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Introduction

This second essay on the history of the rise and fate of the Zerowork collective and its journal *Zerowork: Political Materials* picks up where the [first essay](#) left off, namely with the publication of the first issue. In what follows, I trace — as well as existing memories and records allow — how we distributed that first issue, the reactions of others to it, changes in the editorial board and the political engagements of the editors, beyond the collective itself. I also sketch the debates within the collective and some of the outside forces influencing those debates — especially the efforts of the leadership of the Wages for Housework Campaign to suborn the journal to its own line and needs. Those efforts resulted in a split in the collective resulting in three editors leaving the group before the publication of the second issue. This historical background is complemented by brief biographies of those who joined the collective in this period and contributed to the crafting of the second issue.

Distribution of *Zerowork #1*

Peter Linebaugh sent final proofs of *Zerowork #1* to the printers in early December 1975 and picked up 3,000 copies on December 31st. On January 6th, he wrote to Geoffrey Kay in London,

On the last day of 1975, *Zerowork* was born. Labor was longer than we thought it would be. We know its friends will understand. It is alive, well, and thrashing about asking "Who are my friends? How can they help me grow and be powerful?"

At that point, we began to make efforts to distribute the journal, to find new friends. As typical with such political interventions, we sent copies to friends to share with friends. We sought to distribute the journal through radical bookstores, to place ads announcing its existence and the cost of subscriptions in other radical publications. We peddled the journal and solicited subscriptions at various radical meetings. We sent copies to comrades who, we hoped, would write positive reviews to get the word out about its existence and contents and to start discussions. We also printed flyers, stacks of which we placed in bookstores that had the habit of making such things available; we handed them out at conferences, sent them to friends, etc.

Because we started where we all lived, our initial efforts were directed mainly at distribution in the US, Canada, Britain and Italy. Paolo Carpignano, George Caffentzis and Bill Cleaver were all living in New York — a place with

lots of bookstores and political activity – while Peter Linebaugh was in Rochester, New York. Initially, Bruno Ramirez and Peter Taylor were in Toronto, although Bruno moved to Montreal during the year.

Although one of our corresponding editors, John Merrington, was still in Britain, he was preoccupied with other things, so our primary correspondent at that time became Geoffrey Kay who had been in the Offord Road group with John and Peter Linebaugh. Kay saw opportunities for distributing the journal and soliciting subscriptions through two connections: first, there was the possibility of exchanging ads with Hillel Tickkin's *Critique*, a journal mostly devoted to the analysis of the Soviet Union and related systems, and second, through the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE). The CSE was an organization with a diverse membership of left-leaning economists. Although Kay saw possible interest in *Zerowork* limited by the history of sectarian Leftist influences (mostly British CP and Trotskyist) in that group, he did feel that there would likely be some interest among those then preoccupied with the "labor process question". They were drawing on work by Harry Braverman – an economist closely associated with *Monthly Review* – but also on Italian autonomists such as Raniero Panzieri and Mario Tronti.¹ Kay thought that among those concerned with that question, there was an opportunity for a fair hearing, but worried that some of the Italian analytical categories, such as the refusal of work and class composition, were already being fetishized and taken out of their political context, even in Potere Operaio. As it turned out, according to Robby Guttmann, *Zerowork* would find a sympathetic, or at least tolerant, reception among a wider audience within the CSE – one that included people preoccupied with other issues, such as John Holloway and Sol Picciotto who, at that time, were working primarily on the state.² Effectively, our comrades were successful at putting the labor process at center of the agenda at the 1976 CSE annual meeting, and getting Ferruccio Gambino invited as keynote speaker. In preparation for that meeting, the CSE published a collection of five articles on the labor process debate – three of which were translations of essays by Panzieri, Tronti and Bologna, essays that contained many of the ideas in *Zerowork*.³ At any rate, for a while the "London Zerowork Collective Group" was made up mainly of John Merrington, Christian Marazzi, Robby Guttmann and Geoffrey Kay.⁴

In the light of these efforts made within the CSE, it is perhaps worth noting that we made much less effort to get our ideas out to those in what was more or less the American counterpart of the CSE – the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE), a group that published (and still publishes) the *Review of Radical Political Economics*. This lack of enthusiasm for such an effort originated in our familiarity with the organization and the views of its adherents. There were a few Marxists, but mostly of the traditional sort – Trotskyists, Stalinists, Maoists or Althusserians. There were a few Marxologists, who worried about what Marx "really meant", and some Hegelian-Marxists, who worried about proving Althusser wrong. But most eschewed the label Marxist, preferring – as the name of the organization makes clear – that of "radical political economist." The "radical" suggested an adherence to some heterodox element in the history of economics.⁵ "Political economist", while evoking the classical economics of the 18th and 19th Century, signaled that those using these characterizations to describe themselves and their work, still considered themselves part of the economics profession.⁶ This was important for some – as their contributions to the RRPE made clear – because they wanted to engage mainstream economists in debate and carve out niches for themselves within the profession. Their agenda, on the whole, was to demonstrate to the mainstream

¹ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, New York; Monthly Review Press, 1974.

² One fruit of Holloway and Picciotto's work on the state would be published two years later: an edited collection of translated contributions to the "state derivation" debate in Germany, *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.

³ CSE, *The Labour Process & Class Strategies*, CSE Pamphlet no. 1, London: Stage 1, 1976.

⁴ In *Zerowork* #2, Merrington and Marazzi are listed as belonging to the Editorial Collective but Robby considered everyone in the London Group to be acting collectively in terms of both contributing to the journal's content and distributing it in England. Letter from Robby to Paolo, Phil, Peter etc., April 28, 1977.

⁵ There were several "heterodox" moments in the history of economics but probably the most important one in the United States in the 20th Century was "institutionalism" – a tradition that some trace back to Thorstein Veblen but most recognize to include such luminaries as Clarence Ayres, John Commons, Wesley Mitchell and John Kenneth Galbraith. Several economists in this tradition played important roles in the Roosevelt administration of the 1930s, helping to craft new institutions for new times. Those who do not simply draw on that tradition but style themselves institutionalists even have their own journal. A few economics departments – mostly in Midwestern and Plains states – were still, in the 1970s, dominated by economists with such views. The Department of Economics at the University of Texas at Austin was one such place. It was partly study with institutionalists that led students there to be curious about Marx, to fight for three years to get a Marxist hired and to finally succeed in getting a job offered to Harry Cleaver in the Spring of 1976.

⁶ The term "economics" replaced "political economics" around the turn of the Century, from the 19th to the 20th. Since the time of Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, the term political economy was commonly used – until the embrace of a calculus-based marginalist analysis and discomfort with the evolution of political conflicts around economic issues led to its abandonment and its replacement with "economics", understood as one of the "social sciences" in the United States and Britain and with "la science économique" in France.

that they had developed critiques revealing weaknesses and flaws in the latter's theories and had better theories to offer. This approach held out, among other things, the possibility of acceptance on the margins of the economics profession and even of tenure.⁷ Those of us in the Zerowork, however, had no interest in offering either critiques of mainstream economics or alternative theories that might help mainstream economists do their job better. This was why we held out little hope for a sympathetic hearing from most in URPE and made little effort in those circles.⁸

A second possible source of help with distribution in the UK was Falling Wall Press – the organization that was publishing most of Wages for Housework's materials. Kay had neither knowledge of nor contact with them, but of course, those women close to Zerowork, e.g., Silvia Federici, did. Although the Press was a help at first, that avenue of distribution was eventually closed off as a result of the subsequent split within the Zerowork Collective over its relationship to Wages for Housework.

From existing correspondence it appears that despite these efforts, both in North America and Britain, we had some success in getting the journal distributed – to radical bookstores, conferences, and prisoners (in both Federal and state institutions) – and in circulating the ideas through alternative radio programs, e.g., WBAI in NYC,⁹ but failed to create dependable networks of distribution and the number of copies of the first issue distributed remained limited to a little less than the initial press run of 3,000.

At the time *Zerowork* #1 became available our main contacts in Italy were Ferruccio Gambino, our Corresponding Editor in Padua, and Bruno Cartosio in Milan.¹⁰ Both undertook to distribute the first issue to like-minded comrades, organizations and publications, e.g., *Primo Maggio*, with which both Ferruccio and Bruno were collaborators. Christian Marazzi who would join *Zerowork* during the preparation of the second issue also participated in *Primo Maggio* – especially in its working group on money. At the same time, Ferruccio, in collaboration with the graphic artist Manfredo Massironi, who designed the cover to *Zerowork*, created a beautiful poster for **ZEROWORK** – in the same style as the cover of the journal – plastered across a background of 24 black & white photographs of various moments of struggle. Those posters became available to help get the word out about the journal in early 1977.

Ferruccio also put us in contact with Yann Moulier (later Moulier-Boutang) in Paris, one of the editors of the autonomist journal *Camarades*, to whom we promptly sent a copy of *Zerowork* hoping for further contact. Although we would indeed have further contact with Yann, and would receive some copies of *Camarades* in return, no substantial distribution in France developed from this contact.¹¹

Reactions to *Zerowork* #1

Considering that the objective of crafting the "political materials" making up the first issue of *Zerowork* was to influence current debate over the nature of the crisis, the general silence – dearth of formal, published reviews or articles taking up issues raised in the journal – from folks beyond our circles, in response to its limited distribution was disappointing. We found poor consolation in reminding each other that the initial reaction to the publication of Marx's *Capital* was similar. What limited feedback we did get was a mixture of negative and positive reactions.

Informally, negative reactions and objections varied – as one might expect – with the political positions of the objectors. From the traditional Left, probably the most common negative reaction derived from the long-standing

⁷ This was also true with a few who did call themselves Marxist, although many taught courses in "heterodox economics" or "political economy", titles that caused less worry among both mainstream colleagues and university administrators.

⁸ As the reader will discover below, we later decided that our failure to make greater efforts to engage many of those we initially judged to be beyond the pale was a major flaw in our whole project.

⁹ One such radio appearance was a debate between George Caffentzis and Murray Bookshin on WBAI (Pacifica Radio) in New York on January 28, 1976, 4-6pm. The debate centered on the how to respond to the imposition of austerity and cutbacks in social services. Bookshin argued that the crisis provided an opportunity for people in the city to develop modes of mutual aid. Caffentzis saw that as "[self] managing our poverty" and argued for fighting for the restoration of services.

¹⁰ Bruno was a professor of history at the Università degli studi di Milano whose research focused on the United States and included the history of the Johnson-Forest-Facing Reality groups. He would publish a collection of Martin Glaberman's writings *Classe operaia imperialismo e rivoluzione negli USA*, Torino: Musolini, 1976.

¹¹ Yann was, at that time, a student in Paris working on his doctorat d'état. He would go on to create and edit the autonomist journal *Babylone*, and later in collaboration with Toni Negri in Parisian exile, the journal *Futur Antérieur* and still later *Multitudes*.

tendency to juxtapose “bad” work under capitalism – exploitative, and for many alienating – with “good” work under socialism and communism – work without exploitation or alienation. To those inclined to such a perspective, the very term “zerowork” suggested a fatal failure to make that distinction. By not explicitly excluding “good” socialist work from the struggle for zero work we were accused of nihilistically embracing slacking and of a failure to understand the essence of human species-being as *homo faber*. Although how, as individuals, we answered that objection varied, one answer to the question “Are you talking about a rejection of working for capital or a rejection of working in any form?” was the following: “If you know about some other type of work [than for capital], tell me what it is. Is there any work that is not work for capital? . . . We need not enter a fantastical discussion of utopia, or “play”, or human activity in past societies, or future ones, in order to understand that there is no work but what the boss says.”¹² Many, including the person who raised the question quoted here, did not find this answer adequate, but it offered the beginning of a dialog – which we both sought and welcomed.

Closely related was distaste for the notion of attributing the crisis of the 1970s to the “struggle against work”. On the one hand, many traditional Marxists clung to one of the “crisis theories” debated since the Second International, e.g., the tendency of the rate of profit to fall or underconsumptionism.¹³ Neo-Marxists of the Monthly Review school similarly remained strongly attached to some variation of the Baran & Sweezy thesis that the source of crisis in monopoly capital can only be found in difficulties in “disposing of the surplus”.¹⁴ On the other hand, those inclined to distinguish between “bad” and “good” work – and to berate us for not recognizing it – had a similar inclination to differentiate between those who hated their work and those who reveled in it. The former were admitted to sometimes resist work, either informally through slacking or sabotage or formally in strikes for shorter working hours, but the work of the latter, it was often maintained, had enough elements of unalienated self-realization as to produce an attachment to work. Moreover, it was argued, neither slacking nor strikes had been pervasive enough to cause a crisis in the system. In response to the “consciousness” objection, we generally pointed out how it shifted the discussion back to the familiar, traditional terrain of “class consciousness”, whereas in *Zerowork* #1 we had identified various behaviors as “struggles against work” regardless of how they were consciously framed by the workers in question. Refusing to enter into what we felt was a stale and unproductive debate over “class consciousness”, we generally insisted that the real issue was how various struggles had undermined, and continued to undermine, the power of capital to impose work. In response to the second objection, we stood by the evidence presented in the journal of how struggles against work by both waged and unwaged workers had indeed precipitated crisis for capital.

At that time, the main “crisis theories” in circulation that even remotely resembled the analysis we put forth in *Zerowork* #1, were the “profit squeeze” theory held by some radical economists and that of the “fiscal crisis of the state” put forward by Jim O’Connor.¹⁵ The former could be found among members of the Union of Radical Political Economics. They recognized that working class struggles to raise wages had been successful enough to “squeeze” profits, i.e., lower them. They differed by failing to explore the struggle against work both at the point of production and in the sphere of reproduction. Similarly, while some, like James O’Connor, Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward pointed to the multiple struggles that forced state agencies to spend more and more money on social services and public employee wages and benefits, they too failed to explore the struggle against work among both those receiving services and those providing them.¹⁶

¹² Peter Linebaugh to Monty Neil, February 22, 1976. Peter’s answer to Monty’s question is actually much longer and more involved but the above quotation is typical of our frequent refusal to enter into the usual “fantastical” imagination about post-capitalist society.

¹³ See some examples from this period. Mario Cogoy, “The Fall of the Rate of Profit and the Theory of Accumulation, A Reply to Paul Sweezy,” *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists*, Winter 1973, pp.52-67. Geoff Hodgson, “The Theory of the Falling Rate of Profit,” *New Left Review*, 1974. Michael A. Lebowitz, “Marx’s Falling Rate of Profit: A Dialectical View,” *Canadian Journal of Economics* IX, (2), May 1976, pp. 232-254.

¹⁴ Paul Baran (1909-1964) and Paul Sweezy (1910-2004), *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966. Sweezy, Paul M. “On the Theory of Monopoly Capitalism,” *Monthly Review*, April 1972. Andre Gunder Frank, “World Crisis, Class Struggle and 1984,” in URPE, *Radical Perspectives on the Economic Crisis of Monopoly Capitalism*, (a reader), 1975.

¹⁵ See for example, Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe, *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profit Squeeze*, London: Penguin 1972. Andrew Glyn, “Notes on the Profit Squeeze,” *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists*, February 1975. Raford Boddy and James R. Crotty, “Class Conflict and Macro-Policy: The Political Business Cycle,” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, April 1975, pp. 1-19. Raford Boddy and James R. Crotty, “Wages, Profits and the Profit Squeeze,” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 8, No.2, Summer 1976, pp. 63-67. James O’Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, Transaction Publishers, 1973.

¹⁶ Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

Another, fairly common, negative reaction was to the broadening of our treatment of the working class to include unwaged workers such as housewives, students and peasants. In this we were, appropriately, blamed for making the same “mistake” as those in *Wages for Housework*, namely not recognizing that the only “true” working class was made up of *waged* workers who produced surplus value. Our rationale for this, offered in one form or another in response, is spelled out in the section “[Background: Genesis of Zerowork #1](#)” on this webpage.

We did, of course, get quick, sometimes critical, feedback from more immediate friends. Geoff Kay, for instance, initially objected strenuously to the assertion in the introduction that “these articles show how the struggle has obliterated any distinction between politics and economics, the distinction that in previous phases dominated conceptions of revolutionary organization.” “If no ‘distinctions’ exist,” he wrote, “then the most immediate struggle of the class becomes a struggle against the capitalist mode of production as such . . . I do not think that this is true concretely, but even if it were, it would take much more than an ‘abstract’ statement about the wage being a political as well as an economic instrument of class oppression to prove the point.” Later he would write a longer, more detailed letter laying out his critiques, a letter that we would publish in the second issue.

Besides critiques of particular aspects of the analysis in *Zerowork*, the journal was often critiqued for the style of writing – a critique that the editors took very much to heart as is clear in the following comments by Peter Linebaugh.

[Criticisms] have forced us to find that our allusiveness, the knowing tone that we occasionally indulged in, and the lapidary phrase might sometimes be a matter of abbreviation of positions we all understood and at other times merely a way of suggesting that we knew more than we did or of asking our readers to fill in the ellipsis (so to speak). The “Introduction”, “Notes on the International Crisis, the auto piece and some others all fell into this trap, a trap that led us to neglect our political responsibilities both to our readers and to our own collective development.”

Beyond immediate acquaintances of the editors, we did receive a few letters that contained friendly, thoughtful, and substantive critiques, of both content and form, one by Peter Rachleff – the essence of which he later elaborated in a review for *The Fifth Estate* – and another from the City University [of New York, (CUNY)] *Kapitaliststate* group.¹⁷

Rachleff's primary critique was of references to both capital-as-a-whole and the working class-as-a-whole having "strategies" in their struggles. In the case of capital, he argued in his letter that Marx's restriction of capitalist planning to the shop-floor – with capitalist production more generally subject to the "anarchy" of unplanned markets – remains largely true and that if we want to argue that it goes beyond that, we need to demonstrate it much more concretely. In his review, he states, "I fail to see how capital, via its agency the state, is capable of having a coherent 'strategy'." In both places, he refers the reader to councilist Paul Mattick's book on Marx and Keynes.¹⁸ In the case of the working class, he asked in his letter about the aims and processes through which a general strategy might be argued to be and suggested that given the diffuseness of struggles at best one might be able to identify a "*unifying thrust* to working class activity in the past decade." Yet even that would require "much more attention to be paid to the self-organization of these struggles" than we provided. Indeed, in his review he emphasized the need for addressing the "form" of workers' struggles. "How are these struggles carried out? The 'form' of self-organization bears a 'content' of its own . . .".

Had the authors of *Zerowork #1* given references to some of their important theoretical sources, Rachleff's objection to the notion of a capitalist "strategy" – beyond the factory – might have been formulated differently. His assessment of Marx's analysis of the "anarchy of production" might have taken into account works such as Raniero Panzieri's

¹⁷ Peter Rachleff had taken a B.A. in Sociology at Amherst College in 1973 and was at this time working on his Ph.D with David Montgomery at the University of Pittsburgh. He published *Marxism and Council Communism: The foundation for revolutionary theory for modern society*, Brooklyn: Revisionist Press, 1976. His review of *Zerowork* was published in *The Fifth Estate*, Whole No. 278, Volume 12, No. 2, November 1976, p. 7.

¹⁸ Paul Mattick, *Marx and Keynes: The Limits of the Mixed Economy*, Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969. Paul Mattick was the last important theorist of the Council Communist movement. See the brief discussion of the disconnect between the tradition treated here and Council Communism in the section "[Background: Genesis of Zerowork #1](#)".

analysis of how capitalist planning has expanded beyond the shop floor in response to working class struggle.¹⁹ Planning, of course, requires strategy. Similarly, his reference to Mattick's notions of the nature and limits of Keynesianism might have been different had we referenced Toni Negri's analysis of Keynes and capital's response to the class struggles of the Great Depression era.²⁰ Those analyses constituted basic points of reference for the contributors to *Zerowork*, yet remained unreferenced in any of the articles in the first issue.²¹ It would have been obvious that those analyses offered responses to Rachleff's initial objections and would, perhaps, have resulted in different suggestions on his part. Negri's analysis of Keynesianism as capitalist state planning in response to workers' struggles carried Panzieri's analysis to the level of the nation state. Montano's, and then later Marazzi's, analysis of Bretton Woods and the International Monetary Fund's management of fixed exchange rate regimes carried it to the global level.²²

With respect to Rachleff's demand for much closer investigation and analysis of exactly how workers organized themselves in the struggles highlighted in *Zerowork* #1, I think we mostly agreed. Had we responded directly to his letter, and later his review, this issue would certainly have been taken up. One aspect of this that he emphasized in his review – the relationship between rank & file workers and union bureaucrats – was certainly underspecified in *Zerowork*. Our emphasis, of course, was on the emergence of antagonism and overt conflict between the two, but unlike, say, the earlier work of Paul Singer, Marty Glaberman or James Boggs, there was no close examination of the dynamics of self-organization and opposition. Unfortunately, the same absence of analysis of exactly how those concrete struggles that we judged important were organized existed throughout not only *Zerowork* #1 but *Zerowork* #2 as well. It's not that we didn't think such analysis was important, on the contrary, we just chose, at that point in our work, when many other Marxists were talking about the "laws of capitalist development" to focus on what we felt was "the big picture": the power of our struggles to throw capital into crisis.

The clarity of our discussion of the relationship between workers' struggles and crisis was apparently not sufficient to avoid confusion on Rachleff's part about our analysis. Twice in his review he characterizes our argument as saying that workers "struggled to reduce the rate of profit". But we were only saying that their struggles for higher wages and benefits coupled with their struggles against work had, *as one result*, the effect of reducing profits. We were saying that the crisis those struggles imposed was far more than what some, at that time, called a "profit-squeeze"; it was a rupture of the power of capital to impose work – its fundamental vehicle of social organization and control – in sector after sector of society. So too did we leave room for confusion over capital's response to that crisis of control. Rachleff wrote that he could not visualize "the possibility (let alone the reality) of the bourgeoisie uniting to cause a crisis". But what we were arguing was not that capital itself had caused the crisis it faced, but rather that capitalist policy makers responded with policies designed to turn the crisis back on the out-of-control workers who had ruptured their previous plans, e.g. the imposition of a planned Keynesian downturn in 1970 designed to marginally raise unemployment and slow wage growth that had been outstripping that of productivity since 1965. Or, when such Keynesian policies failed, shifting from the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate regime that required such policies to work, to flexible exchange rates that did not.

While the CUNY Kapitaliststate group was supportive of several aspects of our analysis, its critique, as one might imagine from its name and the title of its journal, mainly lamented the dearth of theorizing in *Zerowork* #1 about the nature of the state.²³ Lauding our approach as a "an affirmative, constructive, methodology", it agreed with the emphasis on working class struggle as a determining factor in capitalist crisis, the broadening of the category of

¹⁹ Panzieri's "Plusvalore e pianificazione: Appunti di lettura del Capitale," originally published in *Quaderni rossi* 4, 1964 [?] had been translated into English as "Surplus value and planning: notes on the reading of *Capital*," and included in *The Labour Process & Class Strategies*, published by the CSE a year earlier, in 1976.

²⁰ Negri's "John M. Keynes e la teoria capitalistica dello stato nel '29", was originally published in *Contropiano* in 1968 and republished in *Operai e stato* in 1972 – a book that Bruno Ramirez had reviewed for *Telos* in 1972 and which had been a prime point of reference for Mario Montano in the essay on "Theses on the Mass Worker and Capital" that he wrote with Silvia Federici that same year for *Radical America*. Bruno's review of *Operai e stato* appeared in *Telos*, No. 13, Fall 1972, pp. 140-147. Mario and Silvia's "Theses" appeared in *Radical America*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May-June 1972, pp. 3-21, under the pseudonym "Guido Baldi".

²¹ Unfortunately, this failure to reference materials that would have clarified our reasoning would also be true of the second issue of *Zerowork* – and typical of our failure to clearly identify theoretical work upon which we had drawn.

²² Of course, had we been familiar with the much earlier work by C. L. R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya we might have referred Peter Rachleff all the way back to their writings on state capitalism. (See the discussion in the section on "[Background: the Genesis of Zerowork #1](#)" on this webpage.)

²³ The first issue of the journal *Kapitalistate: Working Papers on the Capitalist State* appeared in 1973. The eleventh and last (I think) was published in 1983.

working class to include the unwaged. Its characterization of the former was one we heard from several quarters, "Zerowork corrects the tendency to overestimate the power of capital and underestimate the potential of labor . . ." At the same time, they also recognized how Zerowork saw "capital as essentially reactive to labor as a class". Its characterization of the latter involved a reformulation.

The proletariat is, then, not wage labor but the society of social labor – those who are and who are not employed, those who are and who are not wage earners or potentially wage earners but are nevertheless an identifiable part (no doubt through the mediation of the "state") of socialized labor power – the society of socialized production. . . . the wage laborer is . . . but one element of the society of real producers that includes houseworkers, welfare recipients, even consumers of necessities in general.

Their critique identified other problems that they perceived with our analysis, some of which we agreed with, e.g., the need for much greater specification of certain relationships, some of which struck us as odd. One oddity was the charge that the analysis in Zerowork adopted "an archaic and mechanistic view of the capitalist enterprise which tends to portray capital as overly particularized and therefore as directly reactive to overly-particularized labor conflicts." In the only response to this criticism that I have been able to find, Peter Linebaugh expressed how surprised we were at the charge, "that our portrayal of capital is 'overly particularized'", that, he wrote, "I cannot understand". He went on,

Usually ZW1 has been criticized for the opposite, namely that in speaking as we often do of capital's 'plan' we attribute far greater unity and direction than in fact exists. Usually this comes from hide-bound Marxists of the Trot and CP variety. I think that it is very important for our future work to learn what you mean when you say our view is archaic and mechanistic."²⁴

Another critique, that we also found odd, was the claim that Zerowork failed "to undertake a serious discussion of subjectivity independently of individual psychology (consciousness as attitudes of individuals, etc.)", that we so reduced "the problem of subjectivity to the problem of the relationship between what people think and what they do" as to "to flirt uncritically with the categories of bourgeois psychology and an empiricism that breeds endless speculation". To this, Linebaugh also articulated what I think was our general response.

Your second main criticism of ZW1 was its failure to undertake a serious discussion of "subjectivity". And you say that we hold an implicit theory of consciousness which is essentially psychological. Perhaps there are differences of terminology and tradition, for I fail to see how our "theory of consciousness" (I can't believe that we have one!) is psychological or anything else. . . . perhaps the problem that you pose as problems of "consciousness", we pose as problems of organization."²⁵

Whether the problem in this precise case was terminological is questionable, but there were certainly multiple problems of terminology. The Kapitalistate folks were working and writing within the context of a considerable, ongoing debate over the nature of the state in modern capitalism. Their journal *Kapitalistate* was only one space of that debate that was much more far-flung.²⁶ How the orientation of that whole debate differed from Zerowork's can be seen in the opening sentence of John Holloway and Sol Picciotto's introduction to their 1978 collection of

²⁴ Peter Linebaugh to the City University Kapitalistate Collective, September 1977. Given that several members of that Collective later participated in regular discussions with Zerowork folks in New York City, they perhaps explained themselves more clearly. Unfortunately, I was, by that time, in Austin and have seen no record of such discussions.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Other loci of concentrated debate over the nature of the state could be found in England (around the CSE), France and Germany. See some examples, in English, from the period being discussed here. Nicos Poulantzis, "The problem of the capitalist state", *New Left Review*, No. 58, 1969, pp. 67-78, reprinted in Robin Blackburn, *Ideology in Social Sciences: Readings in Critical Social Theory*, London: Fontana Press, 1972. Ralph Milliband, *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power*, 1969. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971. John Holloway and Sol Picciotto (eds), *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate*, London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1978, that includes several English translations from the debate in Germany. Bob Jessup, "Recent Theories of the Capitalist State," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 353-73, reprinted as chapter 1 in Bob Jessup, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990. Simon Clarke, "Marxism, Sociology and Poulantzis's Theory of the State", originally published in the CSE journal *Capital and Class*, No. 2, 1977 and reprinted in Simon Clarke (ed), *The State Debate*, London: MacMillan, 1991 that includes an assortment of contributions to the debate, including one from *Kapitalistate*. For a later overview, that includes the work of the French regulationists and the American "social structures of accumulation" theorists, see Clyde W. Barlow, *Critical Theories of the State: Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Post-Marxist*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

contributions to that debate: "The present crisis of capitalism appears, more than ever before, as a crisis of the state."²⁷ For us, that crisis "appeared" more than ever before as *a crisis of the class relation*. Rachleff raised other points, but those were, I think, the main ones.

Eventually, Rachleff's critique, excerpted from one of his letters, was printed in *Zerowork #2*, alongside the letter from Geoff Kay. Why the Kapitalistate Collective's letter, was not included, I don't remember. [In a Sept 9, 1976, letter Peter L. mentions "a short review that *Liberation* did of *Zerowork*".] In all cases, our failure to respond *in print* to these missives and their critiques was emblematic of a more general failure to engage in public debate, even with those sympathetic to our project.

Nevertheless, as one might imagine, these critiques – along with our own internal evaluations – became the subject of considerable discussion within the editorial Collective, as we reconsidered the content and form of *Zerowork #2*. What we judged to be the most appropriate, and feasible, content for the next issue evolved considerably as a result of turnover in the composition of the Collective.

The Editorial Board: Departures and Arrivals

During this period, roughly from January 1976 to September 1977, there was considerable turnover in the composition of the editorial group of the *Zerowork* collective. By the end of this period four of the original editors remained active (Paolo Carpignano, Peter Linebaugh, Bruno Ramirez and John Merrington), four dropped out (George Caffentzis, Bill Cleaver, Mario Montano and Ferruccio Gambino), while four new people joined (Harry Cleaver, Philip Mattera, Christian Marazzi and Bruno Cartosio). There are three identifiable moments of this turnover.

First, early in 1976, two of the original editors – Bill Cleaver and Mario Mantano – bowed out of further direct work on the journal. Bill dropped out for two reasons. First, because the time and energy demands of his struggles against his union's bureaucracy proved more pressing than the primarily theoretical debates that preoccupied other members of the *Zerowork* Collective. And second, because neither those struggles, nor a follow-up piece on miners' struggles that he wrote with a friend in West Virginia interested the other editors. In short, he was frustrated with the failure of the collective to follow up on its own insistence in *Zerowork #1* on the need to identify appropriate organizational solutions for the working class in the current period.²⁸ In Mario's case, his own shifting preoccupations – from politics to spirituality – led him to leave his teaching in the U.S. and his work on *Zerowork* to join an ashram in India.

Second, Harry Cleaver (Bill's brother), Phil Mattera, Christian Marazzi and Bruno Cartosio joined the collective. Harry joined as a contributing editor after finishing both his Ph.D. dissertation and the first draft of what would become his book *Reading Capital Politically*. He would prepare a long essay on the international food crisis for the second issue. Phil Mattera also joined as a contributing editor – he would write two articles for the second issue, one – with his companion Donna Demac – on the fiscal crisis of New York City and one on socialist Vietnam. Christian Marazzi, a friend of Paolo's, had been working on a book on money with John Merrington in London and would contribute an essay on the "crisis of the money form" and the new use of flexible exchange rates against the working class. Bruno Cartosio was a comrade of Ferruccio's and an historian who was editing an Italian collection of Marty Glaberman's writings. He would replace Ferruccio as our Corresponding Editor in Italy.

Third, George Caffentzis and Peter Taylor separated themselves from the rest of us in the midst of a failed attempt to take over the journal and subordinate it to the Wages for Housework movement. (see below) Ferruccio Gambino also soon withdrew from the collective, as he too was caught up in conflicts involving Wages for Housework folks in Padua.

²⁷ Holloway and Picciotto, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁸ In this, his frustration found an echo in the responses of some Italian comrades to the first issue. In a letter from Bruno Cartosio – one of those actively circulating *Zerowork* in Italy – can be found the following feedback, "Many of them raised a question . . . about the organizational perspectives that are to be attached to the analysis and theoretical framework characterizing ZW. It is a curious fact: a practical rejection of [traditional forms of] organization and a theoretical need for organizational perspectives do co-exist at the same time in the same comrades." Bruno to Peter Linebaugh, June 5, 1976.

New Issues and Debates

Generally speaking, our agenda for work on *Zerowork* #2 was two-fold. First, we wanted to extend the analysis of the crisis to aspects beyond those that had been the focus of the first issue. Second, we wanted to continue discussion of various theoretical and political issues, both those raised during and after the production of the first issue and others raised by drafts of articles for the second issue. Changes in the contents – and the form – of the second issue had been discussed sporadically during the production of the first but their determination became more immediately pressing in early 1976.

In terms of content, at first the focus was to have been on “the problem of imperialism”. That “problem” concerned both the phenomenon and the concepts that Marxists have used to analyze it. Since the time of Hobson, Lenin and Bukharin, imperialism was understood by most to involve the efforts by nation-based capitalists – backed up by their governments – to develop export markets, new sources of raw materials and outlets for investment capital.²⁹ Such efforts were seen to have led not only to the colonization of much of the world but to wars between competing blocs of capitalist nation-states. Such was a common Marxist explanation for World Wars I and II. Complicating this analysis/narrative after WWII was the phenomenon of the Cold War. How the conflicts that emerged within that framework were interpreted depended, in large part, on one’s understanding of the nature of the Soviet Union.³⁰ Widespread decolonization during the same period – largely the result of independence movements, or wars of “national liberation” – further complicated how one understood imperialism. Not only did these complications lead to debates among Marxists, but they also led to other efforts to grasp the forces at play. “Dependency theorists”, e.g., Andre Gunder Frank, and world-system theorists, e.g., Emmanuel Wallerstein, challenged traditional Marxist narratives with new ones of an interlocked global capitalism, but one organized hierarchically with centers and peripheries and transformed through processes of both development and underdevelopment.³¹ For those of us in the Zerowork Collective, all of these narratives had one outstanding problem: their failure to grasp working class struggle as a fundamental pressure driving foreign capitalist adventures. In theory after theory the working class appeared only as a victim of forces far beyond its ability to influence.³²

Because Geoff Kay had published a book on the subject – *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis* – the members of the Zerowork Collective undertook to read his manuscript in early 1976 and considered including certain sections of it in the next issue.³³ Eventually, however, we decided *not* to include those sections. In this same general vein, however, we did decide to include an essay by Ferruccio Gambino on “Class Composition and U.S. Direct Investment Abroad” that was very much about the class dynamics of imperialism.³⁴ Although, due to the conflicts surrounding the relationship between Zerowork and Wages for Housework, Ferruccio would withdraw this piece, and it would not appear in the second issue, today, years later, a polished version is available on this website.³⁵

²⁹ It was John A. Hobson’s book *Imperialism* (1902) that Lenin and Bukharin both reworked using Marxist concepts. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (1916). Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (1915, 1917).

³⁰ The Soviet and the American governments and their ideologists, of course, (as well as many others) portrayed the Cold War as an epic battle between socialism and capitalism. Trotskyists, although they collectively interpreted Stalinism as a betrayal of socialism, came in 57 varieties with 57 different interpretations – including seeing the Soviet Union as state capitalist, as in the cases of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, Facing Reality and News & Letters whose analyses (discussed in “Genesis of Zerowork #1”) were more or less shared by those in the Zerowork Collective.

³¹ The term “dependency” denoted the view that within an interlocked global capitalist system, some peripheral areas, countries and peoples were dependent on others more central to that system. Those in the periphery were also often seen to be subject to underdevelopment – understood as what happens when capital disinvests in one previously developed area in favor of more profitable investment elsewhere.

³² This was even true in those Marxist critiques of dependency and world system theory that took its authors to task for focusing too much on international trade while neglecting to either recognize or analyze differences in the sphere of production. Their own focus on production tended to accept some variation on Althusser’s mode of production analysis that, in his main writings and in those of a great many of his followers, failed to recognize how the dynamics of capitalist accumulation is driven and shaped not only by capitalist efforts but also by workers’ struggles.

³³ Geoffrey Kay, *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis*, London: Macmillan, 1975. Geoff had already submitted two other essays to the Collective, one on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and one on abstract labor. These were deemed interesting but unsuited to the intended contents of the second issue. His essay on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall would be published later that year as “The falling rate of profit, unemployment and crisis”, in *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, vol. 6, Issue 1, 1976, pp. 55-75.

³⁴ From a letter from Ferruccio to Peter L, August 8, 1975. The original translator of his article from Italian to English was Julian Bees.

³⁵ Its availability is emblematic of the more general phenomenon that within a relatively short time following the split in *Zerowork* (detailed below) those editors who had gone their separate ways once again collaborated, and continue to do so today.

Despite the original intention to focus the second issue on “imperialism”, those who have already read *Zerowork #2*, or who skim the contents on this webpage, will be struck by the absence of anything like a systematic treatment of the subject. Instead, such examination reveals two sorts of articles, either ones focusing on local class conflicts, e.g., the essay on the New York City fiscal crisis and the one on post-war Vietnam, or ones dealing with class conflict on a global level, i.e., the essay on food and famine and the one on international monetary crisis. In both our thinking and our writing, we sought, increasingly, to grasp the crisis not only in class terms but at the level of the world as a whole. On the one hand, the overtly “global” articles situated local conflicts within the larger framework. On the other, the “local” articles also examined specific struggles within that same larger framework. This would become even more obvious in the years following the dissolution of *Zerowork* as its one-time editors deepened and enlarged the analysis.³⁶ In short, we were trying to overcome the deficiency of previous theories by grasping the whole in terms of an analysis of class struggle that centered those of workers, and thus the crisis in accumulation of the early 1970s as a rupture brought on by a cycle of workers’ struggles.

The articles we chose were, thus, selected as moments of a larger effort to grasp the complex evolution of a global crisis in class relations.

By 1976, six distinct moments of global crisis had made headlines and were widely recognized as such. 1) In 1971, Nixon ended the Bretton Woods agreements for the management of the post WWII international monetary system. 2) In 1972, international food crises emerged with soaring prices and famine in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. 3) In 1973-74, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) unleashed the first "oil shock" by quadrupling its sales price of crude oil. 4) In 1974-75, the world economy underwent an unusual "great recession" of rising unemployment but also of rising prices. 5) In 1975, a fiscal crisis was imposed on New York City by multinational banks refusing to roll over the city's debt. 6) Also in 1975, the American war effort in Vietnam collapsed and its precipitous withdrawal left the Vietnamese communist party in charge of the country. What we thought we could contribute to understanding the first five of these events was to demonstrate how they were not just spontaneous byproducts of "capitalist crisis" but were, rather, calculated responses by capitalist policy-makers to struggles that had ruptured their previous plans. What interested us about the sixth event were indications that the communist party's first steps in "building socialism" looked like one more example of "state capitalism" in action.

In the case of the crisis of the international monetary system, we judged that move to be a direct response to workers having undermined the ability of Keynesian policies to manage the "adjustment" of national balances of class power necessary to the maintenance of fixed rates. This was already discussed in Mario Montano's article in *Zerowork #1*. By 1976, however, new, flexible exchange rates among major currencies provided new weapons to attack real wages and workers' power. Christian Marazzi elaborated this analysis in his essay "Money in the World Crisis: The New Basis of Capitalist Power".

Similarly, the international food crises in 1972, we saw to have been engineered by government policies both within food exporting countries, especially the United States, and within those countries where famine was spreading. The policies that restricted supply and drove up prices, often elaborated in secret, we judged to be responses to declining trade balances brought on by accelerating inflation (caused by workers forcing wages and benefits up faster than productivity). Where famine was spreading, we saw governments using starvation to bring local, uncooperative populations to heel. Juxtaposing these events to earlier capitalist development strategies, Harry Cleaver drew connections and parallels between policies being enacted in the North and those in the South, between those in the West and those in the East, in his contribution "Food, Famine and International Crisis".

The first "oil shock", i.e., the quadrupling of oil prices, was clearly engineered by OPEC. While it began as retribution against countries supporting Israel in the 1973 "Yom Kippur War", it continued in a desperate effort to reverse a decade-long decline in terms of trade and to gain the resources necessary to deal with workers' struggles at home. Moreover, despite the resistance of some European governments, the acceptance by US policy makers of this

³⁶ This would be obvious in Harry Cleaver's article on the international debt crisis that identified the NYC bank and local government strategy of using debt against working class struggle as the model and proving ground for the strategies deployed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank against workers in the global South. (Minor variations on this strategy have since been deployed against the workers of post-communist Eastern Europe and more recently still against those in Greece, Spain, Portugal, the US and the rest of the global North. It would also be obvious in the early work of Midnight Notes that focused on energy crises – a topic much discussed within the *Zerowork* collective but barely touched upon in the articles in *Zerowork #1* and *#2*. See: "[Close the IMF, Abolish Debt and End Development: a Class Analysis of the International Debt Crisis](#)," 1989 *Capital & Class* No. 39, Winter 1989. On Midnight Notes on energy crises see below.

huge price hike was motivated by the desire to use it to undermine real wages and transfer value from labor to capital. As this analysis was already spelled out in Mario Montano's "Notes on the International Crisis" in *Zerowork* #1, no special article in *Zerowork* #2 was devoted to these events. The analysis would, however, eventually be elaborated in great detail and with considerable imagination by the Midnight Notes Collective – formed by George Caffentzis and friends after his split from *Zerowork*.³⁷

The "great recession" of 1974-75, we interpreted not merely as another, predictable cyclical downturn or as the inevitable spontaneous consequence of the "oil shock", but as the intentional use of high unemployment to undermine workers' abilities to raise wages and benefits faster than productivity gains. The failure of that strategy, signaled by the continuation of wage growth led first to discussions among economists of "stagflation" – a term coined in the mid-1960s by an English politician denoting simultaneous high unemployment and continuing inflation – and then to the International Monetary Fund declaring inflation (read: rising wages) to be the number one global economic problem.³⁸ As Mario pointed out, the problem of inflation was really a problem with working class power to force up wages, benefits and social services. The failure of the attempt to use OPEC prices increases and higher unemployment to undermine average real wages and transfer value to profits would not be overcome by capital until the end of the 1970s, when Jimmy Carter would bring in Paul Volcker to so restrict growth in the money supply as to precipitate a global depression and dramatically higher unemployment.

As spelled out in Demac and Mattera's article on the subject, the "fiscal crisis" of New York City was really a crisis of class relations in the city because the struggles of both waged (mainly city employees) and unwaged workers (mainly those on welfare). Those struggles were behind the rise in city expenditures and the decline in tax revenues (as a deteriorating "business climate" led dozens of firms to move elsewhere). The immediate action that precipitated the crisis – the refusal of creditor banks to "roll over" the city's debt – amounted to a capitalist demand for the restoration of control by city government. This was manifest in the conditions placed on debt roll-over: austerity through the cutting of waged employee benefits and reductions in welfare expenditures.

As the above summary illustrates, whereas the articles in the first issue had concentrated on workers' struggles and how they had undermined the post-WWII Keynesian era and thrown the global capitalist system into crisis, those aspects of the crisis addressed in the second issue dealt, primarily, with capital's responses, albeit interpreting them in terms of the struggles that had forced their deployment.

This was true, even in the case of the article by Phil Mattera dealing with Vietnam. Among those of us outside of Vietnam who had opposed the war, few differentiated between the armed forces fighting the US military and the people of that country. When the war ended, we argued that the distinction had to be addressed. As the post-1975 era began to unfold, we saw the new communist government seeking to impose discipline and peddle cheap labor to multinational corporate investors – a "development" strategy familiar in other East Asian (South Korea, Taiwan) and Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines).

In terms of the *form* of *Zerowork* #2, once again there was discussion about including shorter texts and images rather than just long, detailed articles. Although we did find and include a variety of illustrations that complemented and broke up the main texts in a satisfying manner, we did not follow up many ideas about alternative types of material. Perhaps the most amusing suggestion came from Geoff Kay who wrote, "How about a children's section in ZW – Tales from the Third and Fourth Internationals?" Born, undoubtedly amidst the sectarian infighting in England, and around the CSE in particular, his suggestion included a variety of "tales". After sketching the goings on in and around the International Socialists, and giving them due consideration, however, he mused, "The political theory of organization assumed here is perhaps not fit for children." Apparently, we agreed with him for no such section was

³⁷ The main Midnight Notes publication dealing with the oil crisis was *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War 1973-1992*, New York: Autonomedia, 2001, but also see various other of the articles collected on its [website](#). The most striking and theoretically innovative article in that collection – which includes 5 of the 7 articles in *Zerowork* #1 – is George's "Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse". Whereas Mario's analysis is limited to the capitalist use of energy against labor, George uses one formulation of the second law of thermodynamics to examine the growing problem for capital of sorting workers more willing to work from those more inclined to struggle against work in its attempt to restructure and regain control over the working class.

³⁸ An effective capitalist response would not be found until the end of the decade when President Jimmy Carter appointed Paul Volcker to the Chairmanship of the FED and he would, in turn, impose high interest rates, precipitating a global depression that would dramatically eclipse the earlier "great recession" of the mid-1970s. Retained by in-coming president Ronald Reagan, Volcker and his policies, coupled with the new administration's attacks on unions finally achieved falling wages and reduced inflation but only via a global depression and the international debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, during which the methods used against the people of New York City were wielded world-wide.

ever created, nor indeed thereafter considered, not for *Zerowork* #2, nor for *Zerowork* #3. This was characteristic of the lack of interest of any of the editors in engaging in debate with traditional Left groups.³⁹ It also, however, reopened the never-quite-satisfactorily-answered question, “with exactly whom did the journal want to engage?” In rereading notes and letters, the closest approximation I have found is something like “those who find the traditional Left unattractive and are looking for something new.” That was, obviously, pretty vague and made the search for “new friends” difficult.

All of the discussion and debate within the collective took place via snail-mail (which has the advantage of leaving a hard-copy record) and face to face meetings (which, for all its other advantages, has the disadvantage of leaving but a few notes).⁴⁰ Most of the latter took place locally although at least one trans-oceanic meeting was arranged in July of 1976 where two editors from North America met in London with those from Britain and Italy.

While drafting essays on the above conflicts, and discussing them among ourselves, several of us – in the Struggle Against Work Collectives (SAWC) in New York City and Toronto – continued to be involved in organizing local actions and in discussing the implications for our own activities of the Wages for Housework Campaign.

Associated Political Activities in New York City

In New York, our discussions about the city's fiscal crisis built on the historical analysis already laid out in *Zerowork* #1 and focused on struggles within the city of the unwaged (e.g., welfare rights activists and students) and the waged (e.g., city employees) and their mutual impact.⁴¹ The usual, formal definition of the fiscal crisis – city debt repayment obligations in excess of revenue and borrowed funds – turned out to have been imposed by the banks that began by charging ever higher interest rates on short-term loans and then refusing to roll over city debt as they had done before.⁴² Investigation into the motives of the banks revealed that refusal to be a response to the struggles of people in the city. This we could see in the demands by the banks for the imposition of severe austerity. The state responded by laying off thousands of city workers, freezing others' wages and benefits, forcing the unions to invest city worker pension funds in city bonds (thereby tying future income to the city's financial health) and by reducing standards of living in the city generally. City employee layoffs reduced social services; transportation fares were raised undercutting real wages; tuition was imposed on students attending City University of New York (CUNY).⁴³

This analysis of the fiscal crisis was laid out systematically by SAWC member Phillip Mattera and his companion Donna Demac. They wrote an essay that we first published as a pamphlet: *Developing and Underdeveloping New York: The 'Fiscal Crisis' and a Strategy for Fighting Austerity*, circulated in the summer of 1976. In this analysis, underdevelopment appears not just as a *process* that capital imposes by leaving – as it was understood by the *dependistas* – but as a *strategy* for bringing problem workers to heal. After locating the sources of the crisis in the struggles of people in the city, and recognizing austerity policies as constituting a counter-offensive, the pamphlet concluded by rejecting any collaboration with austerity and calling for an extension of those struggles that had created the crisis into new areas, e.g., wages for housework, wages for schoolwork instead of tuition.

The key is to demand the money we need to live. True, it may seem paradoxical in a time of "no money" to be demanding more of it and less work, but this is the only effective response to the engineered climate of austerity. For this is the strategy which attacks the very root of our oppression, in all its forms. By

³⁹ An at least momentary exception was expressed by Peter Linebaugh in March 1976 in a letter to Geoff Kay where he wrote of “an enormous growth of what’s called the “Marxist-Leninist” movement in the US” and offered that “I think it was a mistake of ZW1 (among several) not to have engaged directly (at least in our footnotes or endnotes) with the positions that have emerged in [at least some parts of] this movement.”

⁴⁰ Although by no means complete, there are a great many original letters and copies of letters in the files of the one-time editors of *Zerowork* – some of which I have been able to draw upon for my historical reconstructions. Perhaps one day they will all be deposited in some archive and become available for a more complete and detailed history.

⁴¹ The primary points of reference were the analyses in Carpignano's piece on "US Class Composition in the Sixties" that highlighted welfare rights struggles and Caffentzis' piece "Throwing Away the Ladder" that sketched the human capital strategy that had guided state investments in both welfare and schools.

⁴² Banks "roll over" debt when they loan more money to pay back money already owed. This takes care of immediate debt obligations, but to the degree that the new loans do not reduce principle, but only pay interest charges, such "roll over" increases the total amount owed to the banks.

⁴³ The "state" in this history included not only the city, state and federal governments who participated in imposing this austerity, but also "Big MAC" – the Municipal Assistance Corporation and the Financial Control Board – unelected, appointed overseers of this austerity. The parallels with the recent imposition of an outside authority to oversee the recent imposition of austerity in Detroit should be obvious.

demanding to be paid for all the work we do, we expose the extent to which our entire lives have been made into work and help ourselves build the power necessary to get the time and wealth that would serve as the basis of our liberation.

In a small, direct-action effort to stimulate resistance to austerity, we also drafted and distributed flyers protesting increased subway fares and organized a whole series of illegal direct actions getting people into the subway for free (or at very low cost).⁴⁴ The flyers argued, among other things, that because the primary use of the subways was getting people to and from work, and that riding the dirty, noisy, dangerous subways was itself work, that those on their way to and from work should be paid for the time spent in travel.⁴⁵ We undertook these actions in the same spirit as the earlier rent strike movement in the city (sketched in the pamphlet) and as similar efforts at the “self-reduction of prices” that were taking place in Italy and reported in *Zerowork* #1.⁴⁶

These interventions – both written and direct-action – into the fiscal crisis constituted one response to the autonomous self-organization of women in the Wages for Housework movement. While those of us in NYSAW had explicitly endorsed the demand that the work of reproducing labor power be paid for, we were also supporting a more general resistance to austerity, in the pamphlet we published and in our actions against the increased costs of transportation.

At the same time, however, we – a group made up entirely of men – also tried to think through the more general implications of the separation of struggles by gender and to better define our own political demands. In New York City, that thinking involved regular discussions among members of the group and found expression in two pamphlets: *We Want Everything: An Introduction to the Income without Work Committee* (1976) and *If We're So Powerful, Why Aren't We Free? White Men, the Total Wage and the Struggle against Work* (1976).⁴⁷ In Toronto, similar discussions unfolded among the men in the Struggle Against Work Collective of that city.

In the 10-page pamphlet *We Want Everything*, our emphasis was on role of the struggle against work among waged and unwaged workers and how that struggle, combined with others demanding the same or more income, combined to create the growing crisis for capitalism that was manifested locally in the New York City fiscal crisis. The struggle against work, we argued, was not only real but was the understandable outcome of the blatant contradiction between rising productivity – that made it technically feasible to work less – and the capitalist imposition of “social factory” with a 24-hour workday made up of both waged work (in factories and offices) and unwaged work (in homes, schools and getting to and from work). Therefore, the demand in the pamphlet's title for “everything” was explained as the perfectly reasonable insistence that the fruits of rising productivity be realized in *both* more income and less work. Although this very “Zerowork” focus on the refusal of work and the social factory was derived and adapted from earlier work by Tronti and that on the 24-hour workday from the Wages for Housework analysis, there was no mention of either in the text. Moreover, although we identified ourselves in the pamphlet as “white, male militants”, there was little discussion of the implications of either adjective. The only reference to race was how the struggles of “Black and Latin people” had illuminated the nature of the “social factory.” The only reference to gender was in pointing out how the revolt of women against unwaged work had made the existence of the 24-hour workday apparent to men.

We considerably expanded the discussion of gender and racial differences in the pamphlet *If We're So Powerful . . .* and made the connection to the Wages for Housework Campaign explicit. In the introduction, we wrote, “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 substance of that influence we made clear in the body of the pamphlet whose general line of argument followed that of the first issue of *Zerowork*. First, we sketched the nature

⁴⁴ The primary methods used to get into the subway without buying the official, increasingly expensive tokens were 1) holding open gates for people to pass without paying, and 2) circulating large quantities of a very cheap foreign coin (I forget which one) that was exactly the same size and weight of the much more expensive tokens for the gate machines.

⁴⁵ See flyer *Fight the Fare, Go Thru the Gates!*

⁴⁶ The flyer's demands echoed those chronicled by Bruno Ramirez's “[The Working Class Struggle Against the Crisis: Self-Reduction of Prices in Italy](#)” in *Zerowork* #1. The argument was inspired by the demands by coal miners for “portal to portal” pay, i.e., hourly wages being timed from the entry into coal mines, not from arrival at the veins being worked, which were reached only after long, dangerous vertical and horizontal passages.

⁴⁷ Although both pamphlets were the result of collective discussion, the second was drafted by, and its authorship attributed to, Larry Cox, a member of the New York SAWC.

of the social factory, its 24-hour workday, and the usual positions of white men within it – namely the general phenomena that more men have been waged than women, that white men have been paid higher wages than non-white men. We also pointed out how wages confer more power to refuse work than their absence and how higher wages confer more power than lower wages.⁴⁸ Second, we reiterated the *Zerowork* analysis that struggles against work, by both the waged and unwaged, precipitated a crisis for capital's control-through-imposed work. Third, we also restated the argument that capital's counterattacks against both wages and other forms of income had been aimed at restoring its ability to impose work. Fourth, we set out an argument that was *not* in *Zerowork* – namely that the only adequate response to capital's efforts to continue to subordinate everyone's life to work is a struggle for a "total wage", i.e., payment by capital for all the work we do. We loosely defined the "total wage" as wages *plus* payment for currently unwaged work-for-capital done by both the unwaged and by the waged in their hours "off the job".

Clearly, the demand for the "total wage" was a demand more comprehensive than that for "wages for housework" although the latter was included within the former. The relation between the two demands we spelled out in two ways, first in general terms and second by pointing to specific, concrete demands that included, but went beyond wages for housework. In the first case, we wrote: "the strategy of the total wage" has its roots in the wages for housework perspective but,

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.

Asserting that the fight for a total wage is not equal to the fight for wages for housework required spelling out what the former fight was for – besides wages for housework, that we too wanted – given that part of our work as mostly waged, white males included the reproduction of our own labor power and that of others. What terrains of struggle did we argue were worth joining? They included the following:

1. *unemployment insurance* (because it pays for the work of looking for work),
2. *workmen's compensation* (because it pays for recuperating from damage suffered on the job),
3. *social security* (because it pays for the "work of the old", namely "dying quickly and quietly"),
4. *welfare* (because it pays "women for raising children to be obedient and productive workers"),
5. *job-related travel* (because both daily travel to and from the job and periodic relocation to new jobs are work),
6. *job-related study* (because it is work-for-capital and not for us), and
7. *the tax system* (because it is rigged to pit us against each other, e.g., taxing the young instead of capital to pay for things like social security).

Noticeably absent from this list are the usual abstract Marxist calls for revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. Yet the pamphlet ends with a statement that clearly implies the concrete replacement of capitalism with a world freed from domination via imposed 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.

⁴⁸ What we had in mind was the ability of workers to accumulate resources – either personal savings or collective strike funds – to finance escape from work. Clearly, those at the high end of the wage hierarchy often got there through the more or less total subordination of their lives to work and competing with others and thus were not inclined to use their greater income and wealth to avoid work. This happens even at the level of blue collar workers as we were reminded in those days by the Elio Petri's 1971 film *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (variously translated as *The Working Class Goes to Heaven*, or *Lulu, the Tool*). The film, in which the central character, Lulu, is played by Gian Maria Volonté, provides a vivid illustration of the negative side effects of such subordination, a striking visual portrayal of metal-working piece-work and some hope through collective struggle.

Both of these pamphlets were shared with others associated with *Zerowork*, those in the parallel group in Toronto and those not engaged in either group and with a variety of friends and comrades. The feedback was overwhelmingly negative – from those in the *Zerowork* editorial group who were NOT part of either the NYC or Toronto SAWC's, from some who had been receptive to *Zerowork*, and, most surprisingly, from in the Toronto SAW Collective, from those in the Wages for Housework Campaign.

From within *Zerowork*, from those not part of either SAW Collective, came two responses: a conversation with John Merrington and Ferruccio Gambino in London in which they dismissed *If We're So Powerful* and a much longer, thoughtful response from Peter Linebaugh raising a series of questions and critiques. From outside of *Zerowork*, one fairly detailed response came from Peter Rachleff who had been generally receptive to *Zerowork* #1 and a much harsher response from Wages for Housework – a response that so thoroughly condemned the pamphlet as to lead the NYSAW collective to essentially abandon the project. In retrospect, the condemnation can be seen as a step toward what came later: the attempt by Wages for Housework to take over and suborn *Zerowork* itself. Let me summarize the various critiques.

According to a half-page note summarizing Merrington and Gambino's comments, they were scathing. The pamphlet, they wrote, "doesn't have the ring to truth. The key word is 'we'. . . . [the analysis] has "no class in it. . . . [the author] employs a perspective that includes the most debased, demeaned man right up to the cops or the President. In this anthropology, it is true that there is a cop in all men and that this is less so in women, and that this anthropology is developed for the purpose of command. But the piece cannot be a piece of agitation, not with that 'we'. You can't go anywhere with a piece like that. . . . Is that 'we' part of the working class?" In short, dismissal rather than a thoughtful reply.

From Peter Linebaugh – in those days teaching upstate in Rochester, New York – came longer and much more thoughtful but still critical replies – first verbally at a meeting in New York, and later in a long 7-page, single-spaced letter. He clearly agreed with Merrington and Gambino about the lack of specificity in the reduction of complex class compositions to "we", and about the tendency of the analysis to drift into anthropological distinctions rather than class ones. He also made a number of much more specific points, including the following.

1. The importance of the struggles referred to in the pamphlet, he argued, was not demonstrated in concrete evidence gathered from detailed investigation.
2. The concept of the "total wage" retained the same irrational form of the value of labor power as that of the wage *tout court*. "The notion of the total wage," he wrote, "seems to me overgeneralized, "spacey" and lacking the ability of further specification, as, say "Total Victory".
3. The concept of the 24-hour working day "suggests that capital has all our days and hours. It does not. With time, as with money or the social product, there is a struggle between capital and the working class, and that struggle is not one-sided. What otherwise could be the significance of the absenteeism you report in the family and in the plants? One feels in your use of that idea, the 24-hour working day, that you are not aware of victories. More than one reader of the pamphlet has been struck by a feeling of defeat." He goes on to argue that Marx's double-sided treatment – of consumption within reproduction that provided "some tools for analyzing the 24-hour day" and of the struggle over the length of the working day that "at all events, is less than a natural day" – provides a better model for understanding current struggles than the oversimplified concept of a "24-hour working day."
4. He objected to the continued use of the concept of "social factory" – derived by Tronti from Volume II of *Capital* and amplified by Wages for Housework – without clear differentiation among different situations. "Personally," he wrote, "I think that its job is done and that now it can be quite misleading. Even in ZW1 we wanted to show how the conditions of struggle and the types of power were different in various settings – the mine, the factory, the university, the supermarket, the apartment building and the prison. . . . the time for metaphorical transpositions of concepts is over." In the same spirit, he "objected strenuously" to the phrase "prisons called factories", insisting on the differences in their functions and methods.

There was more, but those four points suggest the depth of his criticisms. Those in NYSAW responded, both at the meeting in New York City and later in writing. However, the only record that I have of those responses to Peter's

criticisms is a one-page letter written to Peter by Phil Mattera and a half-page note from George Caffentzis.⁴⁹ In his letter, Phil reiterated the NYSAW position that demanding wages for currently unwaged work undermines divisions in the class and provides more resources to fight against capitalism in its entirety. He did not, however, respond to any of Peter's points highlighted above. In his note, George expressed disappointment that "your criticism makes no attempt to reveal political solutions . . . its totally negative tone seemed to suggest more a closing of debate rather than an opening." But he, no more than Phil, responded directly to Peter's specific criticisms.

From Peter Rachleff came a one-page letter more critical of the implications of the analysis in the two pamphlets than of its logic. He argued that calling for the expansion of institutions and programs such as unemployment insurance and welfare is utopian and no more likely to be successful than overthrowing the system as a whole. On the other hand, he objected that while more money and less work might provide more opportunity to restructure our lives,

On what basis should this restructuration take place? Surely you don't mean to imply that we will all become no more than passive consumers. What is the world that we can build once we have destroyed the division between the waged and the wageless in society as a whole and in our daily lives? Today reformism is utopian, while revolutionism is possible. Your very analyses indicate your awareness of this, and the deeply-felt need for such a change. So say so! Why fall back on these partial demands?

So far, I have found no response to this critique.

With respect to the criticisms voiced by Wages for Housework, I have only hearsay testimony in letters from Phil Mattera – first in his response to Peter Linebaugh's lengthy critique and second in a letter he wrote to me in Texas recounting discussions within NYSAW and with Wages for Housework.

In his response to Peter, written on August 18, 1976, Phil mentioned that "We have seriously re-examined the *If We're So Powerful* . . . piece and have decided that certain revisions have to be made. For this reason, we have decided to suspend the distribution of the piece. We will certainly take into account your comments in doing the revision." In his letter to me, Phil was much more detailed about what was going on in New York City. In the first place, the notion of "revision" that he had mentioned to Peter evolved from merely changing the opening statement about the authors' debt to Wages for Housework, through rewriting the pamphlet as a whole, to writing an entirely new essay. The reasons for any revision, Phil felt, lay "more for the sake of diplomacy with NY Wages for Housework and Selma James, than they are for the sake of improving the pamphlet or correcting serious political errors (which I don't think are really there)." On what did he base this judgment? On a verbal account by Larry Cox and George Caffentzis of a meeting with Selma James' son, Sam Weinstein, whose views Phil judged to be those of Selma and of Wages for Housework more generally.

Much of Larry's and George's desire to rewrite the pamphlet came after a meeting they had with Sam Weinstein (Selma's son, who lives in Los Angeles). Sam reportedly expressed concern that the pamphlet represented a call for male separation and he claimed that there is no special oppression or exploitation of white men. According to him, we suffer the general oppression and exploitation of the class, but unlike women and blacks, we don't suffer additionally on the basis of our sex or race. (I didn't meet him, so I can't explain this theory any better.) Larry and George apparently admitted the sins of the pamphlet and told Sam of the intention to stop circulating it. After some time, apparently, Sam decided we are not dangerous and expressed a desire to work with us. . . . "

Phil went on to distinguish NYSAW's agreement with Wages for Housework's *perspective* from the very open question of its relationship to the Wages for Housework *Campaign*. NYSAW, he argued, had three options: 1) forming its own autonomous campaign, 2) organize merely to support the women, or 3) not organize at all. "We see," he wrote, "all the problems with each of these alternatives . . . The problem is to find a political direction which deals with our 'role' in the social factory, yet is not separatist and which respects the autonomy of women, yet does not make us the men's auxiliary of the Wages for Housework Campaign. . . . All this is obviously not fully worked out – but before we get too humble, let's not forget that no one – neither Wages for Housework or the Toronto men have really confronted this problem before." As it turned out, the Wages for Housework solution would indeed be

⁴⁹ Phil Mattera to Peter Linebaugh (no date?) and George Caffentzis to Peter Linebaugh, September 1, 1976.

for the New York and Toronto SAW collectives to become men's auxiliaries and *Zerowork* a vehicle for the promulgation of its own ideas and programs.

Associated Political Activities in Canada

While all this was playing out in New York City, parallel events were unfolding in Canada, both within the Toronto Struggle Against Work Collective – that included two *Zerowork* editors, Peter Taylor and Bruno Ramirez – and in the relationships of that group and its members to Wages for Housework. As discussed in "Background: the Genesis of *Zerowork* #1", individuals within the various Canadian groups, including the New Tendency, the Autoworker Group, Out of the Driver's Seat and the Toronto SAWC, had been discussing and debating the implications of the Wages for Housework perspective and autonomous organization for quite some time. It was the departure of women from the New Tendency in Toronto – to form a Toronto Collective of the Wages for Housework Campaign – that led to the formation of the all-male Toronto SAWC. Some of that history of discussion and debate was reflected in the list of readings compiled by the latter group in 1976; it contained materials about previous struggles, e.g., of auto and postal workers, materials on the "refusal of work", including articles from *Zerowork*, and various pieces by Wages for Housework authors, including Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, and Silvia Federici. When NYSAW shared its pamphlets with their counterparts in Canada, the critical feedback made it clear that the same issues had been raised up North, had absorbed a lot of energy and were also unresolved. An example of those responses came in a letter from Jim Brophy who wrote,

As you know, I've argued for a time about the need to understand the "particularity" of the male waged worker. How does he perceive his struggle, in what way does he view his power, what are his collective strengths and weaknesses, etc. We know that both the terrain (i.e., the factory or workplace) and the historical traditions (i.e., the unions, the stable wage relation, etc.) make for a different set of experiences than say Black wageless, students, housewives, etc. But the question is how? . . .

One thing I do know is that that pamphlet is not an accurate reflection about the particularity or the strengths and weaknesses of male workers. It does not reflect the power that the male sector of the class has developed for itself, nor does it show the complex set of relationships which shape his experience and develops his struggle. The pamphlet more explicitly picks up the general one-sidedness of WfH and projects into the male working class. The problem of how the kitchen is not totally a reflection of weakness or how male/female relations are not totally factory/worker relations seems missed and abstracted completely outside even their own experience. Male workers would read that pamphlet and dismiss it by the third page. They've heard that guilt and liberal shit before and just don't need it.⁵⁰

Drawing on his own experience in debates over these issues in Canada, Brophy then offers a prophecy which proved, in time, to be entirely accurate.⁵¹

If the tendency that projects and agrees with the general politics of the pamphlet is "alive and well", then, in my view *Zerowork* is in serious danger of splitting. I have been in concrete struggles around this very politics for almost a year and a half and I know that unless there are major changes in their outlook, then they will carry the struggle into the publication and draw extremely sharp lines around these politics.

This, unfortunately, was exactly what would unfold a few months later in New York City within both *Zerowork* and the Struggle Against Work Collective.

Controversies

Despite spelling out multiple terrains on which white males might contribute to a struggle for a "total wage", the pamphlet *If We're So Powerful, Why aren't We Free?* contained a reflection that lay like a time-bomb in the text – one that soon exploded so violently as to rupture not only New York Struggle Against Work, but the *Zerowork* editorial collective. That reflection was the following:

⁵⁰ Jim Brophy to Peter Linebaugh, September 22, 1976.

⁵¹ Brophy's remarks were based on his experience with the split in the Toronto Struggle Against Work Collective that had taken place earlier that year. See below for more details.

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. [my emphasis]

What were the concrete implications, for the political action of waged white men, of characterizing the role of unwaged women – or the wageless more generally – as "taking the lead" in the struggles that had increased working class power to the point of rupturing the capitalist imposition of work and bringing on crisis? The question was not answered in the text because we were still debating it.

Although neither my memory nor my notes permit any detailed account of those debates – that took place almost 40 years ago – I am fairly comfortable collapsing them into two of the alternatives Phil spelled out in his letter (above). One implication was to overtly recognize and explicitly valorize the roles of the unwaged – which both *Zerowork* and the NYSAW pamphlets did – while crafting struggles that *complemented* those roles. A second possible implication (that evoked, for those of us opposed to it, the old notion of a working class "vanguard") was that the struggles of the waged – including those of waged white men – should be *subordinated* to the struggles of unwaged women (by being limited to *direct support of women's initiatives*). Given its theoretical and political influence on our analysis, the obvious candidate for such support was the Wages for Housework Campaign. The advocates of each position argued that their answer would increase the power of the working class as a whole. In the first case, that increase could be achieved through complementarity and the circulation of struggle, i.e., the actions of white waged men could be crafted to strengthen those of unwaged women by fighting for things like increased welfare – an increase in the income and thus the ability of unwaged mothers to expand their struggles. In the second case, the increase could be sought directly by providing supportive manpower for whatever battles were chosen by the women of Wages for Housework.

This debate unfolded in discussions that took place within the Zerowork Collective and the Struggle Against Work groups in New York and Toronto, and, simultaneously, within the context of close personal relations between the men in those groups and women involved in the Wages for Housework. For the most part, the personal relations were those of friendship and camaraderie, but in some cases, they were more intimate. Two examples. Larry Cox, the primary drafter of *If We're So Powerful* was married to Nicole Cox, a member of Wages for Housework group in NYC and the author, with Silvia Federici, of the pamphlet *Counterplanning from the Kitchen: Wages for Housework, A perspective on Capital and the Left* (1975). Bruno Ramirez was married to Judy Ramirez, a leading figure in the Toronto Wages for Housework group.

The debates over these two possible paths came to a head at different moments in different places.

As indicated above, the first casualty was the Toronto Struggle Against Work Collective that dissolved in early 1976 with, according to Jim Brophy's account, *Zerowork* editors Bruno Ramirez and Peter Taylor on one side and the rest of the Collective on the other. Although he gave few details, Brophy attributed the breakup to Bruno and Peter's insistent pushing of the Wages for Housework perspective that he, and others, felt failed to address adequately the debated issue of the particularity of the strengths and weakness of white males within the working class and vis-à-vis capital. Unlike Peter Linebaugh who expressed skepticism of the whole issue, Brophy and comrades accepted the need to clarify those strengths and weaknesses and argued that Zerowork needed both to address the issue and to take a position on it. "I believe," he wrote in a letter to Peter, that

Zero Work must come to grips politically with the situation of white male workers if it is to be a useful tool for militants like myself. And then from that position we can say what we see other sectors doing and how their struggle against capital gives us power in our struggle. . . . [But] if I look for a clear view of the situation of male workers where do I go? To WfH???? Their view of us as men is pretty one-sided, to say the least, although they have uncovered many dynamics within the class. But they were able to do this historically, and politically speaking, by first exposing and understanding their own position within the class . . ."⁵²

⁵² Jim Brophy to Peter Linebaugh, March 5, 1976.

Thus, he concludes, white men must do something similar. To contribute to such a project, he and his comrades contemplated writing an article “on the notion of particularity” to deal with “the situation of men under modern capitalism without conceding and posturing to any other sector of the class.” Their notion was at least partly realized when they reconstituted themselves as “The Toronto Collective” and issued a rather lengthy (almost 4,000 word) Letter to Wages for Students on SAWC Split, in June 1976.⁵³

In that letter they laid out their debts to Wages for Housework but rejected the subordination of men’s struggles to those of women. The acceptance of such subordination, they argued,

not only abstracts itself from the whole experience of working class struggle historically and at present, including our own struggles as white male students and workers, but most crucially for us, it sees no positive role for white male workers' struggles except where they directly support the autonomous struggles of less powerful sections. This tendency leads to abdicating being part of the organization of struggles of our own section of the class in the name of the "higher" class interest of supporting the struggles of workers in less powerful sections. It leads to complete isolation (as SAWC was isolated) from the concrete struggles white male workers and all other workers are making to increase their power against capital.

They went on to differentiate their notion of *particularity* from that of *autonomy* that they still embraced and that they agreed justifies “less powerful” sections of the working class (e.g., women) developing their struggle for more power independently of more powerful sections (e.g., men).

Whatever the form in which specific struggles are organized (autonomous, "mixed", etc.) we stress the importance of being clear on the particularity of different sections of the class. By *particularity* we mean:

- (a) the position of different sections occupy in the hierarchy of power;
- (b) the particular way capital organizes the 24-hour working day of each section and
- (c) the particular strengths and weaknesses of different sections of the class which flow from our position in the hierarchy and division of labour.

Having addressed their essay to students, after offering some historical justification for trying to identify the particularity of the situation of white men, they then turned to discussing the problem of identifying the particularity of various kinds of students – something they suggested had not been done by the student activists whose ideas they otherwise found attractive. I have no record of the students’ response to this critique, nor of any *collective* response from those in the Zerowork Collective.⁵⁴

About a year later, another parting of the ways took place, this time within the Zerowork Collective.

The prelude to that parting was debate within the editorial collective over Christian Marazzi's essay on the crisis of the money form – written as part of the collective effort of the London Zerowork group to produce a book on money in the crisis. The debate was complex. While there was agreement about some things, e.g., that Nixon's ending of the convertibility of dollars to gold on August 1971 was a turning point, or that after that money was being used as a terrorist weapon against the working class in new ways, there were also many controversial aspects of the essay. Questions were raised about Christian's reading of Marx on money, on gold, on credit and on the relationships among them. There were challenges to his formulation of the economic manifestations of crisis in class power. The meaning of "the law of value", to which he often made reference but never defined, was disputed.⁵⁵ Moreover, the debate, it turned out, had roots in earlier disagreements over some aspects of Mario's piece in *Zerowork* #1 "Notes on the International Crisis" to which Christian's essay made explicit reference.

⁵³ That Statement was apparently addressed to a group of students at the University of Waterloo, among whom was Tim Grant, the author of a two-page spread in the student newspaper titled “Wages for Homework.” The choice of addressee would seem to be a measure of the depth of the split in the Toronto SAWC; dialog with Bruno and Peter Taylor was over. But not with the other editors of Zerowork, because Brophy would continue to discuss these issues with Peter Linebaugh and share with him their essay on the split.

⁵⁴ Peter Linebaugh did compose a one-page response – basically asking for further clarification.

⁵⁵ At this point in time – 40-odd years after the debate – it is impossible to recreate all the arguments. But when comparing this summary with the published essay, it should be remembered that the final, published form of that essay was the result of several revisions, in several hands, undertaken in the midst of the debate, with the objective of crafting something that while not agreed upon in every point was nevertheless acceptable to all the editors as a point of departure for future discussion.

In the end, the primary issue of contention – that led to the split in the collective – was the degree to which the arguments in these essays were in contradiction with the analysis of the unwaged and the importance of the struggles of the unwaged. At the time, several of us found the critiques being made of Christian's essay – mostly by George and Peter Taylor – hard to follow. (See the long passage from a March 14, 1977 letter from Peter Linebaugh to Ferruccio Gambino quoted below.) Years later, in an interview given to Greek comrades in 2000, George retrospectively summarized his objections to both articles in terms of what he saw as a stark contradiction between the "refusal of work" perspective and that of Wages for Housework. To embrace the one meant, for him, to deny the other. The troubles with the "refusal of work" perspective, he claimed, were three-fold. *First*, the long-run tendency of capital to substitute machines for workers – discussed in *Grundrisse's* fragment on machines and quoted at length in Mario's essay and referenced by Christian – was judged, by those embracing the "refusal of work" perspective, to have reached the point of virtually eliminating work in the production of wealth, or, in George's characterization a "zero-hour work day". This line of argument, he argued, completely ignored the still vast amount of unwaged work required – 24 hours a day – for the reproduction of the working class, and hence of capital – namely the work emphasized by women in the Wages for Housework Campaign. *Second*, this elimination meant, for those adhering to the "refusal of work" perspective, that Marx's own deduction that it would render the law of value irrelevant had come to pass – an evaluation rejected by the theorists of Wages for Housework who continued to use the concept of labor value.⁵⁶ *Third*, under these circumstances, if the role of work was reduced, as Mario and Christian claimed, to a vehicle for capital's command over workers and hence over society, then the "refusal of work" only made sense for those few workers in high tech industries. If we accept this latter-day summary as an accurate one of George and Peter Taylor's objections in 1976-77, then we can also say that the debate at the time was over whether these points amounted to such acute contradictions with the analysis of unwaged work and the struggles of the unwaged as to render the previous publication of Mario's article regrettable and the prospect of publishing Christian's essay intolerable. Let me deal with them one by one and explain why conclusions about this differed.

First, when we examine that part of Mario's essay evoking the "fragment on machines", it is clear enough that he – as with Marx originally – was focused on the production of commodities sold for profits and ignored the labor of reproduction of labor power.⁵⁷ Yet in that same article not only did Mario recognize the existence of unwaged labor reproducing labor power and the importance of the struggles of the unwaged, his very first footnote acknowledged the importance of Selma James and Silvia Federici's writings as sources on the subject. Moreover, in Christian's essay the importance of those same unwaged struggles is also repeatedly highlighted.⁵⁸ I was not around during the genesis of *Zerowork* #1 and therefore missed earlier debates took place over this issue, but during the later debates in 1976-77 around both Mario and Christian's essays, several of us could not see the fundamental conflict that George and Peter claimed existed.

Returning to Mario's quotation from the "fragment on machines", Marx clearly argued that the tendency of capitalist development is to reduce "the necessary labor of society to a minimum". But what did he mean by "necessary labor"? Two readings are possible – a Marxological reading, if you will, and what I'll call a vernacular reading. With the former, in Chapter 6 of Volume I of *Capital* (and thereafter) Marx defined "necessary labor" as equal to the (socially necessary) labor (time) required to produce the consumption commodities necessary for the reproduction of labor power. In a vernacular reading, "necessary labor" equals all labor, that producing consumption commodities *and* that producing labor power itself, e.g., housework, schoolwork. George's objection, it seemed to some of us, was based on such a vernacular reading. For those of us who stuck to Chapter 6's definition, we understood the reduction of required labor by machines as being limited to that involved in the production of consumption

⁵⁶ The employment of Marx's concepts of value was quite explicit in key texts of the Wages for Housework movement, e.g., the seminal essay by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Women and the Subversion of the Community" (1971).

⁵⁷ It is always tempting to write the simpler expression "commodity production" instead of the more cumbersome "the production of commodities produced and sold for profits", but commodity production includes the production of the commodity labor power – the most important commodity of all – that is often sold, but not for profit. In what follows "commodity producing industry" refers to the capitalist "the production of commodities produced and sold for profits" and not to the production of labor power – which has not yet, on the whole, become what is commonly known as "an industry" however much capital has sought to intervene and manage it.

⁵⁸ At three different points in his essay, Christian explicitly pointed to the struggles of the unwaged and at the end, when he turns to "what is to be done?" he wrote: "Rather it is a matter of analyzing the successes and failures of the modes of working class organization in the previous cycle of struggle, primarily the organizations of the unwaged in the struggles against the state over the social wage."

commodities.⁵⁹ In that case, we saw no necessary contradiction with the continued importance of unwaged labor procreating and reproducing labor power.⁶⁰

Second, the argument – by Mario and Christian about the implications of dramatic reductions in the need for labor in commodity production for the labor theory of value was problematic for all of us – although how we interpreted what they were saying and what we made of it differed. Mario wrote, "In the Tendency [to reduce necessary labor time], capital is pushed *beyond value*. Once labor ceases to be the wellspring of wealth, value ceases to be the mediation of use-values. With a radical revaluation of labor corresponds the suppression of the law of value . . ." In Christian's essay, the "law of value" is repeatedly evoked – mostly as an undefined force causing crises of accumulation and from which capital has sought to escape, or manage, by manipulating the money form. With respect to moving beyond value, he merely refers the reader to Mario's essay. During the debates about Christian's essay, one of the many questions raised was what he meant by the "law of value". At the time, the only answer I can remember was that the "law of value" referred to prices being determined by values.⁶¹ That memory is consistent with one reading of Mario's statement, "With a radical revaluation of labor corresponds the suppression of the law of value and then any relationship between value and price is severed."⁶² In his 2000 account of the debates, George also summarized this analysis as concluding that, according to Mario and Christian, "the law of value is no more a determinant in the system" – but as he offered no other understanding of "the law", it's hard to say if what he meant by it, at that time, was the same.⁶³

Here's the thing. For some of us, the very existence of any "law of value" – however defined – remained an open question. The voluminous literature in the debate over the "transformation of values into prices" offered only an unsatisfying wealth of competing interpretations. For my part, I found (find) the whole exercise a misguided attempt to use Marx's theory to satisfy the demand by bourgeois economists for a theory of relative market prices – a *sin qua non* for economists, whose work requires such a theory to help guide policies supportive of capitalist development. Misguided in the following senses. First, by my reading, Marx elaborated his theory for a purpose antithetical to that of bourgeois economics. The former was dedicated to defeating and transcending capitalism, while the latter is devoted to promulgating it. Therefore it was (is) a mistake to try to use the former to solve the latter's problems.⁶⁴ Second, time and again when addressing historical prices, Marx discussed their determination in terms of supply and demand, in pretty much the same manner as his mainstream contemporaries.⁶⁵ Third, in Volume I of *Capital*, before setting the issue aside, Marx discussed how prices *often* differed, quantitatively, from values. In such cases, the value analysis adds something distinct to knowledge of prices determined by supply and demand. If one has reason to believe, for example, that prices exceed values, then the successful realization of those prices would suggest a

⁵⁹ Assuming a general tendency for the utilization of machinery to displace labor, in Department I as well as in Department II of Marx's "reproduction schemes" spelled out in the third part of Volume II of *Capital*, the reduction in the labor employed to produce consumption goods would include any reductions in the labor employed in the production of the tools, machines and raw materials used in the production of consumption commodities.

⁶⁰ Indeed, a point often made by those who have studied housework is that despite the success of women in fighting for the diversion of household income into the purchase and use of labor-saving devices such as washing machines, changes in standards have often resulted in little or no reduction in the actual amount of work required.

⁶¹ The quantitative relation between values and prices has been a hotly debated issue throughout the history of Marxism. In Volume I of *Capital*, while recognizing that price often differs, quantitatively, from value, Marx *assumes* that values = prices. The debate has been fought out mainly over the interpretation of the material in Volume III on the so-called "transformation problem". I cannot, however, remember any substantial discussion about that piece of the theory in the midst of our debates over Christian's essay.

⁶² Obviously, another interpretation is possible, namely that the severing of the relationship between value and price is the result or an effect of the "suppression of the law of value" – in which case the later remains undefined.

⁶³ Five years later, in an essay published in the on-line journal *The Commoner*, George discussed possible interpretations of "the Law of Value" in more depth while critiquing Negri's, and Hardt and Negri's rejection of it. See, George Caffentzis, "[Immeasurable Value? An Essay on Marx's Legacy](#)", *The Commoner*, No. 10, Spring-Summer 2005.

⁶⁴ Too many Marxists, in my view, have allowed themselves to be drawn onto the terrain of mainstream economics and felt the need to prove that Marxian theory can not only explain everything mainstream economics does, but can do it better and can explain more. By accepting the usual standard in science that one should only trade in an old theory for a new one if the new one can explain everything the old one does plus account for anomalies that the old theory could not account for, they have missed the most vital point. The purpose of Marxian theory is diametrically opposed to that of mainstream economic theory and must therefore, be held to completely different standards.

⁶⁵ NB: neither Marx nor his mainstream contemporaries conceptualized supply and demand in the manner to which we are accustomed today, i.e., upward and downward sloping curves denoting how much will be supplied or demanded at given prices. Those curves became common only after being derived by the "marginalists" using the calculus in the late 19th Century. [The early work of Antoine Augustin Cournot (1801-1877) – unknown to Marx – was an exception; he posited a downward sloping demand curve in 1834.]

transfer of value to the sellers from elsewhere.⁶⁶ So, if one neither believes that, nor seeks to prove that, relative prices are determined by values, then the whole debate over the "law of value" – and whether or not it has been transcended – becomes an unproductive distraction.

But, if we set aside the "law of value", we can still ask whether the tendency to reduce the use of labor in the production of commodities renders the concept of labor value itself useless. Part of the problem has already been indicated – a part with which we all agreed – namely the continued existence of vast amounts of work of reproducing labor power. That leads to another part of the problem: how Marx (and the rest of us) define "labor" in commodity production. In the much debated 1857 *Grundrisse* "fragment on machines", by juxtaposing "direct human labor" employed on machines (fixed capital) to "the general state of science", "the general powers of the human head" or the "general intellect", Marx was clearly employing the term "labor" in a restrictive manner, a term denoting manual labor. Ten years later, in the first volume of *Capital*, in his analysis of "the labor process" in Chapter 7, no such restriction applied. There he defined labor as workers using tools/machines to transform non-human nature into commodities. But, in an oft-quoted passage, he also pointed out how the worst of human architects was better than the best of bees (who systematically make nice hexagonal structures) because human architects first conceive their projects in their minds before carrying them out. Thus in *Capital*, "labor" includes both manual labor and mental labor, or the "power of the human head" whose collective work constitutes "the general intellect" and generates science and technology (the application of science to industry that leads to machines, new production processes, new products, etc.). In other words, to the tendency of capital to reduce the need for manual labor in producing commodities, corresponds a growing need and use for mental labor to develop science and more productive technology (the basis of relative surplus value). Before and during Marx's time, manual and mental labor were often closely interwoven in the form of so-called "skilled labor" but the development and deployment of machines, while requiring only *deskilled* labor to tend them, also required skilled mental labor to develop them. Thus the rise of science and engineering as distinct professions – professions characterized by mental labor.⁶⁷ Thus, for some of us, Marx's "general intellect" was/is no disembodied, abstract social force, but one very much embodied in an expanding part of the labor force. Although Marx's analysis in chapters 12-15 of volume I of *Capital* of the rise of machine industry implied such an expansion, he focused, instead, on the tendential reduction in the need for manual labor.

If, therefore, a declining need for *manual* labor is offset by a rising need for *mental* labor, then any tendency toward the reduction in the need for *all kinds* of labor must necessarily be slower than it would be without that offset. Moreover, while the continuing, albeit irregular, rise in labor productivity in commodity producing industry certainly suggests a decline in the per unit requirements for labor of all kinds, the methods by which productivity is measured (even today) undermines such a conclusion. The reason is that those methods ignore the vast amount of labor engaged in the development of science and technology *outside* of commodity producing industry, in separate research institutions, either private or public, e.g., universities funded by the state, private tuition and donations. Commodity producing industry effectively taps that labor – by drawing on its results – to help increase productivity. But because that labor is not counted in the measurement of inputs, industry-specific measures of labor productivity are overestimated, and the requirements for labor underestimated.

Added to these considerations is one more fundamental than questions of the kind or quantity of labor that needs to be taken into account when questioning the relevance of the labor theory of value. Those, like Mario (and I think we can include Christian here) who argue that capital is "pushed beyond value", nevertheless also argue that labor continues to be important but only "as a form of control of the working class". "Control" is juxtaposed to "value" that is associated with wealth production. This was a juxtaposition that, even in 1976-77, made no sense to me. In my reading of Marx's value theory – laid out in a manuscript first composed in 1974, later published as *Reading Capital Politically* in 1978 (see my biographical sketch below) – the "substance" of value (abstract labor), to use the

⁶⁶ A fairly dramatic example of this was the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973-74 with no change in the methods or costs of production. That quadrupling resulted in the transfer of billions of dollars from oil importers to oil exporters and all the value – and its command over labor – those billions represented.

⁶⁷ This distinction between manual and mental labor can be, and often is, overblown. In the laboratories where both scientists and engineers experiment with new ideas, there is often a considerable amount of manual labor, only some of which is rote work delegated to unskilled assistants. The same caveat applies to work that appears to be mainly manual; such work often not only involves – through practice – an intimate understanding of machines and production processes, but that very understanding often leads to creative innovation in how machines are set up and used.

terminology of Chapter 1 of Volume I of *Capital*, was precisely "control."⁶⁸ Adam Smith's labor theory of value was about the emerging centrality of labor (as opposed to land or trade) in the production of "the wealth of nations", but Marx's theory was one about the value of labor to capital as its fundamental vehicle of control – of the ordering of society according to its own rules and methods. "Useful" labor produced use-values, real wealth. But "value" was about the social role of labor in capitalism with all its characteristics of exploitation, alienation and domination. This was the real reason, for me, for seeing the "economic" not as something separate from the "political" but as its central mechanism. Therefore, as long as labor – no matter the kind – is the primary vehicle for the imposition, maintenance and promulgation of capitalism, Marx's theory of the value of labor to capital remains essential for focusing our attention on the centrality of the struggle against work in the struggle to transcend capitalism. So, while I welcomed the focus on work-as-control, I didn't think it obviated Marx's labor theory of value, on the contrary.

Let me now turn to George's third objection, namely that confining the role of work to a vehicle for capitalist command over workers, and hence over society, implied that the refusal of work only made sense for those few workers in high tech industries and not for those engaged in unwaged labor. The argument of the "fragment" that capital's tendency to substitute machines for workers reduced the need for manual labor in the production of *commodities required to reproduce labor power*, seemed (and still seems) to me to be perfectly compatible with a continuing need for unwaged labor to produce and reproduce labor power.⁶⁹ Moreover, if that is true, then the "refusal of work", the demand for less work, seemed to some of us just as important for the unwaged as for the waged. In the *sphere of waged labor*, the demand for less work (and the separation of income from work) had long taken the form of demanding shorter working days (and later shorter working weeks, then years, then life-spans). In the *sphere of unwaged labor*, e.g., housework or schoolwork, were not struggles also aimed at less work? On the one hand, were the phenomena highlighted in *Zerowork #1* of absenteeism on the job (individual actions or collective wildcat strikes) and in schools (skipping classes, or shutting down schools in protests). On the other hand, was not the strategy of women demanding that family wages be diverted into housework-saving devices like washing machines, or by demanding a sharing of housework by waged spouses, not aimed at less work? Was not the demand for wages for housework (or schoolwork) aimed at providing more resources to finance the struggle for less work as well? So it seemed to most of us.

These then were some of the issues discussed and debated among us in that period leading up to the split and subsequent publication of *Zerowork #2*. They were not the only issues, but in the end, they turned out to be decisive ones for the future of the collective. Finally, I want to emphasize that our debates about all these issues, at that time, were not so clearly articulated as they became later on.

The Split

In a March 11, 1977, letter to Peter Linebaugh and George Caffentzis, Ferruccio related how he had chosen to side with Mariarosa Dalla Costa in a conflict with Toni Negri. "On this side of the ocean," he wrote, "painful as it has been, I have said goodbye to the people at the Instituto (Toni included) and have sided with Mariarosa. If I had done otherwise, it would have been a nasty piece of old Stalinism." Unfortunately, he provided no details of the nature of the conflict or the course of its unfolding – some of which remains obscure to me, even today. That same day things came to a head in New York.

In a letter he wrote three days later, Peter told Ferruccio, "ZW has split." His letter contains the most precise details of the split that I have been able to find and corresponds to my own memories, so I will quote it at length.

Last Friday evening [March 11, the same day Ferruccio wrote his letter] the ZW editorial board (North American editors!) met in Manhattan. We were joined by Sam Weinstein and Paul Layton. Paolo, George, Peter Taylor, Phil Mattered, Harry Cleaver, Bruno Ramirez and myself constitute the ZW collective here. The first item on our agenda was to discuss, once again, Christian Marrazzi's article "Money in the World Crisis". Have you seen this article? We've had several discussions here about it. Phil Mattered has re-written and edited it twice. Paolo has written Marazzi about it a couple of times. Already it has caused an "international debate". The objections here are, in my

⁶⁸ In other words, that characteristic that all on-going labor in the capitalist production of commodities (for sale and profit) has in common, once we abstract from all those particular useful qualities that produce use-values, is its value as the vehicle of capitalist command over people's lives.

⁶⁹ Although the tendency of the organic composition of capital to rise plays out in the producer good sector just as it does in the consumer good sector, Marx's interest in the former – with respect to surplus value – lay in its impact on the reduction of per unit value in the latter sector. The two sectors Mario used to illustrate the reduced requirement for labor brought about by the increasing use of machines were those of food – a consumption good – and energy – a basic input into the production of consumer goods. Those are also two of the most capital-intensive parts of the economy.

opinion, confused: they have never been written down. Some find it obscure and difficult. Others don't like the "marxology" in it. Mainly it has been interpreted as an attack upon wage struggles, an attack upon the struggles of women for wages. All of us to one degree or another share some of these objections, though only George and Peter Taylor consider the last objection to have any merit.

Our meeting began with Sam Weinstein attacking the piece. George and Peter Taylor attacked the piece. Paolo defended it for an hour or so. The attacks became increasingly heated and incoherent. Peter Taylor and George were attempting to provoke Paolo into resigning. He did not fall for this, of course. Everyone wanted to continue the discussion the next morning on the basis of a discussion of George's long review of *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, a good article because it has so many long quotations from that pamphlet. We agreed to meet Saturday morning.

Bruno, Paolo and I went to the Bronx to sleep. We had a long discussion about Christian's article. Bruno has many reservations about it, and the discussion between Bruno and Paolo was especially important to both of them. At the same time, I filled Bruno in on the London meeting (though he had seen my minutes and transcription of the meeting) and of a September meeting in which I had criticized that *If We're So Powerful...* pamphlet I showed you last summer.

Meanwhile, George, Taylor, Weinstein, Layton were meeting in Brooklyn with Selma, Sylvia and Judy Ramirez. At 3:00am those men returned to Manhattan to wake up Phil and Harry. They told them that they had expelled Paolo and insisted that Harry and Phil "choose" and meet in Brooklyn the next morning. They left Manhattan and they took the subscription list. At 4:00am Harry and Phil phoned George saying they wanted to have another conversation to "understand what was going on," but this conversation had to be with George alone. George refused.

Saturday morning Taylor phones Bruno to say that Paolo had been expelled and to go to Brooklyn for a meeting. They argue. Bruno is furious and concludes that George and Peter are "following a script" that Selma wrote and was first played out in Toronto last year. George phones Paolo saying that he's expelled from ZW and to return all copies [Paolo has five or six] of ZW1 to George. It went from bad to worse. George won't talk to me on the phone. Finally, I get him and he says the meeting has been changed to 6:00pm Sunday night, knowing that I will have had to leave NY Sunday morning to get back to Rochester.

Phil, a friend of George's, is not "allowed" to talk to George as Sam Weinstein tells him on the phone. Phil goes to the bank and transfers the funds from the ZW account, to which George has access, to his personal account, a smart dude is Phil. Phil then goes to Brooklyn. Sam won't let him in the door. Phil finds George at Sylvia's. George tells Phil that he must sign an introduction saying that "wages for housework is the class perspective". He has 24 hours to decide. George tells Phil "I am Zerowork."

Bruno, Paolo and I go to Manhattan. We see Harry and we wait for Phil. We're pretty low, but we talk. Phil wants to go ahead with ZW2. He wants to talk about the Marazzi piece again. I say I'm willing also to work on ZW2 (generally I've done the production). I also hold the inventory, the leaflets . . . and I have a ZW account too. Maybe we can pick up the pieces. Bruno will need time to think. He has personal clarity and is ready to split cleanly from the wages-for-housework oriented men's group in Toronto. Two years of his political labors have been thrown in his face. He's very tough. George tells him he is no longer to be trusted because he didn't "choose" fast enough. Harry cannot come to the Sunday night meeting in Brooklyn. Harry's now with us.

To this account, I will add only the following. A day or two after this attempted "coup", I was able to meet with George. Not only was I presented with the same choice but he informed me that anyone, myself included, who desired to remain part of the Zerowork Collective would be required, henceforth, to clear anything they proposed to publish – in *Zerowork* or anywhere else – to what amounted to a "central committee". In other words, participants in *Zerowork* would be required to toe the line, with that line clearly being set by the leaders of Wages for Housework.

Immediately following Peter's account above, he noted, "It was all very sad. It was not hard on me personally. My heart and soul took some blows in London and in the September meeting. But for everybody else there were deep emotional thrusts."⁷⁰ This was very true, this attempted – and botched – coup ruptured friendships that, in some cases, had lasted decades. Peter went on, "I thought this is ignominy. This is Trot faction fighting of the 1950s. That is more than a 'parallel' because the hidden hand of the weekend was formed precisely in those 50s faction fights." The "hidden hand", of course, was that of Selma James, an individual whose insights I admired, and continue to admire, but whose sectarian political tactics and behaviors I have come to loath.⁷¹

As the reader might imagine, not only was the behavior of those attempting to "take over" *Zerowork* intolerable, but the conditions laid out for future collaboration were totally unacceptable to the other editors. None of us in New York that weekend would submit to such "discipline" and George and Peter found themselves on their own instead of head editors of a new *Zerowork* subsidiary of Wages for Housework, Inc.

⁷⁰ Years later, Peter would confess that that these events actually were hard on him, despite his downplaying their effects at the time.

⁷¹ More on this below. A year later during a research trip to England, France and Italy, I would discover, at each stop, more examples of such sectarian behavior – that left a trail of anti-Selma feeling in its wake, even from those who admired her many insights and analyses of class and gender relations. See the essay on "Background: From *Zerowork* #2 to *Zerowork* #3" on this website. It was sad, as Peter wrote, to see such an intelligent individual sow discord and antagonism instead of understanding and collaboration among more or less like-minded comrades.

In retrospect, this attempt to impose a party line and party discipline should not, perhaps, have been such a surprise. It was not just conflicting evaluations of the Marazzi piece slowing down efforts to produce *Zerowork #2* that might have signaled the existence of unbridgeable disagreements. As early as November 1975, in discussing John Merrington's relation to the editorial board, some wanted to condition his continued association with us on his position on Wages for Housework.⁷² Increasingly, individual initiatives were more and more being constrained by demands that everything be sanctioned collectively. Once the first issue of *Zerowork* was published and circulated, resistance emerged to allowing individuals to respond to critics. For example, when Phil wrote a long-delayed response to Peter Rachleff's friendly but critical review that was published in *The Fifth Estate*, pressure was put on him not to publish it and insistence that all responses should be collective.⁷³ Things as mundane as the exchange of ads with other publications became the object of a political evaluation of the other publications and an assessment of whether we should be associated with them even to the degree of such an exchange – as if printing an ad amounted to a political endorsement.⁷⁴ These kinds of developments turned out to have been foreshadowings of the kind of strict discipline that the Wages for Housework partisans sought to impose the weekend of March 11-13, 1977.

At any rate, Peter immediately wrote to Christian Marazzi and John Merrington in England and to Ferruccio and Bruno Cartosio in Italy about what had happened, about our decision to go ahead and produce *Zerowork #2* and solicited their feedback about how to proceed with the *Zerowork* project as a whole. Christian and John's response came quickly, supported our decision and discussed how to move ahead. For their part, they were amenable to revisions in Marazzi's article but were also proceeding with their plan to produce a book – *Money and the Proletarians* – that would include his ideas along with other aspects of the work they had all been doing on the changing role of money in the class politics of the crisis.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, within a month or so, we heard from Ferruccio in Padua that he did not want us to include his article on class composition and US direct investment in *Zerowork #2*.⁷⁶ He didn't explain why, just as he hadn't explained the nature of the conflict in Padua that had led to his parting of the ways from Toni Negri and other comrades at the Institute of Political Science. In the light of what we had so recently experienced, we could only guess at the pressure that had been brought to bear and at the likelihood of gross misrepresentations of events in New York. We begged for explanations but none were forthcoming.⁷⁷ To our considerable chagrin, Ferruccio followed the withdrawal of his article by his own withdrawal as Corresponding Editor of *Zerowork*. As a result, Bruno Cartosio,

⁷² The primary basis of objections to Merrington's continued collaboration was his status as an editor of *New Left Review*. Peter Linebaugh adamantly refused to "tell him that his presence among us depends on a) withdrawal from the *NLR* and b) his "stand" on WfH, because we have not (yet) applied such standards to one another." He would only pass along, he said, that "two of our comrades did not understand how it was possible to be an editor of *NLR* when that mag has opposed WfH while at the same time fighting for WfH." Peter Linebaugh to George Caffentzis, November 18, 1975. Even four days later, in a draft of a letter to Merrington – that was never sent – Leoncio Schaedel suggested the possibility of making future collaboration conditional not only upon "Disassociation from political journals that espouse opposing lines, e.g., *New Left Review*", but also upon "Recommendation by the Power of Women International Collective"! Letter from Leoncio to "Dear Zeroworker", November 22, 1975.

⁷³ Phil prepared a draft response to Rachleff in mid-January 1977, circulated it for comments and was open to having it published either as an individual or collective response. Within two weeks he not only learned that the draft was unacceptable as a collective response but that he had no encouragement to submit it to *The Fifth Estate* as an individual. In measured words, tinged with bitterness, he announced, "The reactions received on the circulated draft were in such sharp variance that it appears a collective response is not possible at this time. If anyone else should like to attempt to write another draft that might satisfy everyone, let him do so." Phil Mattera to Peter Linebaugh, February 1, 1977.

⁷⁴ After returning home from the previous *Zerowork* Collective meeting in New York, Peter Linebaugh wrote to Phil Mattera of putting on hold his discussion with James O'Connor of exchanging ads with *Kapitalistate* after discovering how "our meeting allowed itself to come to the decision that there was to be little exchange of ads without full collective consultation within ZW about the 'political suitability' of ads." Peter Linebaugh to Phil Mattera, February 5, 1977. In that same letter Peter responded to Phil's withdrawal of his response to *The Fifth Estate* saying he wished Phil had gone ahead and worried, "Is a point arising where our desire to act collectively and politically is paralyzing our ability to act at all?" Recently (this year of 2014 CE), reading Goutraux and Hays-Kingsinton's books on *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, I have discovered that such political decisions about placing advertisements has a long history in sectarian politics. Philippe Goutraux, *Socialisme ou Barbarie: Un engagement politique et intellectuel dans la France de l'après guerre*, Lausanne: Payot, 1997. Steven Hastings-King, *Looking for the Proletariat: Socialisme ou Barbarie and the Problem of Worker Writing*, Boston: Brill, 2014.

⁷⁵ That book, unfortunately, was never completed, although their work eventually led to other publications.

⁷⁶ During the preparation of this webpage, Ferruccio was happy to work with me in polishing his essay for publication here. Thus, his very valuable work is finally available in English. He has also explained that at the time, in 1977, quite apart from the political troubles, there were things about piece that left him unsatisfied, i.e., that he had "undervalued the state" and also had given "short shrift . . . to the enormous issue of the reproduction of labor power". Ferruccio email to me, November 26, 2014.

⁷⁷ Years later, Ferruccio explained that his decision about withdrawing from editorship was partly due to his "inability to grasp the terms of the debate" on the other side of the Atlantic. *Ibid.* It is my impression that his inability derived from receiving varied and conflicting accounts. As I hope *this* account makes clear, at first the real nature of the debate was not obvious to those of us who stuck with *Zerowork* either.

working at a distance from the intrigues in Padua, enthusiastically cried “Don’t stop! Put out ZW2 as soon as possible!” and became our new Corresponding Editor in Italy.⁷⁸

Discussion Groups

In the wake of the split in the editorial collective, along with work completing *Zerowork #2* went efforts to draw sympathetic readers of *Zerowork #1* into closer discussion. One result of those efforts was the creation of study groups in both New York City and Austin, Texas. In New York, a “Wednesday Night Zerowork Group” was formed and in Austin a parallel group also came together on a regular basis. In both cases, some 15-25 people engaged in regular discussion about the contents of *Zerowork #s 1 & 2*, possible content of *Zerowork #3* and more generally the *raison d’être* of the journal and its strengths and weaknesses as a political project. These groups included local editors – Phil Matera and Paolo Carpignano in New York and Harry Cleaver in Austin – but most participants were friends and comrades drawn in from outside the editorial circle. Most came from academic workplaces, either professors or students. In many cases, the students had been previously exposed to the ideas of *Zerowork* through lectures or extra-curricular study groups. Others from outside included a few from the New York City *Kapitaliststate* group. As is usual in such undertakings, some participated regularly; others came and went. Unlike the earlier Struggle Against Work Collectives, these groups included both men and women. Interests of participants varied, from extending previous work on the New York City fiscal crisis to discussion and debate about the theoretical and political sources of the ideas in the journal⁷⁹ as well as about what those ideas implied for answering the old question “What Is To Be Done?”⁸⁰

With respect to this last question, there was considerable discussion of more engagement with people in struggle beyond our own, largely academic, workplaces. One past example to which reference was often made, was Peter Linebaugh’s work with the prisoners’ movement, work in which his research on the working class and crime in the 18th Century was brought to bear on contemporary struggles. One much discussed possibility was the further elaboration of contacts and collaboration with coal miner struggles. Bill Cleaver, whose contribution to *Zerowork #1* was the piece on wildcats in Appalachia, followed up by working with a West Virginia activist Wess Harris, to compose a new article about more recent coal miner struggles in that area.⁸¹ Their work also inspired Bill’s brother, Harry, while on a trip to the state of Bihar, India to contact miners in Dhanbad, the coal mining center of that region.⁸² It also inspired Mike Wustner, a comrade from the New School – who had grown up in Montana – to consider contacting those working in Western strip mining.⁸³ Finally, Harry’s work on food crises in Eastern Europe had revealed the role of coal miner struggles in Silesia, Poland and raised the possibility of building contacts there. Of all these possibilities, only the new essay by Bill and Wess was actually realized.

End Result: *Zerowork #2*

The upshot of the departure of George, Peter Taylor and Ferruccio from the Editorial Collective was a reassessment of everything that had gone before, including proposals for the content and form of the second issue.

⁷⁸ Bruno Cartosio to Peter Linebaugh, April 14, 1977. Bruno also wrote “You are not a party. If the w.f.h. comrades believe they are and have their own little international party-line to hold forth and to cling to – let them do it on their own.”

⁷⁹ During the summer of 1977, one member of the group, Peter Bell, then teaching at SUNY Purchase, while visiting family in England, contacted John Merrington and obtained from him a verbal history of the “Italian connection”. Upon his return, he wrote up and circulated a fairly detailed synopsis of that history. It only whetted many appetites for more details and materials on roots hitherto obscure for most participants.

⁸⁰ To give credit where it is due, this “old” question did not originate with Lenin, but with the Russian revolutionary populist Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828 – 1889) who wrote a novel whose title/question Lenin (following Tolstoy) appropriated. Lenin, of course, gave a quite different answer from Chernyshevsky’s embrace of the peasant commune (*mir*) as the template for building a new society – a position with which Marx largely agreed once he was drawn into the debate in Russia. (See the discussion on the inclusion of the peasantry within a broadened definition of the working class in the section of this webpage on “[Background: Genesis of Zerowork #1](#)”.)

⁸¹ That essay, although never included in *Zerowork*, is accessible on this webpage. Wess Harris later collaborated with William C. Blizzard to produce *When Miners March*, New York: PM Press, 2010, about the Battle for Blair Mountain, a massive armed struggle, during the West Virginia mine wars of 1920-21.

⁸² While nothing came of this visit to Dhanbad, a separate by-product were [several articles on Malaria de-control](#), written in response to an upsurge in the incidence of that disease, hitherto on the verge of complete eradication.

⁸³ Wustner produced the 1990 film *Montana*, written by Larry McMurtry, starring Gena Rowlands and Richard Crenna, about ranchers vs coal mine operators who want their land.

With respect to content, the withdrawal of Ferruccio's essay on class composition and US direct investment, reduced the draft manuscripts in hand to: a revision of Donna Demac & Phil's essay on the fiscal crisis of NYC, which NYSAW had already published as a pamphlet, one essay by Harry on food crises and another on global capitalist planning⁸⁴, Christian's much-debated essay on the crisis of the money form and a piece Phil was composing on post-war Vietnam.

With respect to form, there were two substantive decisions.

First, critiques of the first issues' poor aesthetic qualities led to a concerted effort to find illustrations to visually break up, and complement, the texts – something that had not been done in *Zerowork* #1. Indeed, only the cover by Massironi had demonstrated any attention to aesthetics at all. This was accomplished by locating and including a series of photographs, drawings, etc. appropriate to each individual article.

Second, instead of simply presenting another set of essays embodying our interpretation of the crisis, we decided to pitch, at least some of them at specific audiences. This had been the original objective of the essay on the New York City fiscal crisis, as it originated in a pamphlet distributed in the city. We decided that we could also shape at least two of the other essays – the one on food and the one on post-war Vietnam – with a view to particular audiences. In the case of the essay on food crisis, Harry composed his essay, in part, as a conscious intervention into the "food movement" that had been set in motion by the hardships caused by rising food prices and spreading famine in the early 1970s – the browning of that "Green Revolution", so touted during the Development Decade of the 1960s.⁸⁵ In the case of the essay on post-war Vietnam, Phil aimed, in part, at all of us who had been involved in struggle against the war on Vietnam. We spelled out these motivations in two flyers prepared to accompany copies sent, gratis, to particular individuals and groups.

The flyer for the food article contained the following suggestion,

We think the implications of this analysis are far reaching for all those involved in the food movement. It means *first* that while we must always study the mechanisms of oppression, we must above all study the struggles, which have gone on and are going on against those mechanisms. We must try to grasp the fact that the fight for food is part of a larger fight that is proceeding on many levels and in many places, and that a "food movement" can only be effective if it addresses itself to the problem of speeding up the circulation of those struggles. . . . Secondly, the analysis of the similarities of the struggles around food in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, along with Mattera's article on Vietnam in this issue, raise serious questions about the search for alternative 'socialist' approaches.

The flyer for the Vietnam article included a quotation from the June 3, 1977 issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* relating how:

⁸⁴ This piece on global capitalist planning was written in response to skeptical responses to that theme in *Zerowork* #1. For example, in Mario Montano's essay "Notes on the International Crisis" we find assertions such as capitalist strategy "took the shape of international planning and management of the contradiction between development and underdevelopment". For those whose thinking about the world was still framed in terms of imperialism – conceived as competition among national blocks of capital, such formulations sounded outlandish, harking back to Kautsky's "superimperialism" much critiqued by Lenin. For those of us in *Zerowork*, however, it was obvious that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund were not merely tools of US imperialism but represented the interests of an increasingly dominant multinational capital without national allegiance. In some ways, our position foreshadowed Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire.

⁸⁵ The "food movement" in the early 1970s consisted of several parts. First, was the angry reaction of farmers and consumers to the "Great Grain Robbery" of 1972 – a secret grain deal negotiated between the US government and the Soviet Union that benefited the big grain trading companies but hurt grain growers and, subsequently, consumers due to rising meat prices. (Much of the grain being exported to the Soviet Union was feed grain – a concession to Soviet citizen's protests and demands for more meat. So much was included in the deal that the consequent rising feed grain prices led to a steep rise in the price of meat in the US.) Second, vivid pictures of starving children, first in Ethiopia, then from elsewhere in the Sahel and South Asia, led to a widespread private mobilization to raise money to aid the starving. Third, a substantial part of the "consumer movement" concerned the quality and safety of food. Fourth, among farmers there was both the long standing minority that engaged in "organic" methods – increasingly supported by the consumer movement – and the battles by small farmers to survive in the face of government subsidized competition by agribusiness. Finally, there were the struggles of farm workers, such as the United Farm Workers of California led by Cesar Chavez – that fought for rights against big growers and obtained widespread support among consumers, e.g., the grape boycott. Harry analyzed some of this history in his contribution to *Zerowork* #2. Another minor intervention, at that time, was the preparation of a short book review of Susan George's *How the Other Half Dies* (1976) and Francis Moore Lappé and Joseph Collin's book *Food First* (1977) prepared for *The Library Journal* for which Phil was working at that time. Harry was familiar with these efforts, partly because of his earlier work on the Green Revolution – his dissertation and a piece published in *Monthly Review* – and partly because while working on *Food First*, Joe Collins had spent a week culling his files for materials.

A major incentive to foreigners investing in Vietnam is the availability of cheap labor, with average wages of US\$20-25 a month . . . Vietnamese officials [have] underlined the investment advantage of Vietnam's political stability . . . Citibank officials seem impressed by the seriousness of the Vietnamese and their accommodating attitudes." ⁸⁶

Initial discussions of available materials and of past ideas of what to include in *Zerowork #2*, combined with an assessment of editors' available time and energy, led to a decision to finish polishing the five draft manuscripts and to compose two more: an introduction and an essay on "restructuration" that would provide an overview of our struggles that had precipitated the crisis and of capitalist counterattacks.⁸⁷ Paolo and Harry took on the job of drafting those two. The first would be completed; the second would not. At the same time, efforts continued to distribute *Zerowork*, using pretty much the same methods as before, but included designing a new advertisement for placement in other Left journals (no longer considered a problematic political act).

The introduction, as one might imagine, went through several revisions and all the editors had input into those revisions. Most importantly, the introduction was composed, in part, to respond to criticisms that we had not juxtaposed our position in *Zerowork #1* to more traditional Marxist and Marxist-Leninist ones. Because the articles in the second issue were framed as moments of a global class confrontation, we began responding more directly by differentiating our understanding of the crisis from traditional, and contemporary, theories of imperialism (including dependency and world-systems theories). Rejecting the usual analysis of imperialism in terms of competition between blocs of capitalists and their governments (often with the complicity of an opportunistic labor aristocracy in the "center"), we argued for rethinking such conflicts in terms of the dynamics of class struggle evolving differentially over time and space, as driven by working class struggle at home and a desperate search by capital for weaker foreign labor power or cheaper raw materials to pit against domestic troublemakers or to compensate for necessary concessions.⁸⁸

As it turned out, neither the proposed essay on "restructuration" nor Harry's existing essay on global capitalist planning would be included in *Zerowork #2*. The reasons for the failure to compose the essay on "reconstruction" are not clear, either in my (and others') memory or in what written records remain of our discussions and correspondence. I suspect the main reasons concerned the press of time and limited energy. The press of time derived from the split. George's affirmation that weekend that he, Sam Weinstein and Peter Taylor considered themselves *Zerowork* suggested that they would try to put out their own version of *Zerowork #2*. The rest of us had serious doubts about their ability to do so, even with the help of their comrades in *Wages for Housework*. But not knowing, we felt it important to get *Zerowork #2* published fairly soon to establish continuity and reaffirm the identity of the journal.⁸⁹ The limited available energy derived partly from the negative psychological effects of the split and partly from other obligations. Paolo's energies were being absorbed by his waged job; Harry's were being soaked up mainly by his work on the food piece – which, because of its scope, wound up being by far the longest of the essays, even after editing – but also by his new job teaching in Texas that started in September 1976.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ The only direct responses to these efforts, that I know of, was discussion of the food piece among some activists in that part of the food movement preoccupied with trade and famine. Communication from Mark Richie.

⁸⁷ What we had in mind by "restructuration" is suggested by the following passage in the final introduction to *Zerowork #2*, "restructuring of world capital in the crisis – by which we mean the new ways . . . in which capital is creating new forms of accumulation in which [working class] needs are either incorporated or smashed."

⁸⁸ Ironically, this kind of understanding was evoked, but not developed, by Lenin in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* when he quoted Cecil Rhodes on how vital imperialism was to controlling workers at home. This much neglected passage, can be found in [Chapter VI](#) of that book and is worth quoting at length.

And Cecil Rhodes, we are informed by his intimate friend, the journalist Stead, expressed his imperialist views to him in 1895 in the following terms: "I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread! bread!' and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism.... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists....."

⁸⁹ Whatever their original intentions, they never published an alternative *Zerowork*.

⁹⁰ See the biographical sketch below.

The exclusion of Harry's essay on global capitalist planning was due to lack of space and a decision about priorities. We had decided to limit the length of the second issue to 150 pages and, after estimating the printed length of all the essays, realized that its inclusion would require substantial cutting somewhere else – most obviously in Harry's long essay on food crises. We decided in favor of retaining the integrity of the food piece and excluding the planning essay.

This then was the final line-up of the contents of *Zerowork: Political Materials 2* sent to the printers in early September 1977; copies would come back on September 10.

Introduction,

Harry Cleaver, "Food, Famine and the International Crisis",

Philip Mattera, "National Liberation, Socialism and the Struggle Against Work: The Case of Vietnam,

Christian Marazzi, "Money in the World Crisis: The New Basis of Capitalist Power"

Donna Demac & Philip Mattera, "Developing and Underdeveloping New York: The 'Fiscal Crisis' and the Imposition of Austerity",

Letters [one from Pete Rachleff in Pittsburgh, one from Geoffrey Kay in London].

Brief Biographies of the Editors of *Zerowork* #2 (1977)

Paolo Carpignano – see the previous section on the genesis of *Zerowork* #1

Harry Cleaver (1944 -) An American, I grew up with my younger brother in conservative rural Ohio but with middleclass, liberal democratic parents. We went to the same public schools but whereas my brother became politically engaged early on, in high school, my political activity dated from the Civil Rights Movement during my studies at Antioch College (1962-1967) – mentioned in George Caffentzis' biographical sketch. Those studies included an academic year at l'Université de Montpellier in France (1964-65) where I met numerous Vietnamese students who questioned me about growing US involvement in their country.⁹¹ Those questions – to which I had no satisfactory answers – being, at that time, a biochemistry major – drove me to the study of American imperialism, to a B.A. in Economics and to subsequent graduate studies in economics at Stanford University (1967-71). While in France, I was also confronted by French feminists who critiqued my typical Mid-Western male chauvinism and challenged me to read and respond to Simon de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949). Doing so converted me – at a theoretical level – to feminism and set me on a never-ending path to bring my praxis into line with my theory.

At Stanford, I was deeply involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement. That involvement included: 1) participation in the local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)⁹², 2) research on Stanford's involvement in the war and capitalist strategy in the Pacific Basin more generally, 3) founding – with other anti-capitalist activists and researchers – a radical think tank, the Pacific Studies Center, and 4) dissertation research analyzing the historical origins of the Green Revolution – an agricultural strategy designed to undermine peasant unrest and, in Indochina, to complement US military counterinsurgency. That research continued during the three years I taught at l'Université de Sherbrooke in Québec (1971-1974) – accompanied by the study of Marx, Hegel and the writings of French Marxist anthropologists Maurice Godelier, Pierre-Philip Rey and Claude Meillassoux.

Those studies led me to frame my dissertation in terms of the interaction of modes of production. Dissatisfaction, however, with the inability of that framing to give due weight to the struggles of peasants against whom the new agricultural technologies were aimed, led me to closer scrutiny of Marx's value theory and to working out a new reading in terms of the value of labor to capital and workers' struggles against work. Those studies had two outcomes. First, they included the composition of an essay that would turn out to be the first draft of my later book *Reading Capital Politically* (1978). Second, when I moved to New York City to teach Marx in the Graduate

⁹¹ I was also marginally involved with the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF) and conflicts with the Right-wing Fédération des étudiants nationalistes (FEN) – an offshoot of the Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS) and its underground resistance to Algerian independence movement (1954-1962) – conflicts that were particularly sharp in Southern France.

⁹² Stanford SDS soon dissolved into the "April 3rd Movement" – a broader coalition that began with the decision to shut down and occupy the university's Applied Electronic Laboratories where research was being conducted on countermeasures to North Vietnamese ground-to-air missiles being used against US warplanes carpet bombing both cities and irrigation infrastructure.

Program of the New School for Social Research (1974-1976), my reinterpretation of value categories in class terms predisposed me to an immediate interest in the kinds of theoretical innovations grounding the analysis in *Zerowork*.

Finishing my dissertation in the fall of 1974 provided time and energy for me to participate in the *Zerowork* Collective. By that time, capitalist policy makers had complemented the Green Revolution *development* strategy of increasing food supplies in some areas with an *underdevelopment* strategy of dramatic food shortages, price increases and famine in others. Given my previous research, my contribution to the second issue of *Zerowork* would be a long article on "Food, Famine and International Crisis."

My earlier student activism, conversion to feminism in France, studies of mostly unwaged peasant struggles in Southeast Asia, and work on value theory, all contributed to my openness to the Wages for Housework analysis of the unwaged. On the one hand, that analysis helped shape my work on Marx's value theory and on the food crisis of the early 1970s. On the other hand, it made me amenable to collaborating with George Caffentzis, Philip Mattera, Larry Cox and others in organizing the Income Without Work Committee, that soon became New York Struggle Against Work, and in organizing resistance to the austerity measures then being imposed on both waged and unwaged in the city.

When differences over the relationship between *Zerowork* and Wages for Housework reached an impasse in early 1977, I aligned myself with those who sought to retain the independence of the *Zerowork* Collective rather than with those who sought to subordinate it to WfH. In the midst of these conflicts and parting of the ways, and in response to an invitation by graduate students, I took a new job at the University of Texas in Austin and left New York City in the Summer of 1977. In Austin, I organized a new discussion group around the analysis of *Zerowork* and its usefulness in understanding various aspects of the ongoing crisis. (See "Background: from *Zerowork* #2 to *Zerowork* #3" on this webpage.)

Peter Linebaugh – see the previous section on the genesis of *Zerowork* #1

Philip Mattera (1953 –) An Italian-American from Brooklyn, New York, Mattera was active in the anti-Vietnam war movement in high school and while at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, where he wrote his senior thesis on Marx. He met the *Zerowork* and Wages for Housework crowd while studying political economy at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research and simultaneously working as a news and public affairs producer at listener-sponsored WBAI radio. He participated in the New York Struggle Against Work collective and, with Donna Demac, wrote the pamphlet *Developing and Underdeveloping New York: The "Fiscal Crisis" and a Strategy for Fighting Austerity* (June 1976). Working within the *Zerowork* Collective, he reworked that pamphlet into an article for *Zerowork* #2. He also contributed a second article on postwar Vietnam.

Bruno Ramirez – see the previous section on the genesis of *Zerowork* #1

John Merrington – see the previous section on the genesis of *Zerowork* #1

Christian Marazzi (1951 -) Born in Lugano, Switzerland, with Italian as his mother tongue, Christian studied first at the Lyceum of the State of Ticino in that country, then the Istituto di Scienze Politiche at the University of Padua, Italy (1971-1975), where he worked with Toni Negri and took his Doctorate degree, and finally at the London School of Economics (1975-76) and the City University of London (1976) where he worked with Geoffrey Kay. In both Padua and in London, Christian's research focused on the post-WWII international monetary system of fixed exchange rates. With Kay and John Merrington, Christian began to study – in class terms – the crisis of that system that emerged in the late 1960s, came to a head with Nixon's abandonment of tie between the dollar and gold in 1971 and mutated into more or less floating exchange rates among major hard currencies. One fruit of these studies was his contribution to *Zerowork* #2, "Money in the World Crisis: The New Basis of Capitalist Power."

Bruno Cartosio (1943 -) An Italian, Bruno was born and reared in Tortona, a commune of about 30,000 inhabitants in the Piedmont region, about 40 miles south of Milan. The son of a foundry worker and a laundress, who started their own small businesses after the Second World War, Bruno was the first in his family to go to college. Son of a father aligned with the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), and nephew of an uncle who had been an active anti-fascist before the war (jailed in 1931) and a partisan during the war (jailed in 1944), he grew up in a highly politicized family and began participating in politics at age 13. He entered the Università degli Studi di Milano in 1964 – where he met Ferruccio Gambino. In the years 1967-1972, Milan was one of the main centers of student unrest – a wave of struggle in which Bruno participated. As a result of his interest in the Black civil rights struggles in the US, he wrote his dissertation on "Il problema negro nella storiografia statunitense e nella letteratura afroamericana" ("The 'Negro' problem in American Historiography and Afro-American Literature"), obtained a degree in American studies and after graduation headed for North America.

He went to Canada where, for two academic years (1969-1971), he taught Italian at McGill University in Montreal. While there, he started, with a few others, the "Mouvement Progressiste Quebecois" and published a newspaper *Il Lavoratore*, both of which continued for some ten years after he returned to Italy. In Montreal, he once met C. L. R. James, who went to lecture there and thanks to an introduction from Ferruccio, he also traveled to Detroit where he met Jessie and Marty Glaberman.

Soon after his return to Milan, Bruno translated for Italian publishers George Rawick's, *From Sundown to Sunup*; C. L. R. James's, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery*; Herbert Gutman's, *Work, Culture and Society* and edited a collection of James, Gutman and Harold Baron's essays in 1973. In 1976, he also collected and translated into Italian a number of articles and essays by Glaberman, writing an introduction dealing with the history of the "Johnson-Forest tendency" and the "Correspondence" and "Facing Reality" collectives.⁹³ His friendship and political-intellectual exchange with the Glabermans and Rawick lasted until their deaths.

Along with Sergio Bologna, who, in the early 1970s, taught at the University of Padua, and the bookstore owner-publisher Primo Moroni, he launched the historical-political journal *Primo Maggio*, whose first issue came out in 1973 and which he continued publishing until 1988. *Primo Maggio* provided a forum for the main lines of research that characterized a political-intellectual left, which jealously defended its independence from both the institutional political parties (Communist and Socialist), and the formations of the so-called "extraparliamentary left" (Potere operaio, Lotta continua, Avanguardia operaia, Il manifesto...). During most of its life, *Primo Maggio* loosely belonged in the "camp" of the Italian workerist thought. It was mainly through it, and thanks to travels to the US, while teaching American literature and history at the University of Milan, that Bruno met some of the people involved in the publication of *Zerowork* – Peter Linebaugh, Phil Mattera, Silvia Federici, Paolo Carpi gnano, and Bruno Ramirez.

⁹³ George Rawick, *Lo schiavo americano dal tramonto all'alba: la formazione della comunità nera durante la schiavitù negli Stati Uniti*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973. Herbert G. Gutman, *Lavoro, cultura e società in America*, Bari: De Donato Editore, 1979. C. L. R. James, Harold M. Baron and Herbert G. Gutman, *Da schiavo a proletario*, Torino: Musolini Editore, 1973. Martin Glaberman, *Classe operaia, imperialismo e rivoluzione negli USA*, Torino: Musolini Editore, 1976.