend so that we can heal the wounds inflicted on the job, and just as we begin to feel like we can live for ourselves, Monday morning arrives or the vacation ends and the wounds are reopened. Capital skims off the cream of our energy. We want it back — in the form of shorter hours and longer vacations, along with the money it takes to use that time for ourselves.

Life is learning, as the moralists often intone. But our learning is made into work used to insure greater profits and a more "orderly" social system. We must demand to be paid for school-work, homework, apprentice work, training, — learning work wherever it takes place. It is senseless to bemoan the loss of creativity instead of fighting to make that creativity too expensive

for capital to use.

The Abolition of Work

It is not surprising that in struggling against work most of our energy has gone into combatting the waged job through demands for fewer hours, fewer years on the job (“Twenty and out”) and the higher wages to make both possible. The waged job not only takes forty, sixty or more hours of our lives each week, it dominates, twists and shapes the hours that remain. But though we have won power on the waged job, we are now experiencing the limits of that power — including the limits of our traditional form of organization based on the way we have been organized in the waged workforce — the union. In demanding the total wage we are not abandoning the fight on the waged job, but seeking a new strategy that can fully win that fight. Central to that strategy is the organization of a struggle not limited to the factory and instead based on the *social* factory. We have to organize our fight on the level of the social factory if our success in reducing work on the job is not to be met by an increase of work off the job. Even more importantly, only an organized *social* structure can smash the most effective weapon used against us — our fear of wagelessness, fear that chains us to our jobs and, when we lose the job, sends us frantically searching for another.

In winning wages for our total work — including that which has been hidden underneath the mask of our “personal” lives — we are reducing that fear. We are also directly confronting what has been planned for us: the plans to frighten us with the loss of the waged job and move us around so that they can break up the concentration of power we have established in factories, communities and elsewhere. We also directly attack the plans to increase our policework. Indeed, by demanding a total wage we begin to reinforce the power of the very people we are supposed to police. This is crucial because there is no doubt that as others continue to refuse their work, we will continue to be encouraged to fight that refusal or else take over some of their work. For example, as women refuse their unwaged housework, we are pushed to oppose them or pitch in and donate some free labor of our own in the home. Thus, it has recently been “discovered,” amid great publicity, that it is “healthy” for men to do more of the unwaged work of raising children and keeping house. Similarly, when public workers performing such jobs as street-cleaning begin to make themselves too expensive, it is discovered that the “community” benefits by organizing to do the work for free — under the banner of volunteerism. The point here is not to refuse helping others

to lighten their workload. The point is to help both others and ourselves by fighting to eliminate the agony of work rather than simply redistributing it.

It is in this way that we understand our relationship, as white men, to the struggles the wageless have launched in the kitchens, fields and ghettos of the world for more of the social wealth their labor has produced and not more of the pain inherent in "development." In particular, we see a connection between the demand for a total wage and the demand for wages for housework. In the beginning of this document we stated that the wages for housework perspective has made it possible for us to understand how wagelessness is used against everyone. But the connection does not end there, for the strategy of the total wage also has its roots in that perspective. This does not mean that our fight for a total wage is really a fight for wages for housework. That fight is, of necessity, primarily a fight of women, whose work in this society is essentially housework in all its dimensions. But in another sense, we men are indeed fighting for the same goal: *to be paid for all the work we do in order to refuse it all*. What distinguishes us from each other is not different aims, ultimately, but the different work and therefore the different lives that have been imposed on us. Because more of the life of women, as well as Blacks, Latins, Asians and others around the world, has been wageless, they have taken the lead in the fight against wagelessness. And because of the centrality of wagelessness in the imposition of all work, they have taken the lead in the fight against work itself.

In following that lead we will have to meet and attack one more tool of division. This is the tax system, which has long been used to blackmail us. Taxes are not only an instrument for separating the waged from the unwaged, but also waged industrial workers from waged government workers. Taxes are used to increase conflict over the distribution of the share of the social wealth going to all workers and thus divert us from the fight for the vast amount of wealth all our work has produced but which capital still controls. All of us are the creators of this wealth, regardless of the type of work we do, and whether or not we receive a wage for that work. The threat of higher taxes, then, is not an argument against the total wage, but an argument to see that such a wage represents a greater appropriation of the total wealth we create and not a reduction, through the magic of taxes, of what we now have. Higher taxes mean a cut in wages, so the fight to increase those wages must include the fight to decrease our taxes. We have to refuse to be put in the position of paying ourselves for work we are doing for capital.

Similarly, we have to fight against the system of indirect taxation called inflation. Indeed, one of the most effective ways to immediately increase our total wage will be to immediately begin decreasing our total expenses, through tax strikes, rent strikes, the reduction of prices through boycotts and, in the quickest and most effective anti-inflation action of all, the direct appropriation of what we need and want.

We will be told that the demand for a total wage is foolish and utopian, that there is no real possibility in this world of wiping out unwaged work, let alone all work. To this we reply that we are not blind; we can see what our work, waged and unwaged, has produced over the centuries. We are not interested in the creation of more make-work or in eliminating labor-saving technology in order to preserve the system which controls us by linking our share of the social wealth to the forced activity called work. We want to sever the tie between income and work altogether. For we see all around us the potential for a society, indeed a world, in which such forced activity no longer exists and we are free to choose how we will spend our days, based only on our own interests and desires. What prevents us from realizing this potential is nothing more than our lack of sufficient power. We believe that in fighting to win a total wage for our total work, we will be building that power and thus bringing closer the creation of a world in which there will be no wages at all — because human beings will no longer be commodities: a world in which we can stop struggling and start living.

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