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**WE
WANT
EVERYTHING**"

An Introduction to the

**INCOME
WITHOUT
WORK
COMMITTEE**

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I got chewed out by my foreman once. He said, "Mike, you're a good worker, but you have a bad attitude." My attitude is that I don't get excited about my job. I do my work but I don't say whoopee-doo. The day I get excited about my job is the day I go to a head shrinker. How are you gonna get excited when you're tired and want to sit down?... You're doing this manual work and you know that technology can do it. Let's face it, a machine can do the work of a man; otherwise they wouldn't have space probes. Why can we send a rocket ship that's unmanned and yet send a man in a steel mill to do a mule's work? Automation? Depends on how it's applied. It frightens me if it puts me out on the street. It doesn't frighten me if it shortens my work week...

... Why is it that the communists always say they're for the workingman, and as soon as they set up in a country, you got guys singing to tractors? They're singing about how they love the factory. That's where I couldn't buy communism. It's the intellectual's utopia, not mine. I cannot picture myself singing to a tractor. I just can't. Or singing to steel. Oh whoop-de-doo. I'm at the bonderizer, oh how I love this heavy steel. No thanks, never happen.

Mike Lefevre, steelworker, in Working by Studs Terkel

The solution to joblessness lies not in short-sighted make-work or share-the-work programs. These do nothing to increase productivity or curtail costs... For years, the motto

of organized labor was said to be the single word "More." It hasn't changed. But now we hear talk of "less" - not less wages, not less benefits, but less work, shorter workdays, shorter workweeks. This won't wash. Less work, not balanced by increased productivity, really means more cost.

Thomas A. Murphy, Chairman of the Board
of General Motors

This document is an introduction to a new political perspective which some people in the US and other countries have been developing. The writers of this document are a group of white, male militants in New York City working to publicize this perspective and organize around it.

Our political perspective is very practical; it is about money, work, and the power to transform our lives. Simply put, our aim is to organize the power to refuse the work which is imposed on all of us, and at the same time get the money necessary to live well in this society. This is not a notion or a vision which our group has created, for as we look at the situation in every country of the world today, we see the refusal of work and the demand for income occurring everywhere. The point of writing this statement is to acknowledge this phenomenon and state it openly and explicitly as the thrust of our political activity.

The power to refuse work and demand income did not magically appear. It emerged out of the previous struggles waged by our parents and grandparents earlier in this century. Their struggles - which were

fought not only for themselves but for us as well - were for secure income. They fought against the system in which every time they won improvements in their standard of living (and business profits consequently fell), they were thrown out of work and forced to face the threat of starvation for a while, so that wages could be lowered and they could be disciplined. This fight for security was largely successful, but government and business arranged it so that the success was kept in the confines of the usual deal: money for work. The struggle for a secure income was forced into being a struggle for a secure job, for "full employment."

During the generation in which so-called full employment was in effect, there was constant struggle as we sought to improve our living standard while those in power attempted to keep this improvement to a minimum and to always have it depend on us being more productive. Then we began to reject this arrangement and seek higher income not linked to increased work. The era of so-called full employment made it clear that an enormous amount of wealth was being produced and that the technological capacity of industry grew so great that the primary purpose of work was changing. More and more, work and the emphasis on productivity had become mainly means of controlling and disciplining us, keeping us working. Work had always been used to keep us in line, but the struggles of the past led to technological developments which began to make our labor less and less important for production, yet business and government continued to try to force us to work as much or even more than before. So it is now both politically and technically possible for us to struggle not for work (that is, for jobs) but against work: not to repeat the cycle of work-money-more work, but to break it.

The struggle against work is growing every day. Most people realize that a job is a form of slavery, and

work is always forced work by which virtually every aspect of our lives is directly or indirectly controlled. The struggle against this is a fight for time, the time to do the kinds of things we enjoy. It is often said that many people enjoy work, but what is usually the case is that people enjoy getting together in the shop or office to talk, smoke, flirt, etc. - not actually work. At any rate, the basic issue is not whether people like to work, but whether they have the opportunity not to do it, that is, the removal of forced work as the central activity of life.

On the job, the struggle against work is sometimes brought out into the open in the form of strikes, but much of the resistance is largely invisible, taking forms such as absenteeism, long breaks, sabotage, and "laziness." In addition, we must recognize the struggle which takes place concerning the work we do when we are not "on the job." We usually consider work as only that which we're paid to do: waged work. Yet what we have been realizing more and more - and what must be affirmed openly now - is that we all actually have a 24-hour workday. Our "free" time is actually just the time in which we do the work necessary to get us back to the job tomorrow. Because this work we do (along with the work done by housewives, students, etc.) has been unwaged, we have been told it is activity we do "for ourselves." But women especially have long known what this activity is all about, for they are the ones who have had to patch men back together so we could return to our jobs day after day. In fact, it is the very revolt of women against this work which has made the 24-hour workday more and more apparent to men, since we are forced to do the chores the women have rejected. So the blinders are coming off and we see that what we previously thought were our private affairs and problems - from how we travel to our jobs to shopping to housecleaning to the forced fun called re-creation - are all actually work imposed on

us.

Just as work does not end with the job, so the refusal of work and the demand for income do not end there. While we have seen the attempt to turn all of society into a factory, we have also seen how more and more sectors of this social factory have broken out in rebellion: women against their work of getting the rest of us to work; students against their work of looking for new work; and soldiers against their work of suppressing any rebellions against work.

In the US, the nature of this social factory has perhaps most clearly been illuminated by the struggles of Black and Latin people. These struggles - from the civil rights marches to the uprisings in the ghettos - have shown how those in power have attempted to regiment and exploit all of us, in the communities and in the streets as well as in the factories and offices. But more importantly, these struggles have demonstrated new forms of organization for resisting the intensification of work in the social factory.

At this point let us emphasize again that although we struggle against work, we have no desire to starve; on the contrary, we intend to live better and better. Is this a paradox, a contradiction, or wishful thinking? We don't think so. When one or two percent of the US population can produce much more than enough food for the entire country, and it actually costs only about ten cents to produce a barrel of oil, we begin to see the possibilities for creating an enormous amount of social wealth with a minimum of work. But what is technically feasible must be struggled for, since we live in a society which confronts us with the cycle of work-money-more work. Those in power try to discipline us and make us produce more so they can accumulate more profit - but the purpose of this profit seems to be the perpetuation of this system, that

is, keeping us working. The nature of this insane system of never-ending work has been made clear in the amazing technical advances since the Second World War. Not only has the length and the intensity of the work they try to force on us not decreased, but they want us to work even longer and harder than before. Any reductions of work which have occurred have been the result not of mechanization, but of our struggles.

Our struggles have indeed won us many gains in living standards and reduced work. As those in power have sought to impose more rigid control, we have fought back harder to break the link between money and work. Lack of money keeps us working against our will, and the more work we do the more money we need. Not only have we not yet destroyed this cycle, but it has generated conflicts and divisions among us.

The greatest division is between those who have the wage and those who don't. Those who are wageless have significantly less power than those who are waged. This is clearly seen in the case of women, whose unpaid work in the home makes them dependent on men. The division between the waged and the unwaged also arises when women, students, the unemployed, and those on welfare fight for higher income and those in power respond by trying to turn "real workers" against them.

Even among those of us who are waged there is a complicated hierarchy of divisions. If we look at them closely, most of the basic divisions which seem to be based on sex, race, nationality, etc. are actually wage divisions. The aim of business and government is to foster this by manipulating our income and thus limiting our power. Yet, though the wage is the key which makes the system turn, like all keys, it can be used to jam the lock as well as turn

it. This is exactly what many people have been doing in the campaigns for wages for housework, students, and the unemployed, and in the demands by waged workers, ~~work~~. In these battles we have been both winning immediate improvements in our living standards and building our power for the longer term struggle. This longer struggle goes beyond less work and more money in this society in which forced work of all kinds - both in and out of the traditional workplace - is abolished and income is guaranteed.

(a society centered on work. Our goal is a new society)

Yet there is no separation between our immediate struggle and the longer term one since the latter is simply an extension and intensification of what has already begun. The impact of the struggles already carried out is illustrated in the acute crisis we have generated for business and government in the US and throughout the world. This struggle for income not linked to work has been the common underlying thread tying together uprisings in the Detroit factories, the Harlem ghetto, the Russian collective farms, the Latin American countryside, the Vietnamese rice paddies, the Italian cities, and factories, homes, schools, and communities everywhere. The "economic crisis" we hear so much about is actually the crisis of business and government resulting from our gains in power.

The inflation, the unemployment, and the "fiscal crisis" of the present is their counter-offensive, their response to this growth in our power. They have raised prices sharply to undercut our wage gains. They have raised our taxes both for the same reason and in order to divide those of us who are unemployed and on welfare from those of us with waged jobs. They have cut back public services drastically and they have laid off massive numbers of us in an attempt to turn the struggle against work into a struggle for work (that is, for jobs), In ge-

neral, the strategy of their counter-offensive is to create a situation of scarcity and austerity for us in order to try to undercut our power and have us settle for less money and more work. The "money shortage" has been put in place next to the "oil shortage" and the "food shortage" in the arsenal of strategies used against us.

The counter-offensive has also included attempts to restructure those parts of the economy and society in which our power has grown the most. Thus the auto and construction sectors are depressed while oil and agriculture are expanded, since the former have been centers of intense struggle while the latter involve relatively little labor. In the same way, restrictions are being planned on welfare and unemployment payments and public employees have been put under attack. And in general, large numbers of workers are thrown out of their jobs and back into wagelessness in the home.

Yet the counter-offensive has not by any means destroyed our power. Wage struggles have not disappeared as they're supposed to in times of high unemployment, and many of the unemployed are doing everything possible to avoid going back to their jobs. Our organized strength has blunted the intended impact of the counter-offensive as both the waged and the presently wageless have stepped up demands for more income and less work. We are thus at a crucial point: those in power have felt the effect of our struggles and we are feeling the effects of their counter-offensive, but neither side has been defeated. The task for us now is to plan the next stage of our struggle.

In doing so we must not raise old demands - such as "jobs for all" - which are now counter-productive. Nor must we retreat from the confrontation into some mystical haven that will provide temporary peace at the price of po-

werlessness. We must press forward with even more directness the struggle against work and for more income.

Any organization which intends to be a part of this cannot stand above the struggle. We, the writers of this document, are not political missionaries "helping the working class carry out its historic mission." The struggle we are fighting is our own.

When we look around us we see the variety of organizations which different groups of people have formed to deal with specific struggles. We see the power which has emerged out of the autonomy of the different groups, power which comes from people expressing and fighting for their specific needs. Our task, as white males is to begin to define our needs and to develop a strategy for fighting for them. It is only on this basis that we can link our struggles with those of other groups.

We already know that our struggle includes reducing our workload, getting higher wages, and for those of us without waged jobs, improving unemployment payments and making welfare more accessible. Other areas of struggle involve the ways in which the income we do get is eroded through inflation, taxation, high rents, increased public transit fares, etc. We can do more than simply ask that these prices, taxes, rents, and fares be lowered. We can continue to organize our power to reduce these costs ourselves and even eliminate them (for example, through rent strikes and subway gate-crashing). In so doing, we go beyond the demand for more money and begin to undermine the exchange system itself, the system which keeps us from the things we need and want, while increasing our work.

What this means is that we want everything! Clearly this is unreasonable and utopian - from the point of view of business and government. For us it is just a question of

power. For what we are saying is in the most profound sense revolutionary. We are rejecting the austerity and the scarcity which are being imposed on us and we are fighting for the elimination of the system of forced work. We are striving for a society whose main principle is the minimization of labor, a society which would be the realization of what we believe to be the deepest desire of all working people: to cease being working people, to cease having life dominated by work.