

A Ballad Against Work

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1. The ingenuities of our times

1.1 Our times ...

"Money can buy everything, it is said. What is not said is what it takes to buy money."

Eighteen years ago ... **Bhupender** ... dropped post-graduation mid-way ... started job ... hand tools factory ... in Faridabad ... adjoining Delhi ... Gedore Tools ... now Jhalani Tools ... eighteen years consumed ... one rented room ... eight feet by ten feet ...for Bhupender, **Bisheshwari** and four children ... one toilet ... for six families ... one tap ... for two dozen families ... after overspending on rent ... to avoid shanty towns ... no cinema ... or eating out ... or drinking ... or smoking ... even tea shops shunned. Wages ... usually delayed ... paid after three-four months ... Bisheshwari ... cooks ... cleans ... gets water ... desperate for a job ... searching for the past two years ... unable to find one. Bhupender unable to support old parents ... who stay in a village ... small plot of land ... cattle ... old father has now got a job ... road building.

Ranjan ... turning thirty-two ... spent more than a decade studying in premier scientific research institutes ... completed PhD ... employed as research associate ... on project to project basis ... with strict deadlines ... work-shift is 9.30 to 6.00 ... but deadlines mean long hours at night ... not working beyond shift-hours implies hostility towards the boss ... jeopardises employment in future projects ... also works for getting approvals for future projects ... but without guarantee that an accepted proposal will mean a job for him. Highly specialised work ... decade-long training ... uncertainty of work ... and still ... low wages ... a half of the salary spent on food ... just for himself ... has to stay in a hostel ... impossible to support his family.

"Work is on our minds twenty-four hours everyday."

Karen ... **Jean** ... in Paris ... share apartment ... two small rooms ... corridor contains the kitchen ... two small shelves. Karen ... up by 7.00 ... leaves by 7.30 ... reports at 8.00 at a cafe ... works till 1.00 ... next ... television company ... reads proposals ... writes synopsis ... back by 8.00 ... next ... cooks ... eats ... sleeps ... interrupted at 7.00 ... everyday ... except Sunday. Jean Francois ... editor ... at Euro Disney ... leaves by 7.00 ... back by 9.00 ... eats ... sleeps ... two to three months holiday ... once in two years.

Rajbal ... owns a hectare ... northern India ... works everyday ... twelve months ... 365 days ... in heat, frost, rain ... preparing soil ... sowing ... irrigation ... harvesting ... cleaning ... guarding the land ... day and night ... arranges seeds ... fertiliser ... water ... diesel ... electricity ... tools ... cart. Old parents and wife and children help ... sometimes workers hired. Most grain sold to government agencies ... procurement price is ridiculously low ... equals legal minimum wages for eight-hours shift-work for only 147 days ... for two crops per annum on one hectare.¹

"I force myself to go to work everyday, the way I force my child to go to school everyday."

Ramya ... typist ... computer operator ... secretary ... small trading company ... Delhi ... returns from office ... by 7.30... housework till 9.00 ... spends some time with daughter ... sleeps by 11.00 ... heat and mosquitoes ... often without electricity ... up at 6.00 ... cooks ... cleans ... drops daughter at school

¹ Rajbal, Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar (FMS), December 1994.

... leaves by 9.00 ... crowded buses ... reaches hurried and late by 10.30 ... claustrophobic room ... rapid pace ... unfinished work ... lunch ... 15 to 30 minutes ... hurries off at 6.00... Sundays ... washing clothes ... regaining energy. Raghu ... her husband ... sales and servicing job ... electronic office equipment ... leaves by 8.30 ... back by 7.00 ... school homework with daughter ... one room ... including kitchen ... common toilet ... with other families. One child ... already difficult ... second unthinkable ... difficult for the child too ... three-year old ... already gets homework.

1.2 and its ingenuities ...

The ingenuities of our time lie in the

- governance of production
- enforcement of discipline
- manoeuvring of allocation
- command over ideas and dreams

Towards a partial fulfilment of this operation we attempt to understand

- governance of production as management of levels of exhaustion.
- enforcement of discipline as management of layers of eradication.
- manoeuvring of allocation as management of a range of extraction.
- command over ideas & dreams as management of the effectivity of seduction.

The categories that we are using are not to be looked at as rigid, and we hope that they will achieve some explanatory value as we move on. These different ingenuities are all inter-woven and exist together. Their seeming separation results only because at times one becomes more highlighted than the others.

Managing the levels of exhaustion

karoshi dial 110

In the Fordist assembly line the labour process was designed to occupy the workers 45 seconds in every minute. In the flexible production plant, workers are occupied 57 seconds in every minute.

Having appeared in the land of the rising sun, the management paradigm of flexible production is shining in every land where the sun rises. The foremost objective of flexible production is to enforce hyper-intensive work.

Workers on Toyota's assembly line in Japan and England make 20 movements every 18 seconds.

The numbers given above imply that a lack of application and insufficient concentration for even a fraction of a second is being eradicated. This results in a level of stress that imperils both physical and psychological health.

Workers have suddenly died on the shopfloor, seemingly healthy and robust. The flexible production technique has contributed a new word to the Japanese dictionary - *karoshi* : sudden death due to overwork.

Karoshi Dial 110, a volunteer group, had identified 1500 such deaths by June 1990.²

The ingenuities in the management of production lie in the transparency and, therefore, the near invisibility of coercion in our times. A wonderful device which manages to make us work throughout the

² Ben Watanabe. 'Sudden Death from Overwork' in Labour Notes, June 1992 quoted in Tony Smith, 'Flexible Production and the Capital/Wage labour Relation in Manufacturing', Capital & Class 53. Flexible production rose in the land of rising sun in the mid-eighties.

year and throughout the week. As a result, the continuous implantation of habits of work intensification is perpetuated.

In retrospect, whip-yielding master on horse-back managed to make serf and peasant work three to four days a week and three to six months a year.

An intriguing question : What makes coercion invisible now, and what makes it so effective ?

Managing the scales of eradication

- a disciplined child
- a good student
- a productive worker
- an efficient gesture

"Any worker arriving five minutes after the ringing of the bell ..."

"The gates of the school will be closed at 6.30 a.m. Any child arriving late will not be allowed ..."

"The train is scheduled at 17 : 44 : 30 ..."

"8.45 entrance of the monitor, 8.52 the monitor's summons, 8.56 entrance of the children and prayer, 9.00 the children go to their benches, 9.04 first slate, 9.08 end of dictation..."³

"It is expressly forbidden during work (study) to amuse one's companions by gestures or in any other way, to play at any game whatsoever, to eat, to sleep, to tell stories and comedies ..."

"... As for the duration, the small step and the ordinary step will last one second, during which two double steps would be performed ... The ordinary step will be executed forwards, holding the head up high and the body erect, holding oneself in balance successively on a single leg, and bringing the other forward, the ham taut, the point of the foot little turned outwards and low, ..."

"For good handwriting, the pupil must always hold their bodies erect, somewhat turned and free on the left side, slightly inclined with the elbow placed on the table, the chin can be rested upon the hand ; the left leg must be somewhat more forward under the table than the right ; a distance of two fingers must be left between the body and table, the right arm must be at a distance of three fingers from the body ..."⁴

Behind the innocuous words of everyday, such as discipline, efficiency, productivity, work-culture, punctuality, good schooling, lie the pogroms of eradication : the eradication of any uncontrolled movement of a hand or the unproductive glance of an eye or the unwanted wandering of a mind.

Managing a range of extractions

We thought it apt to term "management of extraction" what is generally referred to as the "management of allocation" because the latter does no justice to the ingenuity of personnel trained in management schools.

Their ingenuity, for one, lies in the following comparison :

Till about three hundred years ago the ensemble of monarchs, emperors, kings, lords, priests, knights, samurais, usurers, etc. managed to extract one-tenth to one-fourth of the total produce.

³ Foucault, Michel. 'Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison', Vintage New York, 1979.

⁴ *ibid.*

Today more than 95 % of the produce is extracted. Governments alone extract more than one-half of the global produce, and far from being called exploiters, governments are advertised as the overseers of our welfare.

In the utilisation of the produce militaries get priority over the producers. This becomes evident during tragedies, like the famine in Bengal, India in 1942. Even by official figures, more than three million people died of hunger in this famine. The famine (read genocide) was caused due to the diversion of food and provisions to the military.

Managing the effectivity of seduction

Several pathways blend to form a network of seduction : family, school, religion, academia, national culture and the media are some of the nodal points.

The attempt of the managers of seduction is to convince us, to make us believe, to instil in us that

- work is meant to make our lives easier,
- work is meant to make the world a better place,
- technological research is geared to reduce work,
- money makes social interactions simpler ,
- it is a sin to live without working for a living,

The wages we get are equal to our contribution in production, the militaries, governments, leaders and representatives are there for our benefit.

The most ingenious task entrusted to the managers of seduction is to make us believe that most of us believe this make-belief.

We are seduced to internalise and desire discipline and authority.

We are seduced to hand over our produce.

We are seduced to surrender our voice.

1.3 ..its counter ingenuity

The other ingenuity of our times, an insurgent ingenuity, lies in resistance.

Our resistance to discipline, to seduction, to extraction and to work takes diverse forms, varying from stopping work to working for free. Resistance is directed against governments, against managements, against planners, against media, against wars, against authority, against surveillance, against representatives and against dominant values. Some times it appears as collective defiance of authority, at other times it may even be masked as individual submission to power.

During the Gulf war thousands of people in America participated in anti-war discussions, appeals and protests on radio and television. This was made possible by the operation of a number of unlicensed radio stations and television channels. This attempt to circulate ideas and opinions unconstrained by the interests and permissions of governments, businesses and media created something of an electronic equivalent to a leaflet.⁵

A signpost on the road leading to a village in Maharashtra, India reads : "Government officials are not allowed in this village. No taxes will be paid."

Students at La Trobe University in Australia wrote articles in a student magazine, which gave advice on the "Art of shoplifting".⁶

Blue flu - Virus of Everyday Resistance

In 1994, hospital workers in Chicago took a cue from researches in biological warfare and invented a

⁵ Tony Dowmunt (ed.), 'Channels of Resistance', BFI Publishing.

⁶ Rank and File News, P.O. Box 103, West Brunswick, Vic. 3055, Australia.

new sickness - the blue flu. On the 9th of February, more than a thousand workers of four hospitals notified themselves as suffering from blue flu and took leave. The workers included specialists, doctors, nurses, technicians and sweepers.

Researches have shown that virus, such as those causing the blue flu, attach themselves particularly to workers weakened by excessive work-load and low wages. The anxiety caused by new agreements, which reject workers' demands for wage-increases and more employees, makes them even more susceptible to these virus. Such conditions generate turbulent emotions in the workers and they decide to fall sick collectively. In this particular case, managements had observed the symptoms carefully and their prognosis suggested that the workers were going to fall ill. They reasoned that the questions of legality and illegality must have an impact on such a pestilence. They warned the workers that falling sick in this way was illegal, but this did not deter the virus.⁷

*" The practice of 'self-reduction' - i.e. the refusal to comply with price increases of essential services ... is not an entirely new phenomenon in Italy ... what is new is the way in which this practice has spread to other sectors ... such as public transit, electricity and home-heating ... when viewed in the context of parallel practices - such as squatting and organised mass appropriation of groceries from supermarkets ... it becomes ... a struggle for the re-appropriation of social wealth produced by the working class ..."*⁸

ingenuity conceived by the holy ghost

Women workers in Malaysia have to look through micro-scopes and weld different parts together. A worker saw a ghost through a microscope ; within minutes all the workers on the assembly line fainted. The managements got unnerved and called in both rationalists and ghost catchers to practice their respective crafts. Sociologists were also invited to do micro and macro studies for long-term solace.

The holy ghost changed its form and reappeared as rumours of some poisonous gas leak in a factory in the US. In this shoe factory, workers began feeling dizzy as boxes containing glue were opened. Complaints of headaches, dizziness, body-aches, chest-pains permeated throughout the factory - the management got the factory vacated. Chemical-biological warfare experts, with their state-of-the-art gadgetry, checked every nook and corner but could not identify the poisonous gas. Management got the work recommenced. However, after some time again the same symptoms and the same measures followed. The results were also the same as before. With this routine almost established, the ghost was ready to show some more tricks but the management took remedial measures, and called in experts in psychology and sociology.⁹

The information about these ingenuities travelled fast and reached the Bata shoe factory at Faridabad in India. There it conspired to produce another ingenuity. The management had installed new fully automatic lines to replace the earlier semi-automatic lines. The workers were given a target to make 2400 pairs per line per shift instead of the 1660 pairs they were making on each semi-automatic line. Right after the installation of the new lines, workers started complaining of headaches and dizziness due to the constant movement. They gave a production of only 1400 pairs per line. This went on for one and a half years after which the management dismantled the fully automatic lines and had to give up its retrenchment scheme.¹⁰

WORK IS WORSHIP WHY WORK WHEN YOU CAN WORSHIP

Work is Duty said Lord Krishna, Work is Love said Lord Jesus, Work is Chaste said the Prophet Mohammed, Work is Worship said Swami Vivekanand, Work is Truth said Mahatma Gandhi, Work is a Long March said Chairman Mao, Work is Patriotism said Field Marshall Stalin, Work is the Nation

⁷ FMS, April 1994.

⁸ 'The Working Class Struggle Against the Crisis : Self-reduction of prices of Italy' by Bruno Ramirez February 1975 quoted in the Poor...

⁹ FMS.

¹⁰ FMS, August 1995.

said Sir Churchill, Work is Freedom said Fuhrer Hitler, Work is Security says the UNO, Work is a Bond says the World Bank. Work is Worship - so believe the wage-workers. In fact, wage-workers go a step further and believe - 'better worship than work'. And workers, being workers, do not only believe so but also act accordingly. Towards this end they do whatever is in their power to do. So much so that holy days have now acquired the meaning of holidays.

They are eager to worship Kali or Ram, or Mohammed or Mary or Christ or Zarathustra or the Mother Goddess, or Govind Singh, Nehru, Hitler, Churchill, Mao, Kennedy, Sanjay Gandhi, Zia, or even the unknown soldier. They accept this to be preferable to work. They celebrate birth anniversaries and do not work. If celebrating a birth anniversary is not acceptable, then they mourn a death and do not work. In fact they celebrate anything, commemorate anything, observe anything, mourn anything if it means no work. Ram's reaching Ayodhya or Mohammed's leaving Medina; Gandhi's trek to Dandi or Mao's haul to Beijing ; the victor's victory or the loser's defeat - anything will do. Nobody is despicable enough not to be worshipped, nothing is outrageous enough not to be celebrated if it only means - no work!

2. Eradication drives

Understanding work intensification as a multitude of eradication drives.

The euphemism most commonly used : Discipline

"Discipline produces subjugated and practiced bodies, docile bodies."¹

Other related words : efficiency, productivity, work-culture, punctuality, good schooling, smartness

2.1 Eradication of any uncontrolled movement of the hand and any unproductive glance of the eyes

In the last quarter of the 19th century resources were systematically channelised for research in electrical and mechanical engineering. Towards the end of the century, it became possible to introduce the Fordist-Taylorist system or Assembly Line Production.

Techniques of work intensification like opium and whips used on slaves, peasants and artisans became old fables. Even the methods of the early factory system were far too backward. Workers now worked in assembly lines where the products moved at a speed not controlled by workers. The new system allowed the managements to govern the speed of work more stringently. Workers could no longer take a breather between two jobs as they could manage earlier.

Thus began the era of work motion studies undertaken to scrutinise and pattern human actions. They make work more rigorous and demanding. Any uncontrolled movement of the hand or any unproductive glance of the eyes is sought to be eradicated.

"... the speed of the motor has to be maintained at 1500 rpm, the distance between two workers will be 2 meters, the line will move for 2 meters and stop for 2 minutes, the worker must be stationed at a distance of 0.5 meters from the line, feet one foot apart for proper balance, the tool stand will be placed 0.75 meters from the worker on the left, the line will carry ..."

While earlier supervisors inspected to check that workers did not relax even for a minute, now they had these new systems and machines to ensure that workers were engaged every second.

In these production systems, workers are made to work upto 45 seconds in a minute.

¹ Michel Foucault, op. cit.

2.2 Eradication of idle-time

*"Good-bye, Sir, excuse me, I haven't time.
I'll come back, can't wait, I haven't time.
I must end this letter, I haven't time.
I'd love to help you, but I haven't time.
I can't accept, having no time.
I can't think, can't read, I'm swamped, I haven't time.
I'd like to play, but I haven't time."*

- A depiction of the situation to which wage-workers found themselves reduced as a result of scientific time-management around the turn of the last century.²

2.3 Eradication of any unwanted wandering of the mind and the soul

Halfway into this century, managements analysed that the Fordist-Taylorist system had stretched workers' bodies to the limit. (However, as we know, research continued in this field, and by the nineties through flexible production systems workers are made to work upto 57 seconds in a minute.) Managements then began research and brought control over workers' minds and souls on their agenda.

There was an awareness that if you already squeeze 45 seconds out of every minute, there is little scope of reducing what the management guru calls idle-time. The significant emphasis thus became to govern the worker's mind and soul alongwith driving the body.

Since then, a variety of models of production systems have been tried out and their effectivity measured. The proponents of various systems - 'management gurus' - vie with each-other to appropriate more resources. Management schools and research manuals have named these models : Cellular Engineering, Re-engineering, Total Productivity Management, Total Quality Management, Just-in Time Production, Agile Production, etc.

In Nippon Steel Company this control over workers' minds is achieved through another eradication - partial eradication of fixed wages. The wage consists of two components, fixed and a flexible part. The flexible part is divided into 2/3rd individual payment and 1/3rd group payment, decided on the basis of individual and group performance respectively. The flexible wage and the rise of fixed wage depends upon the criteria of : devotion and loyalty to the company, and obedience !³

Such systems are spreading fast but have also become associated with some terms, which along with the system, originated in Japan. We are already acquainted with the most relevant, karoshi - sudden death due to overwork.

2.4 Counter-ingenuity drives back

Just-in-time system of inventory control implies that constant work has to go on unceasingly in production units as inventories are reduced. Any delays would mean stoppage of work down the line in many production units. The introduction of Just-in-time has increased the strength of every small group of workers, as work stoppage in any section of a company or a production network can have wide-spread implications. This forces the managements to do their job of countering resistance through more supervision, stricter & more elaborate disciplining codes, and increase in company security personnel and police-posts.

² Michel Quoist, quoted in S B Linder, 'The Harried Leisure Class'. Columbia University Press, New York and London.

³ Solidarity Links, February 1993 _ Revolt, P.O. Box 11127, 1001 GC Amsterdam, Holland.

*"In our factory, Kelvinator (now Whirlpool) in Faridabad with a total of 4000 workers, tool down strike by 17 operators in the compressor unit brought the manufacture of refrigerators in the entire factory to a halt."*⁴

In June 1992, work-stoppage by workers brought one of the forty-one railway companies in the USA to a stop. Managements of the other 40 companies decided to counter anti-work and declared lock-out in all the other companies. As a result, production in many factories ground to a halt as the railways stopped. Due to the delays in deliveries, production stopped immediately in companies organised on

Just-in-time basis. Even giants like General Motors were helpless. The US government was forced to declare a state of emergency to combat the fall in work ethics amongst workers in America.⁵

2.5 Eradication of "please" !

Operators at the dial-in telephone directory assistance run by Pacific Bell used to say, "What city, please ?". Now the operators have been told by the company to discontinue the practice of using 'please' in their greetings. The company reasons : the new greeting saves time. Research had been undertaken wherein it was found that the revised wordings clock in at 1.2 seconds, compared with the average 1.7 seconds that the earlier "...please" used to take.⁶

2.6 Eradication of "regards" !

Recently, a group of management students during a train journey were troubled over a most profound problem. The problem concerned the immense waste that was accruing daily due to the convention of ending every corporate fax and telex with the salutation, 'regards' ! One suggestion was to save time and money by sending a circular to all concerned to be informed that everybody had been 'regarded' once and for all and to stop this daily indulgence.

This discussion seemed quite oblivious about the origins of this custom of giving 'regards'. 'Regards' came in vogue after the eradication of a variety of salutations - yours' truly, yours' sincerely, yours faithfully, yours' affectionately, yours' etc. - along with the time and thought required to choose the appropriate one, and preceding it with a 'thanking you'.

This discussion was also ignorant of the displacement of regards in many executive circles and faxes by "B.R." i.e. best regards !

2.7 Eradication of idle chatter

TALK LESS, WORK MORE

Tanya was admitted to a neighbourhood school. She was taught getting up early everyday, discipline, punishment, reading, writing, arithmetic. And to sit quietly in the class unless permitted to talk. She, however, loved to talk to her friends even when the teacher forbade such flagrant indiscipline. When other threats and rewards did not work, one day the teacher sent her home with sticking-tape put on her mouth. Tanya was not yet three years old.

the queue theory

"The queue theory" is among the frontier researches in economics. It concerns itself with calculating the length of the queue in which people will line-up to buy a certain commodity, given the demand and

⁴ FMS, September 1995.

⁵ FMS.

⁶ Parade Magazine, January 1, 1995. Quoted in 'The People' February 25, 1995 _ 111 W. Evelyn Avenue, Suite 209, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-6140, USA.

supply position of that product. It stands to reason that for reliable predictions and efficient utilisation of space, the theory must be able to assume (and for practical application, it must be able to enforce these assumptions) that people will behave themselves and occupy only a specified amount of ground space. This implies that they must not talk.

A usual scenario to be noticed is that people standing in lines do not talk to each-other. All that they say is to express impatience at the speed of the line, or express impatience at the speed of children who are slow to internalise these adult habits.

the weekly chat

A research scholar's experience at Yale : the whole day is spent in a library, which suffers from abundance and shelf efficiency ; with instructions to maintain pin-drop silence, the evening passes away in the room, amidst books again. On Friday nights, the only 'holiday' scholars have, people meet for a weekly chat.

2.8 Mass eradication the daily detail

In all probability the phrase 'mass eradication' will lend itself to the following ideas and images:

10 million officially killed in World War I, 50 million officially killed in World War II.

And the 'peace-time' details since then ... 187 wars between nation-states and officially 16 million killed, till 1983!

These events are effects of competition, technology, growth and progress and it is essential to comprehend this. However it is also imperative to talk about the incalculable havoc that incessant eradication drives due to competition between enterprises, between branches of production and between national interests have on people and to examine how the even more wide-spread wars against resistance play havoc with the lives of billions.

Every year for a few days after the announcement of Class XII results, Bombay newspapers carry reports of a number of teenage suicides.

In the USA lack of motivation among students in schools and colleges is treated by large doses of psycho-stimulants. Already by 1970s, 25 % of the students were under this medication.

Attempts by social managers in Japan to push ahead of the US have led to such an increase in the course-work that children have started committing suicide in large numbers.

"If you observe workers crossing any major intersection in Faridabad Industrial Town, you see a large number of missing fingers and amputated limbs. Everyday in the factories and workshops of Faridabad, at least 200 workers are injured badly enough to require professional medical attention."

The social security system, in countries where it is highly developed, has provided the primary method of keeping a watch on people. Every individual in these countries is numbered, and files are maintained on him/her. Corporate bodies and the government use this system in an attempt to monitor people's habits, movements and activities.

All governments keep dossiers on people whom they classify as offenders. Some states in the USA have initiated a new innovation, wherein they keep dossiers on people whom they classify as 'likely to commit an offence'.

Barbara a survivor of mass-eradication

Barbara works in an electronic banking system in the state of Maryland, USA. She and her co-workers are arranged in long rows of small desks. All through the day they open envelopes and arrange their contents. They have to fill in control cards which record the number of envelopes they open and the amount of time they take. They have to work at a speed of three envelopes a minute. Alongside are women who have to key in 8,500 strokes per hour on electronic key-boards.

The workplace resembles a large class room with the manager positioned on a raised platform in the front. Supervisors are stationed at the back. A boss explains that if you want to keep an eye on the

workers the best place is at the back. Then workers do not know whether they are being watched or not.

Black globes hang from the roof with cameras in them. A boss monitors the workers and the supervisors with the aid of eight cameras in the room. The cameras can be zoomed in by remote control on any document on any worker's desk. The boss also receives continuous data on a computer about the work done by each worker.

There is a strict rule that workers can not talk about anything which is not related to that work. The range allowed is from silence to monosyllables.

To do away with the unwanted wandering of the mind all the windows are closed There is no break besides lunch and nothing except lozenges is allowed to be eaten while working.

During the lunch break workers hardly eat. They just talk and talk .

Barbara's co-worker Carol Smith, while in sleep, moves her hands as though opening envelopes and sometimes suddenly wakes up at night.

Barbara has to do a part-time job after this 8-hour shift to meet her expenses.⁷

⁷ A Wall Street Journal Report published in Challenge, Jan 11 1995 _ GPO Box 808, Brooklyn, NY 11202, USA

3. Speed chains

"Isn't it odd that a century which should, by all rights, be the most leisurely in all history is also known to be, and condemned for being, the fastest?"¹

Jagdish is a worker in a studio which gives video-equipment on hire. He has to travel along with the equipment each time it leaves the studio. His troubles have increased as production companies now choose to travel by air to cut equipment hiring costs. Air travel cuts the idle time for the equipment drastically and is very popular with production units. However, it plays havoc with the working schedule of the workers who act as chaperons of the equipment. An instance :

Day I

Dawn..... Jagdish travels from Delhi to Hyderabad, a distance of 1500 kms, with the equipment.

Day...: ...Jagdish works on a 11 hour- shift.

Night..... He takes a flight back to Delhi along with the equipment.

Day II

Dawn..... Jagdish flies to Calcutta - another 1500 kms. The equipment has been hired to another company.

Morning..... Something is found amiss with the equipment ; Jagdish travels back to Delhi.

Dusk..... He travels again to Calcutta.

Day III

Morning.....Jagdish on a 12 hour shift.

Night.....The shooting is finished, Jagdish rushes back to Delhi - to eradicate any 'idle time'.

3.1 the information and transportation web

Telephones at homes make workers easily accessible after shift hours. This extends the working hours.

Telephone companies have aided this phenomenon by charging higher rates during office hours. It costs companies less if the employees work after their shift hours.

Faxes, and informality in official correspondence introduced alongside, have made the sending and receiving of letters a matter of minutes. Office workers using fax machines do ten times, or more, correspondence compared to when faxes were not used.

Counter-ingenuity strikes

More and more workers are not divulging their residential phone numbers to their supervisors and bosses, only friendly colleagues are informed of the secret.

Cordless phones go further, and make it possible for people to be summoned in more inaccessible places, like in their toilets!

Cellular phones and lap-top computers further erase any time for leisure. They keep people working whether travelling in a train or stuck in a traffic jam.

Pagers help employers keep track of the mobile workers and act as electronic chains by which workers can be commanded by a tug on the chain.

¹ Walter Kerr quoted in S B Linder, op.cit.

Some police departments have developed devices which fit even more nicely into the definition of **electronic chains** and are also called the same. These devices alert the police whenever the wearer moves out of certain prescribed limits.

We can safely bet attempts will be made to introduce these electronic-chains for mobile-workers as workers are getting over their initial fascination for pagers and are inventing ways to subvert them by not answering the pager beep, switching the pager off, erasing unanswered messages.

Fast over-night trains make possible that people spend the nights in trains and the days at work.

Air travel, which now means pre-dawn departures and late-night arrivals, allows only a few hours of sleep at home or in a hotel.

It is characteristic for all big cities that the airports have their busiest departure times in the early hours of the morning in order to carry people to work in other cities. The working shift then obviously begins a couple of hours before these scheduled departures.

the swan-song of slowness

In a period when all our time is being devoured by speed chains, it is odd to simultaneously hear the persistent complaint about things being slow and getting late.

How is it that the two co-exist ?

This speeding-up is not taking place in a vacuum. Competition creates the necessity to do more in the face of the threat that you still might be too slow.

For example, in any project, the time of completion is an important part of the contract. Each competitor, in its bids and plans, tries to outdo the other. Approved plans envisage speedier implementation than ever before. Actual work usually lags behind what is planned, and in that sense it is slow and delayed. However, it is still faster than the previous fastest. Thus, the two seemingly antagonistic results exist together.

Another reason for this persistent song of slowness is the managerial ingenuity trying to counter workers' resistance to intensification of work, by pre-empting workers' objections against speeding up of work.

3.2 weary with toil

Health

A friend working as a camera-person (actually an euphemism - he is being made a pioneer in the art of simultaneously working as a camera-person, camera-assistant and a sound recordist) with a television company began losing hair near his temple.

The doctor's prescription : relax.

Diagnosis : overwork and strain.

Now in his late-twenties, he started working only three years ago. Besides doing the work of three people for long hours, his work compels him to portray the world in opposition to his experiences. For instance, news programme done by the same company he works in extolled over-burdened children. The programme applauded an advertising gimmick by a restaurant in Delhi. The restaurant had introduced a scheme of giving free ice-creams to children who scored more than 90% in their school exams. "There is some good news for children and a good reason to put in that extra bit", said the programme.

A homeopathic doctor to a patient of spondylitis:

"So many people are suffering from cervical spondylitis these days. I am myself suffering from it, so is my assistant. Even young children have this complaint. And there is only one reason for it. Too much work. But I will prescribe a medicine to do away with the pain and suggest an exercise. If you do the exercise you may work 12-hours a day without any problem. And I do not intend to recommend a repertoire of exercises which nobody has the time to do. I will suggest you a simple exercise which you may do even while you are travelling and that will be sufficient."

A number of diseases are now associated with the pervasive feeling of time running out, with the speeded-up pace of living, and with the pressure of getting things done in time. Because an intense sense of urgency speeds up human body rhythms, a frequent outcome is heart disease, high blood pressure, lowering of the immune function and an increase of susceptibility to infection, and cancer. The rise in the incidence of sleep related diseases and problems associated with stress are an obvious fallout. A new disease which is a result of time pressure and work intensity is being called 'hurry sickness'.²

Deaths because of over-work are rising. Recent deaths of TV and film workers in India have forced other workers to question the inhuman work-schedules of multiple shifts a day in this industry.

weary with toil? haste !

Medicine

The axial principle of medicinal practice is to provide quick remedies and make people ready for work. A popular ad on television for an ointment for sprains and aches puts it succinctly. Its Unique Selling Point - 'Iodex maliye, kam pe chaliye' [Rub Iodex, and rush to work] - is true for Medicine in general. Workers do not have the time to relax or give their bodies time to heal in case of illness. The obvious trap one falls into is frequent and habitual medication, further eroding the body's resistance to disease - a vicious circle.

Some systems of medicine - e.g. the homeopathic and ayurvedic systems - lost popularity and were not considered worthwhile precisely because their treatment was based on giving the body some time to heal. The dichotomy between allopathic and homeopathic medicine, or between 'western' medicine and 'traditional' medicine is now serving to diffuse the wide spread dissatisfaction with, and the questioning of, the dominant medical practice.

However, these 'slow systems' are now changing track to be on the fast lane as well. Treatment is being geared to quick medication and fast recovery. For example, steroids are being used in some Ayurvedic medicines for quicker effect.

3.3 Mass consumption is Mass intensification

Mass intensification necessitates a continuous increase in consumption. Consumption here implies the purchase and use of objects that serve merely as tools to channelise the worker's time and energy for the intensification of work in the production process. This is required so that we are able to become and survive as wage-workers.

Just as intensification of work requires more expenditure on machinery, on infrastructure, and on technologies of control, similarly, it compels wage-workers to spend more as requirements keep rising to cope with the ever demanding nature of work

Such necessities are spread over a vast range :

- products and services needed to maintain **punctuality**
- products for '**saving time**' which can be devoted to wage-work
- products needed to **cope up** with the effects of long intense hours of work

Watches & clocks -> Necessary for time-management and punctuality.

Tea & Coffee -> Opium was earlier given to artisans and labourers during periods of intense activity. Tea and coffee provide the wide-spread and diluted substitutes for this practice. They have also served as eradicators of the post-lunch nap and the early-morning slumber.

Refrigerators -> Cook food once a day. Store packaged food.

Cooking gas, cookers, toasters -> To cook food before the family rushes for school, college, office and factory.

² Barbara Adam, 'Timewatch : The Social Analysis of Time'. Polity Press 1995.

Washing machines -> Laundry possible only on the weekly holiday.

Cloth dryers -> No place or sun in crammed apartments.

2-minute noodles -> 2-minute food.

Fast food -> A meal in 4-minutes flat.

Frozen food, masala mixes, packed food -> Quick-fix food.

Microwave oven -> Cook while you work. Heat refrigerated and packaged food in double quick time.

Telephones -> Be available while at home.

Pagers -> Be available while on the move.

Lifts & Escalators -> Necessary for high-rise buildings.

High-rise buildings -> Results of highly-centralised, densely-populated cities.

Suburbs -> Workers move into suburbs because they can not afford city centres.

Vehicles -> Essential for all jobs, as workers move out of city-centres due to unaffordable rents, or are forcibly evicted as property rates rise.

Literacy -> Essential for all jobs, in factories or otherwise.

Education -> Essential for office jobs.

Entertainment -> To provide an illusion of life to tired minds and bodies, and numbed souls.

the sandwich effect

Wage-workers are being sandwiched between the opposing movement of lowering purchasing power and rising necessities. Consumer gadgets are necessary so as to cut-down time for housework. This does not lead to more leisure time. Rather, they are necessary so that both parents can become and continue as wage-workers. Domestic gadgets have also become essential, as wage-workers, because of decreasing wages, do not have time for domestic work and can not afford domestic help. Domestic wage-workers are also pushed into more intensive work or unemployment. This phenomenon, however, is often obfuscated by a moral disapproval of hiring domestic workers.

Similarly, the need for vehicles and mass transportation is increasing because wage-workers are multiplying and the distances between the place of residence and the place of work is growing.

The squeeze of the sandwich effect is still more. Wages are not enough for buying necessities. Loans & credit become the normal means for buying necessities - future work and earnings are promised in return for consumption necessary in the present.

Another pressure builds up against relaxation. Another motivation surfaces for resistance.

The attempts of the managers of seduction to counter resistance are seen in the various explanations forwarded to explain the sandwich effect. "Consumerism is growing", "quality of life is rising", "there is too much money", and "new expensive leisure is emerging" are some of these.

The outcome of the sandwich effect is that the working day expands, our work intensifies and the domestic unit contracts.

One person households with 14 hour working-day increase; two person households with 26 hour working-day become fashionable; three person households with 30 hour working-day dominate.

3.4 New leisure Sports - no fun no play

Far from being a form of play, sports have come to acquire a meaning which is an antonym of playfulness, fun and leisure.

Sports plays with players.

performance

In the playing field the assignment is to perform to the best of one's abilities. To perform under given rules and instructions, marked by grimness, stress and tension. To perform under the hierarchy of players, captains, coaches and managements. The captain, part management and part player, has the task to bridge the schism between the two.

With the motto - "**higher, stronger and faster**" - sports are transparently the avant-garde of intensification techniques. The process of recasting the human body begins at an infantile age. Throughout the player's life the body functions as a laboratory for quick-fix medicine and performance-enhancing drugs. Techniques of exerting the injured body are experimented. Resulting teenage-burnouts are now no longer seen as aberrations.

The doses of stimulants and the teams of psychologists simultaneously concentrate on stretching the fatigued mind and soul, and investigating into motivation-strategies. Moreover the players, and especially the stars, must keep up and propagate the pretence of enjoying the competition and the intensification. This is necessary to retain their jobs, salaries, endorsements and modelling contracts.

The contest is an arena for the perfection of measurement technologies, a boon for implementing work intensification on the shopfloor. The interest of cities to host big events is to get resources for infrastructural change - faster roads, fly-overs, displacing populations from prime-land, etc.

Having progressed from **games** (to play a game : to amuse oneself) to **game-theory** (game-theory : how to snatch a win in a situation of mutual conflict), the recognition that players' interests are in opposition to that of the institutions, the officials, the managements, the organisers, the sponsors and the advertisers is catching on. This is a first stroke in the play of resistance.

spectacle

On and outside the playing field, sports provide a spectacle to passive viewers denied play in their lives. This spectacle creates an illusion of life in tired bodies and in numbed minds and souls. It manufactures a sense of achievement and concocts icons in the service of nationalism, corporatism and individualism.³

In their attempt to provide a spectacle, the police in Atlanta were on an year-long campaign to sweep the 55,000 homeless (conservative estimates) off the streets, in preparation for the 1996 Olympics. People were arrested on charges like walking through parking lots, sitting on kerbs, asking for money and sleeping in public.

crowd

The interface of the performance and the spectacle is the crowd. At the border-line between the playing and the non-playing fields, it is arranged around the arena in a tiered formation. The crowd is the most wanted entity and the most feared. The jeers and cheers create an atmosphere, attract the TV audience and spur the contestants - the crowd is indispensable for the organisers, the advertisers and the news-makers. But any crowd is unpredictable, there is no guarantee that it will behave, that it will follow the rules of the game. The crowd is a collective, and our times are irreconcilable with any collective. This promotes the heavy policing of the crowd, the researches into crowd control techniques and the projects on mob psychology.

The Samba of the Brazilian fans has been made a symbol of Brazilian nationalism, and the cameras love to focus on it. However, the police allows only the smallest drums inside stadia, lest the drummers get too big to handle !

Cultural commodities

Just to indicate a parallel between sports and other cultural commodities, we quote a few passages from an article in a film-magazine⁴ on the contribution of Alfred Hitchcock and the film *Psycho* in the process of creating a schooled and disciplined audience.

"... it transformed the previously casual act of going to the movies into a much more disciplined activity of arriving on time and waiting in an orderly line."

"... [the] demand that the audience arrive on time would eventually lead to the set show times, closely spaced screenings, elimination of cartoons and short subjects and patient waits in line that are now standard procedure."

"... But there was another trailer, not seen by the general public yet even more crucial in inculcating discipline into the audience. Called 'The Care and Handling of Psycho', this was

³ See Guy Debord, 'The Society of the Spectacle'.

⁴ Linda Williams, 'Learning to Scream' in *Sight and Sound*, December 1994, London.

not a preview but a filmed 'press book' teaching theatre managers how to exhibit the film and police the audience."

"... theatre audiences ... were a highly participatory and unruly lot, arriving late, leaving early, spitting tobacco, talking back to the actors, stamping feet and applauding promiscuously, they were gradually taught by the arbiters of culture to 'submit to creators and become mere instruments of their will, mere auditors of the productions of the artist."

4. Implanting habits of work intensification

*A proposition : " A reward of ten pounds is given for anyone who kills a wolf.
A vagabond, however, is infinitely more dangerous to society."¹
A purpose : To pre-empt such a danger.
A path : Implanting habits of work intensification.
Some sites : Family, School, Work-place*

4.1 family the motivation centre<

Defining us against them.
Providing an uncontested meaning and purpose to our life.
Internalising hierarchical and sexual division of labour.
Characterising play time as wastage.
Characterising time and thought shared with friends as sloth, indolence and lethargy.
Monitoring lack of motivation.

4.2 School the learning centre

Learning to internalise institutional and social hierarchy.
Learning to internalise punctuality.
Learning to build-up stamina and concentration for long hours of continuous, repetitive and stipulated work.
Learning the weight of the written word.
Learning the connections of reward and punishment with any activity.
Learning the ability to measure time in units of effective activity.
Learning the ability to measure usefulness in monetary units .
Learning the ability to evaluate social transactions in monetary terms.
Learning the art of competition to undermine fellow humans.
Learning that knowledge/information lead to achievement and social prestige.
Learning the denial of collectivity, and the affirmation of individualism.
Learning to accept the State as a natural and benevolent arbitrator.
Learning that military and police are our protectors.
Learning the value of success 'Nothing succeeds like success'.
a visible connection literacy & work intensification
Managements' need for hammering in the value of being properly timed and regimented exists perpetually. Early in the twentieth century, to teach some of its labourers the English language, International Harvester Corporation's "Lesson One" read:

¹ Le Trosne quoted in Michel Foucault, op.cit.

I hear the whistle.
 I must hurry.
 I hear the five minute whistle.
 It is time to go into the shop.
 I take my check from the gate board, hang it on the department board.
 I change my clothes get ready to work.
 The starting whistle blows.
 I work until the whistle blows for lunch.
 I eat my lunch.
 It is forbidden to eat until then.
 The whistle blows at five minutes for starting time.
 I get ready to go to work.
 I work until the whistle blows to quit.
 I leave my place nice and clean.
 I put all my clothes in the locker.
 I must go home.²

creeping like a snail unwillingly to school

The increase in factory production and its corollaries - offices, post & telegraph, railways, telephone departments - necessitated that the workers be acquainted with the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. This provided the spur for literacy and schooling, and hastened the conversion of artisans and peasants into wage workers.

The increase in wage-work by women, especially in the twentieth century made literacy crucial for women if they were to work in factories, offices and railways, and in telegraph and telephone departments. The same necessity which acted as the spur for the increase in male literacy formed the major force behind the demand for increased education for women.

Investments by governments in the education system are to produce more productive workers for the industries of today and tomorrow. This constantly increases the workload on children, parents and teachers. Ironically, those far-sighted individuals - the proponents of the present school system - who saw and advocated the possibility of increased production and extraction through literate wage-workers have earned appreciation as vanguards of a humane society.

The spinal disorders that education is endowing onto children due to back-breaking book-loads ; the increasing suicides due to the nerve shattering stress of competitiveness and the parameters of success ; and the continual lowering of the age at which educational instruction begins are posing problems to the halo of benevolence around education.

4.3 work place the squeezing centre

"Produce ! Produce ! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God's name ! 'Tis the utmost thou has in thee ; out with it, then."

- Thomas Carlyle

In the case of industrial wage-workers, incentives for increased production have been among the much used devices to make workers supervise intensification of their own bodies. Incentives are meant to lure workers to give more than normal production. Then this increased production becomes the new norm - to be fulfilled without incentives. The managements then try to begin another cycle of increase in work-load and intensity.

² H.G. Gutman, 'Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America'. Basil Blackwell 1977.

The Escorts Group (among the top ten industrial groups in India with manufacturing units for motor cycles, railway equipment, earth-moving machinery, harvester combines and tractors) management began an incentive scheme in 1987, and through this increased its production to 4.82 billion rupees (482 crores) from 3.82 billion rupees (382 cr.) in 1986. In 1988 this reached 6 billion (600 cr.), 7.5 billion (750 cr.) in 1989 and 12 billion (1200cr.) in 1990. Now production is in the range of 20 billion rupees (2000 cr.).

These increases in the turnover are based on heightened workloads achieved through agreements signed with the union. By 1990, workload had increased to more than thrice the level of 1987. Meanwhile, the incentives had also been reduced. Now the Escorts management claims that production had been only 65% of capacity. It has started trying to find ways to end the incentive scheme, which has now outlived its utility.

The objective of the Escorts management is to move on to the methods of human resource development as exemplified by the Eicher Tractors' management. In 1974, in the Eicher factory in Faridabad 450 workers produced 80 tractors per month. Supervisors then drove workers to make upto 150 tractors in a month. An incentive scheme was introduced and workers started producing 500 tractors a month in 1978, then 1000 in 1982 and 1500 tractors by 1100 workers in 1988. In 1989 a Re-engineering plan was implemented ; 450 workers started producing 1500 tractors per month, and the incentive scheme was discarded. Through its human resource development schemes, Eicher management further reduced the number of workers to 380 and goaded them to produce 2000 tractors a month. And now, through the new agreement being worked out by the Eicher management and its union, attempts are being made to give the workers at the Faridabad factory a target of 2500 tractors per month.

Earlier incentives were given when a tractor was assembled in 15 minutes. Now it is done in 10 minutes without incentives, and the management wants it done in 7 minutes. The latest union agreement has specified a time of 9 minutes.

The managerial critique of incentives

The managing director of Eicher Consultancy pronounces, "to increase production by monetary incentives is the conventional method, but such baits are appropriate only for animals. Workers are after all humans and it is an insult to their human intelligence to make them work for incentives." "Furthermore", he says, "if managements have to increase production by incentives, then what are managers for!"³

4.4 mass production -> mass intensification -> mass eradication

Methods dominant in the nineteenth century through which work intensification took quite a few quantum jumps :

- The spread of the factory system. Researches in engineering and supervision. Strong-arm tactics of owners, their supervisors and goons.
- Legal violence - jails, hangings and shootings.
- The threatening presence of the state.
- Workers becoming adjuncts to machines whose functioning was designed and streamlined to increase productivity.
- The unceasing efforts of governments, and other opinion-makers and institutions (including religious movements) which made relaxation and leisure synonymous with wasting time. The morality of "work is worship" was impressed on the bigger part of the globe.

³ FMS.

- The continual opposition to this indoctrination was contained with the expanding role of police, jails and punishment.
- Seizure of vital supports like common lands and forests.
- Fines and incentives, bells and clocks.
- Preaching and teaching.
- Extinction of fairs, suppression of play.

These methods continued into the 20th century but were inadequate for the then prevalent standards of progress. They were therefore supplemented by other more progressive measures:

- Assembly-line production.
- Work-motion studies.
- Surveillance techniques and devices.
- Flexible production, Just-in-time production, Cellular engineering.
- Strategies for mind-control.
- Sophistication of technologies and methods of policing, prisons, intelligence services and security agencies.
- Agile production.
- Total Productivity Management.

4.5 cultivating intensification

The increase in the time and intensity of work in agriculture deserves a special mention because of its glorification in places like India. In regions like USA, Canada, Australia and most of Europe which account for most of the world's production in agri-business, live-stock rearing and dairy farming - agriculture is not considered different from industrial production.

Introduction of irrigation in agriculture had made possible two or more crops in a year and increased the working year from 3-4 months to 6-8 months. Further progress introduced crop rotation and multiple cropping of three and four crops in a year. The idea of work throughout the year became established in these advanced agricultural regions. This has had repercussions on festival patterns, holidays and family & social rituals which have lessened increasingly. Festivities which went on for months have been replaced by one or two day festivals. Long rituals on the occasion of birth, marriage, death and many others in which hundreds participated were censured as 'rural idiocy' and 'un-productive' expenditure of time and money. They have given way to the onslaught of the smartness of 'time is money'. The present customs are a faint trace of the earlier ones.

Fertilisers, insecticides, electricity, pumps, tubewells, tractors, harvester combines and hybrid seeds brought with them an increasing intensification of work. In spite of the wishes of present-day researchers in biological research (who usually perceive their activities as geared towards the betterment of peasants and agricultural workers), laboratory culture and genome-projects bring in more intensified work and further worsen the lives of agricultural workers. These researches are also causing worsening of lives at large with the ever new diseases caused by "more productive" chemical, biological and nuclear agricultural products.

5. The keys to managerial ingenuity

5.1 A Managerial Habit: Give Us This Day Our Daily Fix

Coffee is the quintessential managerial drink. A managerial magazine's attempt to understand how coffee really affects our body produced the following results :

*"There is an interesting parallel between the symptoms of coffee consumption and body's physical response to fear : increased pulse rate, heart rate, blood pressure, sensory acuity, muscle contraction and alertness. The reason contemporary society would find this pattern desirable instead of pathological is that our society has enshrined fear-producing competition. And caffeine is the little dose of fear with which we inoculate ourselves against the monstrous terror of what we are doing to ourselves. We constantly deny our limitations ; we refuse to listen to the message of fatigue the body sends us as a result of living under the near-continuous assault of what we call stress."*¹

5.2 Another Managerial Habit: Culture of Perpetual Note-Taking

Perpetual managerial coffee drinking is paralleled by perpetual managerial note-taking. For those not accustomed to this manic behaviour, it appears to be a pathological condition.

They make notes while they talk, they make notes while you talk, they make notes while they wait, they make notes while you wait for them, they make notes while they wait with you, they make notes while they do not wait, they make notes on small bits of paper, they make notes on big pads, they make notes while travelling, they make notes while at home, watching children, watching mothers, watching TV, they make notes as a matter of being alive, they make notes on death beds, in hospitals, watching nurses, watching doctors ...

This note-taking spree, which has engulfed our times, has produced some extra-ordinary systems. We give you a few examples of the managerial avant-garde.

5.3 A Managerial Insight: The Mother Cult

Total Productivity Management (TPM) takes the cake as a case of managerial observation, note-taking and insight. It also has the advantage of confirming to the fashion of the day - management research here takes an oedipal twist.

It is an everyday, commonplace fact that domestic slavery forces women to work 365 days a year, without any leave, without any breakdown and without any maintenance shutdown. Great minds are great because, unlike ordinary minds, they have the ability to see the everyday and the ordinary from a radically different perspective.

While ordinary minds strive to figure out ways to end domestic slavery (most have fallen into the trap of advocating wage-slavery) the great managerial minds see in it yet another model for managements to emulate.

¹ Chand Rangwani in E2, March 1996, Bombay.

Their observation is that as a part of preparing food, women also clean the kitchen and the utensils. While doing this cleaning up women also know the condition of their workplace, the equipment and raw material. As a part of their work they know when sugar has to be bought and when salt or rice or the gas or kerosene is going to finish and when the rubber pipe or the stove nipple needs to be changed. This has been theorised, as that simultaneously multiple jobs are done by women in the kitchen.

Total Productivity Management is the attempt by companies to implement such systems in factories - systems which are modelled on the manipulation of a mother's instinctive love for the child and the performence internalised devotion towards the family.

Nippon Denro, Toyota group company was among the first to execute Total Productivity Management, and the results were so amazing that a Plant Maintenance Institute has been set up in Japan and it has given certificates of excellence to 51 companies by 1982. Total Productivity Management strives to do away with the division of work between operation and maintenance of machines. This division had earlier allowed, sometimes, a little breathing space for both the operators and the maintenance workers.

The modelling of work in factories according to women's work in the kitchen combines the tasks of machine operation and machine maintenance. Also intended is that men and women workers should give their body and soul to the companies they work in, the way women do for their families and children. The Escorts management in Faridabad has such a re-engineering scheme on the anvil in which the machine operators will also be responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the machine. This scheme plans to extract a production of 215 tractors per day instead of the present 140. The plan also envisages a retrenchment of 10,000 workers out of the 24,000 permanent workers in the group through similar measures in other plants.²

5.4 Another Managerial Insight: Permanent Panic

This managerial insight is a result of a \$5 million funding by the U.S. Dept. of Defence, and was spearheaded by an auto-manufacturers' body for management research - the Agile Manufacturing Enterprise Forum (AMEF). The Iacocca Institute of Lehigh University in Bethlehem participated in the research. This enterprise is an example of the inter-linkages between industry, military, and knowledge producing factories working for the purposes of work intensification.³

The researchers focused on the conditions of panic in which doctors, nurses and other hospital workers work during emergency duties. Every action is crucial for life and death. Researchers observed these conditions in detail and, of course, took notes. This insight is being moulded into a new mode of production to be called the Agile Production (also Mass Customisation or Rapid Response Manufacturing). Not satisfied with coffee's mimicry of panic, managements would now attempt to create a continuous, everyday and twenty-four hour panic - the permanent panic.

To create these conditions of panic, and to maintain them every minute, every hour and every day, Agile Production calls for Virtual Enterprises. Such enterprises will form to achieve specific tasks, and then dissolve when the task is finished. These enterprises will employ workers from many physical locations, and only for a short time that they exist. There will be a handful of permanent workers who will be experts in diverse fields and will have to undergo constant training to remain experts. Temporary and contract workers will be the norm to create conditions of permanent panic and continuous insecurity.

The other method in this system of production, to squeeze more work out of fewer people, is the creation of Virtual Offices. This is made possible by the confluence of powerful and portable computing and communication technologies - high-specification lap-top computers, portable printers, digital mobile phones, fax and internet modems, and sophisticated software. That will mean that people will have offices wherever they are. The aim of the champions of the virtual office is simple : "to make sure no

² FMS.

³ Bruce Allen, 'Stepping Beyond Lean to Agile', June 1994.

one has any excuse any time for not working". And their confidence is wilfully blind to the resistance that it will provoke : "people will have to do it, if they have to keep their jobs."

To provide a gloss to these stratagems, the advocates of agile production intend to use the concept of empowerment much more widely than it is used by the Just-in-time productionists with their production teams. The increase in work-loads because of taking decisions besides implementing them, and the conversion of lower management into workers is to be promoted as 'empowerment' of workers. To make the concept of empowerment more seductive, some companies give shares of the company to workers. The ownership pattern of today's companies makes this gimmick a ridiculous farce.

Investments in most companies today are principally by means of loans. Around 90% of a company's investment comes from these sources. Loans are advanced by pension funds, banks and financial institutions. Share capital makes a small contribution to this investment. Even within shares, the majority of shares are owned by financial institutions, other companies and mutual funds. An insignificant percentage of shares are owned by individuals. Investment in the shares of a company by workers as a means of empowerment actually means that workers provide money for financing new techniques and machinery which have the sole purpose of squeezing more work out of them.

Empowerment thus means taking the responsibility for supervising our own exhaustion and contributing to the mechanism of our own exploitation. As for the legal revenues of the company, more than 50% go to the governments in the form of various taxes, 30-40% go for interest payments, depreciation account and new investments. Cuts, commissions and frauds are not shown in balance sheets. The rest is paid as dividend to share holders with institutions receiving the larger share and individual share-holders getting the leavings. Workers' wages, even including dividends for their shares, are in the range of 1 to 5 percent of what they produce.

While domestic slavery is the model for TPM, it is still too relaxed for the workers who are 'empowered'. They must be forced to do everything within their power, and even beyond, for 'their' companies. Such work is being modelled on the state of panic under which hospital workers operate during emergencies.

Emergency, by definition, is an abnormal condition, a condition which is to be encountered once in a while. For agile workers every condition will have the status of an emergency. These 'empowered workers' are supposed to do every single task as if life (at least workers' jobs) depended on it.

Today's emergencies will then be tomorrow's everyday.

Work in many fields already necessitates continuous, everyday and twenty-four hour involvement.

Some examples :

- **Marketing Personnel:** On their toes all the time. Anybody could be a good contact. They must read newspapers and magazines as a way to keep in touch with the developments in the market - the changes in exchange-rates, news about new projects and products. They must travel a lot and keep making mental notes about the location of industries.
- **Film and television workers:** A twelve to sixteen hour shift every day is normal in television productions. Competent artists need to exert much more in addition to this. Their response to a beautiful view must be to store it in memory as a good shot ; a meeting with an interesting person must lead to the creation of an interesting character. They must keep abreast of the current techniques and trends by regularly viewing television and cinema and attending film festivals.

The success of agile production would imply that work and competition will impinge upon every hour, every minute and every second of our existence.

5.5 A Managerial Self-Analysis: "I am in my fourth year, which year are you in?"

Marcel - Young, White, European, Male. Works as an Export Sales Manager in a company which has manufacturing units in Europe, America and Japan. Responsible for sales in China, India and south-east Asia. A high-profile, highly-paid employee. A living advertisement of the present system and a dream for millions. However, like all advertisements, the ambience of bliss and harmony is only on the viewers' side of the screen. For the performer, life is not so merry.

The job involves intense physical and mental work and high levels of stress. Marcel's working time is not sharply defined and involves a lot of travel and continuous mental involvement during and between office-hours. A hectic week-long travel schedule almost once a month is usual. A typical tour itinerary would be: Paris to Delhi, from Delhi 2000 kms south to Bangalore and back to Delhi, to Singapore and then to Hong Kong, from there to Korea and back to France - all in a week or ten day's time.

In all these nights - sleeping on flights switching between time zones - a bed to stretch on becomes an unaffordable luxury. His stays in luxurious five-star hotels are more like visits to the toilet to 'freshen-up', as is said in executive parlance, for work. The other, and rather more important, contribution of the five-star hotel is to enhance the company's image .

Compulsions to meet sales targets and result-related salary add to the insecurity, and determine the feverish pace of work. Every lunch is a business-lunch, most dinners are business-dinners. Meetings and flight-schedules often mean that meals are replaced by snacks. And all that Marcel gets to talk about is targets, orders, quotations and enquiries.

Despite half-a-dozen visits to Delhi all he has seen is hotels, offices and traffic. The continuous dealing with clients demands a pasted smile and a glib promotion of the company.

In a rare ten-minute respite, which came his way because another one of his kind was late for an appointment, he let off steam. Marcel showed a cartoon, made by a friend, neatly filed among his office papers. It depicted an enthusiastic face beginning work in the first year of a job, turns dejected, tired, cynical and inhuman as years go by. By the fifth year the change is irreversible and by the tenth year the face is changed into that of a monkey. "I am in my fourth year, which year are you in...?", Marcel asked. The client's arrival interrupted the conversation.

5.6 A Managerial regret: "Kill and Go"

In an incident which occurred in 1990 , Shell (an oil giant) management asked Nigerian riot police to deal with a protest against the company by villagers of Umuechen in the Nigerian delta.

The police mobile force known locally as '**Kill and Go**' came and killed at least 80 people.

Six years later Shell management had pangs of conscience and acknowledged making a mistake in calling the riot police. The head of Shell's Nigeria operations said :

"We have made one or two mistakes. We once called in the police to assist us on a case where things got out of hand completely, and I must say that taught us a lesson...". Almost as an after thought s/he added, "...some people died because of that".

Controlled jointly by GEC Alsthom, Westinghouse Manufacturing Co., GE Finance Ltd., Siemens India Ltd. and ABB Exact pattern of share-holding not known.

Virtual enterprises, virtual offices and virtual production teams are preceded by virtual share-holding patterns. The advances in satellite and computer networking, and high speed communications have brought about the very fast movement of information and money.

Huge amounts of money, moving at a very high pace, are involved in the trading that goes on in currencies, stocks, bonds, shares and commodities. The daily trade in currencies alone amounts to

one trillion dollars (approximately five percent of the annual global production). The price levels of the various stocks, shares, currencies, etc. decides the share-holding patterns of companies, which keep shifting between the big players - pension funds, finance and insurance companies, mutual funds, central banks, etc. State apparatuses are amongst the big players. Most participants in turn are joint-ventures between different companies and groups, or they are branches of bigger companies and groups.

On a recent visit to a company called Cegelec India (big manufacturer of electrical equipment) in Noida near Delhi, none of the engineers were sure about the share-holding of the company. Group's operations are controlled from three or four locations. The companies at those centres are again collaborations between two or three different groups. One of the companies which is now a part of this group in America was till a few months ago a collaboration between AEG and Westinghouse, another two groups of companies. AEG, in fact, now only exists as a name because the various companies in this group were recently divided between four or five different groups - GE, Alstom, Siemens, Schnieder, etc.

5.7 A Key To The Managerial Mind: [plagiarised from a management magazine]

"I RACKED MY BRAINS
VALUED MY WORTH
I GOTTA TOYOTA
TO TRAVEL TO OFFICE
I HAVE CELL PHONE
THEY GET ME WHENEVER
I POSSESS ARMANI
LITTLE CHANCE TO WEAR IT
I KNEW I WAS ON
THE RIGHT TRACK.
AS NONE OF THEM HAD WHAT I HAD-
THE KEY TO THE EXECUTIVE LOO!"

6. Extraction networks

Visible & transparent appropriation

An ancient saying from the misty mountains of China : "what is transparent, may not be always visible !"

A visible extraction network

EXTRACTORS

- Chiefs
- Warlords
- Knights
- Samurais
- Priests
- Usurers
- Rajahs
- Kings
- Emperors
- Monarchs

PASSAGES

- Tributes
- Gifts
- Loot
- Taxes
- Rent
- Protection money
- Usury
- Trade

a transparent extraction network

EXTRACTORS

- Governments
- Banks

- Financial Institutions
- Investment Companies
- Insurance Companies
- Pension Funds
- Postal Saving Schemes
- Mutual Funds
- Corporations
- Manufacturing Companies
- Trading Companies
- Servicing Industry
- Traders
- Consultants
- Managements
- Bureaucrats
- Ministers

PASSAGES

- Excise Duties
- Custom Taxes
- Sales Taxes
- Entertainment Taxes
- Electricity Taxes
- Transport Taxes
- Luxury Taxes
- Interests on loans
- Dividends to shareholders
- Profits
- Taxes on Profits
- Income Taxes
- Rents
- Managerial salaries and perks

- Cuts and commissions
- Ministerial Kickbacks
- Bureaucratic pilferage
- Managerial Frauds

6.1 Governmental appropriation

Why is there such a maze of government departments and their pointless accounting exercises among themselves?

In the mid-eighteenth century in Amsterdam, then one of the main centres of world trade, a proposal to introduce a single tax instead of a very complex edifice of many taxes was suggested by some novices in the art of governance. They shelved their scheme soon after, when they learned that it was much easier to impose and manoeuvre a large number of small taxes as opposed to a single tax.¹

A single comprehensive tax would make evident the extent to which the social produce is squeezed by the governments in the form of taxes.

Taxation is the prime source of extraction, effected by pure force. It is called exploitation when we refer to a few centuries earlier, but indirect taxation has done wonders to get taxes accepted by tax-payers.

There is resistance to the payment of taxes and there are attempts to 'cheat' the state. Governments try to overcome this by means of force as well as the seduction mechanism. In fact, any reduction in taxation is flaunted as an exemption, a favour done by the state.

Clever administrators like Manmohan Singh (World-Bank official, Ex-chairman of Reserve Bank of India, Ex-finance minister, govt. of India) who increase the total tax collection by decreasing the rates of taxation and spreading the tax-net are hailed as saviours.

The distinction between direct and indirect taxes is a fallacy - an artifice of the managers of seduction. What is pertinent is the total tax that the governments collect. The so-called subsidies given to some sectors are actually cases of returning a small part of the tax collected from them.

Of what are called social welfare activities most are not for the welfare of the people at large. They serve the purpose of human resource development to obtain more extractable humans. Calling them social welfare is deception. A small portion is a palliative and a concession as a result of struggles and resistance or under the threat of large-scale disorders. These are always sought to be cut as threats decline or other threats increase.

A large number of taxes, the web too intricate to decipher, provide an effective way for the state to extract large amounts without pinpointed and direct opposition.

The taxing taxes are not the complete story.

These high levels of taxation are still not adequate for governments and they resort to other mystifications of the market to collect more resources :

- Borrowing from tax-payers, other governments and institutions. These borrowings are repaid through more taxes and more borrowings.
- Printing money to devise a redivision of resources by means of inflation has been a major technique in this century.
- Keynes became the most dominant economist of this century because of this insight : it is possible to lower wages even as money wages increase.

¹ Fernand Braudel, 'Civilization & Capitalism, Vol. III', Fontana Press.

- Thanks to this insight a wage of 3000 a month today is less than the wage of 30 fifty years ago.
- Postal savings, bank savings and insurance schemes are also big sources for government revenues. Hence there are provisions of tax 'exemptions' if people use their money in such specified schemes.
- Provident funds and pension schemes have become a major source of money for governments.
- Manipulations by governments of these huge amounts, held in trust by governments as trustees, to appropriate large portions of these funds is amongst the latest economic arts being perfected. All these are parts of the effort to bolster the near bankrupt finances of states.

6.2 Corporations & companies appropriation

Interest, dividends, profits, rents, traders' margins, depreciation funds are some of the heads under which approx. 40 % of the global produce is appropriated by banks, lending institutions, companies, firms, etc.

representatives managements of govts companies and institutions

Legalised appropriation:

Salaries, perks, facilities granted gratis, concessions, grants, gifts...

The above scenario of the distribution within the extraction network is obtained when legal documents like balance sheets are used for calculations. However, we are closer to reality if we take into account the extra-legal appropriation by the bosses, their commissions, cuts and frauds. The cuts and commissions of the government and corporate representatives are in the range of 15 % of the global produce.

[b]Workers get a minuscule 1 to 5 percent of the produce, after the expenditures of the governments, institutions, corporates and their representatives have gobbled bulk of the produce.[/i] This allocation tells us why men-women-children-old people all must work just to keep afloat shrinking domestic units and impoverished individuals.

6.3 a crash course in GOVERNMENT-SPEAK

Subsidy - GIVING BACK 10 AFTER COLLECTING 100

Taxation has been imposed in such a variety of ways that everybody is paying a multitude of taxes. The concessions in a specific product or field do not compensate for what we pay as taxes in that or other fields. The much publicised subsidy given to agriculture, for example, is minuscule compared to the taxes (again excise, sales, customs, profit, property, capital gains , ...) collected from products used in agriculture _ electricity, fertiliser, seeds, tractors, farm equipment, transportation, etc. even if no tax is levied on crops.

Translated into real-speak: subsidy is slightly lower taxation.

The welfare state: seduction at work

All "welfare" spending of the state is only a small part of the tax collected. Such spending falls in the following categories:

Human resource development exercises - investments (literacy, health services) or restrictions (prohibition) to keep workers fit so that returns can be maximised.

Spending which are results of studies which suggest that some welfare measures would actually benefit the government coffers, e.g. governmental interest shown in the recent bans on smoking. These are results of studies suggesting that, in some areas, more money is spent on health insurance because of smoking-related diseases, than the money collected through taxation on tobacco and cigarettes.

Simple deceptions, e.g. subsidy which is actually slightly lower taxation.

Forced spendings on workers: a minuscule fraction of revenue is spent in schemes such as unemployment doles. These are the State's social wages, spent under the threat of discontent and upsurge.

infrastructure

A collection of facilities in the fields of transport, communication, engineering, information, the media, surveillance, etc. meant for work intensification and control. The purpose is to grab more than 95 % of the produce without letting workers' opposition go out of hand .

unemployment

A wage-worker is not employed unless her/his employment produces enough. Enough so that the taxes, interests and profits (and the extra-legal cuts, commissions, kickbacks, bribes) can be generated besides the wages.

Thus, there must be sufficient facilities of production (machines, raw material) and control (managers, surveillance cameras, intelligence agencies) so that workers can be made to produce enough, and enough can be extracted from them to fulfil the above requisites. In the case of inadequacy of such facilities (infrastructure) workers are not employed. This is the real reason for the simultaneous existence of unemployment and over-work.

Labour aristocracy

If a wage-worker produces 100,000 value units, then s/he gets only 500 to 3000 value units out of that. All wage-workers lose upto 99 percent of the produce to the exploitative apparatus. Those getting 5000 a month (usually because they are producing 200,000 units) are accused, and are sometimes themselves guilt ridden, of being a part of the labour aristocracy .

6.4 The global extraction network

The extraction network is a global web of contending extractors. They, nevertheless, have a common interest against wage-workers' resistances to work and extraction. Integral to this perpetuation of extraction, as well as for the confrontations within the extraction network, is the infrastructure of the police and military.

Governments and nations are perceived to be the recipients of extraction from their areas of influence. Companies and products are ascribed nationalities. However, the continuous trading which goes on in currencies, shares, government securities and bonds, commodities and wage-workers implies the existence of a situation in which the various recipients - governments, financial institutions, insurance companies, central banks, corporations, companies, managements, individual bosses and functionaries _ are engaged in continuous bouts with each-other with ever-fluctuating fortunes.

Just the cross currency trade accounts for a volume of one trillion dollars daily. This is nearly five percent of the annual production of the entire world. Added to this is the trade in stocks, shares and government securities, and of course in commodities and wage-workers as another commodity. Some nodal points of these trades are New York, Singapore, Tokyo, London, Bombay, Beijing, Karachi, Cairo, Paris, Buenos Aires ...

These centres for trade in currencies, stocks, securities and commodities are connected by satellite and computer communication systems.

It is a meaningless exercise today to figure out the place of production of the part that anyone of the recipients receives. Our produce has no nationality. All production coagulates to constitute the world produce or the global produce. This total produce is then parcelled out. The parcel size of recipients revolves around their economic, political, diplomatic and military strengths.

The levels of intensity and hours of work, government spending, government debt, investments, workers' resistance, etc. in different industries and areas determine and are determined by this trading. Interest rates, tax rates, currency rates, stock rates and commodity rates are their corollaries. The fluctuations in these rates bring about the changes in the global produce and the parcel sizes of all participants.

Every single product is a result of the activity of an ensemble of companies. Every one of these companies are financed by a number of financial institutions - banks, insurance companies, postal savings, pension funds, mutual funds. These finances are globally mobile and the sources of money are spread all over the world.

However, these companies and financial institutions operate in the territorial jurisdiction of various governments. Although international law is also making its presence felt, governmental jurisdiction helps camouflage the global reality. The cacophony of national versus foreign only aids to divert the discontent towards superficial concerns and counter-productive acts.

It is purposeless and impossible to ascertain from which set of wage-workers an extractor gets its share. Thereby, the various extractors in the extraction network, inspite of their conflicting interests, have a common cause against the workers. a simple case in point.

We consider an example of a product - a car - assumed to be constructed by simply assembling various parts. To make the issue simpler : the steel, rubber, plastic, oil, electricity, machines, designs, etc. used for the manufacture of the parts are not considered. Even after these simplifications the great minds of the U.S. Congress cannot be sure about such a simple thing as to what yardstick must they adopt to define a car as American or foreign for the purpose of differential taxation. The criteria could be weight of the foreign and domestic parts, or the money price, or even more simply the number of parts. They, of course, could not be bothered with simple questions like what is the criteria for designating a nationality to these parts!

After all the deliberations and simplifications the American Congress decreed that any car with 74 percent or more 'U.S. or Canadian-made parts' will be considered made in USA.

To pay lower taxes, the Ford Motor Company used a simple strategy to get its model - the Crown Victoria - designated 'made in USA' even though this car is assembled, like all others, by using parts made in Germany, Mexico, Spain, Japan, etc. It is simply made sure that the imported parts total no more than 25 percent and the car becomes 'a US-made car'. On the other hand, Honda assembles a car called Accord in USA, and uses the right mix to keep the 'U.S.' content just below 75 percent - and gets Accord designated as an imported car in USA - to be able to obtain other benefits !²

Made by many companies together - GM, Isuzu, Fiat, Hindustan Motors Exact manufacturer not known.

Many economic categories, such as, ownership/nationality of a company, nationality of a product, place of manufacture of a product, are now obsolete. They do not meaningfully describe the present economic realities. Theorisations based on such categories can be irrelevant at the best, but evidently harmful otherwise.

To elucidate, we give the example of the seamless web of economic inter-relations between world's major automobile companies. General Motors' association with other automobile manufacturers in 1990 exhibits the meaninglessness of the Made by GM and Made in USA labels.

GM's share-holding in other automobile manufacturers : Vauxhall (100%) ; Adam Opel AG(80%) ; FSO(37.5%) ; Isuzu Motors (5%) ; Suzuki Motor Co.(5%).

GM's joint share-holding with other automobile manufacturers: GM and Toyota Motors in USA ; GM and Toyota Motors in Australia ; GM and Suzuki in Canada ; GM and Saab-Scania AB in Sweden ; GM and Isuzu Motors in Japan ; GM and RABBA in Hungary ; GM and AB Volvo in Sweden ; GM and VEB Automobile Works in Germany ; GM and Chrysler in USA ; GM and UAC in Nigeria ; etc.

GM's clients for automobile parts : Renault, Honda, Toyota, Rover and VAZ.

GM's suppliers of automobile parts : Isuzu, Volkswagen, Fiat, Honda and Pininfarina.

GM's distributorship of following vehicles :

Isuzu vehicles in Europe, Canada and USA ; Renault Vehicles in Brazil; Saab AB vehicles in Canada and Brazil ; Suzuki vehicles in USA.

GM's some other arrangements :

² John R. Munkirs, et al. 'The Automobile Industry, Political Economy, and a New World Order', ibid.

GM's cars Espero Sedan and Opel Kadette are designed by Italy's Berton Spa and are assembled by Daewoo Motors in Korea. GM assembles Isuzu trucks in New Zealand, Kenya, Zaire, Portugal, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador and Columbia.³

Made in one / many locations in Taiwan, Venezuela, Indonesia, China and Canada Exact place of manufacture not known.

6.5 The present extraction network

THE WARRIORS OF HIERARCHIES

Militaries, governments, IMF, World bank, bureaucracies, representatives, policy-makers, police, politicians, judges, corporate directors, company representatives, management gurus, religious gurus, statesmen, media-barons, Nobel-laureates.

The purpose:

To squeeze the maximum from workers.

To get the maximum possible share of this squeeze.

how much, to whom.

All the products in the world which are bought and sold, manufactured no matter where, and all those activities which are arbitrated by exchange and money, form a global whole. This includes tangible material goods and non-tangible services. Money being the representative of accumulated labour, and a very mobile representative at that, the regime of money and exchange not only brings about the formation of the total global produce, but it also decides the division of the total produce.

Given the intricacies of the global extraction network, we can only estimate the approximate shares of the various recipients of the total world produce. These shares are discernible if we divide the price of a single product into its various elements, or if we take a look at the spendings of the many recipients at the global level. The price of a newspaper, or salt, or a washing machine gets divided in the following proportions :

Taxes account for more than 50% of the price.

Excise duty is upto 100%, and even more.

Customs duty could be anything upto 100% and more, to be paid on any components used in the product or equipment required for its production, which is bought from any place outside the country.

Sales tax is paid for everything which is bought and sold for production, and again on the final product.

Electricity tax is paid on any electricity used.

Transport tax is paid on the transport used.

Property tax is paid for land and immovable property.

You may add other taxes (corporate tax, octroi, entertainment tax, luxury tax, etc.) and try to make the list exhaustive.

Interest payments, dividends, margins of manufacturers, distributors and retailers, rents account for around 40%.

Around 90% of the capital employed by companies is loan from various financial institutions. The interest on these loans is a big outlay.

Dividends are paid on the equity capital - the capital owned by the shareholders of the company.

The manufacturing, distributing, wholesale and the retailing companies have their margins.

We remind that the above is a glimpse of what is called the legal parcelling-out. Commissions, cuts, bribes, kickbacks, etc. are universal norms in all transactions. This appropriation of around 15 % is called illegal by the bosses, who are themselves its unrivalled practitioners, and the law-makers.

Of the total price of any product, workers' wages do not constitute more than 1 to 5 percent.

³ James I. Sturgeon, 'What's in a name ? Production Technology and the New Car'. Journal of Economic Issues, Vol. XXVII No2, June 1993.

Even from their wages workers pay innumerable taxes whenever they pay for anything, whether it is food or cinema tickets or railway tickets.

At the commencement of the main battle in the war between factions of slave-owners, called the Maha-bharata, an excited Krishna said to a reluctant Arjun :

”karmanaya adhicarastu , ma faleshu kadachen” You have only the right to work, but no rights over the fruits!

This wisdom of Gita has become the centrepiece of our times!

6.6 The priorities of Hierarchies

Militaries

Terrorist organisations

Police networks, Armed gangs

Prisons, Secret services

Bureaucracies, Policy-research

Juridico-legal system

Industrial Surveillance

Physical Infrastructure (transport and communication network, urban planning, irrigation facilities)

Industrial infrastructure

Management institutes Education & Culture (moulding and controlling bodies and minds, and manufacturing consent)

Human resource development

Luxuries

Police in a town in Java, said they plan to start using venomous cobras to break up mass demonstrations and compel suspects to confess.⁴

6.7: IF WE COMMAND OUR WEALTH, WE SHALL BE FREE

Early in 1980, telephone workers in Australia during an agitation switched off the computers which keep track of the billing of the telephones. Phones could then be used free of charge and people made long-distance calls without having to bother to count seconds or to talk to the point. The telephone workers' action won mass approval for them and accumulated huge unpaid calls for the company. The government and the management got worried by the bonhomie developing between different sections of workers and agreed to the demands of the telephone workers _ a case of choosing the lesser evil.

In 1987, railway workers in France distributed leaflets to passengers appealing to them not to buy tickets and travel free. Passengers readily accepted the leaflets and the appeal. However, in the same year, passengers travelling by bus and metro in Spain and Italy were given no such opportunity of accepting or rejecting workers' appeal when the workers there ran the services but refused to charge the passengers.

In March 1989, railway workers in South Korea gave a free ride to 2.5 million passengers during an agitation. In the summer of 1991, workers of the Bart Railway Company in America distributed leaflets citing the examples of France, Italy and Spain. They also requested the passengers that in case of a strike, the passengers must demand paid holidays from their respective managements.⁵

⁴ The Pioneer, New Delhi, January 14, 1997.

⁵ F.MS, March 1994.

Betty Jean Aborn, a homeless, middle-aged woman with a history of depression was confronted by seven sheriffs after lifting an ice-cream from a convenience store. She supposedly brandished a kitchen knife at them. The response was a volley of twenty rounds, eighteen of which perforated her body.

Questioning Global Produce

Our scrutiny and investigation of the balance-sheet of the total produce of humanity has produced some startling findings and obvious inferences.

Findings:

[list=1]

- Ninety-four percent of total produce of humanity is used for the maintenance and perpetuation of hierarchies.
- More importantly, six percent of the global produce presently suffices for the nourishment and sustenance of the whole of humanity.

Inferences:

[list=1]

- If we are able to remove hierarchies, we just won't need ninety-four percent of the produce that takes place today. Consider anything anywhere from medicine to steel, paper to police-stations, elections to olympics, and erase what is required for the maintenance and perpetuation of hierarchies - we will be left with six percent.
- With the erasure of hierarchies our work-load will be reduced to one-sixteenth of the present load. This by itself will enormously enrich human life and open up diverse arenas of creativity and freedom. Festivals with month-long festivities will resurrect.
- With ninety-four percent of the production done away with, environmental degradation will dramatically diminish and give humanity a long enough breathing space to re-think, re-cast and re-create its production processes to sustain a harmonious human-nature relationship .

Let's Turn Things Around

" The 'youth wage' has become the pretext for a profound revolt among young people. Devalued and rejected before they've entered the 'work world' young people in colleges, high schools and suburbs are faced with massive unemployment.

They already know they've no future in this society. THEY ARE MADE WORTHLESS BECAUSE IN THE MODERN ECONOMY THEIR HUMANITY HAS NO MARKET VALUE ...work no longer makes sense. It no longer corresponds directly to human needs, but serves the insane expansion of consumption and creates a more and more artificial and inhuman order of things.

Work wastes incredible amounts of energy in the production of useless objects that destroy the environment ... Some propose, with a straight face, the 'abolition of unemployment', when it's wage labour and money that needs to be abolished ! ... This society has no hope and no future and we all more or less confusedly know it ... We have no ambitions other than to contribute to the movement, to help it find the reasons for what its already done, and to go beyond what it has yet to accomplish ..."

One of a series of leaflets signed, "Some workers and unemployed", March 1994 France.⁶

⁶ 'We Are All Hooligans' quoted in The Poor, the Bad and The Angry, Issue 2

7. Our working day

The 30 hour working-day

Lower living standards and uncertainty of employment are relentlessly pushing both women and men into multiple jobs.

Working time has increased beyond the eight-hour shift into overtime and additional part-time work. For example, production schedules and deadlines for television programmes and films assume one and a half shifts (8hours + 4hours) everyday as a matter of course.

In many industries such long hours are compulsory. An employee cannot refuse to do overtime work. 'Work to rule' is considered an agitation and disciplinary actions are taken by the bosses.

At places where overtime is not made compulsory, compulsions of survival operate and workers get overtime work as a favour from managements and union leaders.

Companies are trying to do away with the legal provision of payment for overtime at double the ordinary rate. Many do this blatantly while some have tried to camouflage it by renaming it as 'overstay'. Some companies have started giving a 'hardship allowance' instead of over-time - this monthly allowance equals what would be the over-time allowance for one day.

The working-day indicates the hours of wage-work, the wages for which are sufficient for the sustenance of a domestic unit.

This concept dates from the nineteenth century and meant the hours of wage-work put in by one person for the sustenance of a family - because the phenomenon of families with more than one wage-worker had not spread. For a domestic unit, therefore, comparison between the working-day prevailing in the present and the working-day prevalent in the past requires that we take into account the number of wage-workers in a household and the size of the household.

Today, the working day comprises of shift work, over-time and part-time work of the husband, shift-work, overtime and part-time work done by the wife and the wage-work done by the children and the older members of the household.

Overtime and multiple jobs by men and by women are the norm today. Child-workers and student-workers are common. For the old, retirement usually means a shift to lower paid jobs. And the size of families has shrunk. Also, the institution of the family is giving way to new kinds of domestic units.

In the latter part of the 19th century the struggle for shorter working-hours, in some areas, took the form of struggle for an eight-hour workday.

In a famous incident in 1886, known also as the Haymarket Riot, police and working men battled in Chicago during a demonstration for an eight-hour workday. Hangings and imprisonment for workers followed the confrontation.

The same Chicago city was in 1989 the site for strikes by workers demanding statutory limits to over-time, legal limit of 10-hours shift a day and a weekly rest day. The striking hotel workers had to work 12-13 hours daily for more than 10 days at a stretch. Similarly, municipality workers in Chicago have to work thirteen hours a day without any weekly holiday.¹

The difference in the working-day of 1886 and that of 1989 is enormous.

In 1886, predominantly male workers were agitating for a working-day of 8-hours which would give them enough wage to rear a family. The family meant three or four children, at the least, as well as grand-parents.

¹ FMS.

In 1989 both men and women workers agitated for the legal limit of a 10-hour shift. The overtime and part-time jobs they have to do are in addition to this. Still neither men nor women workers are able to earn enough even to support their partners. Together they find it difficult to raise one child, and even grand parents work, or live in old-age homes.

Believe it or not ! The working hours per day for a domestic unit nowadays stretch to more than 30 hours.

Hours of shift-work of the woman - 8 hours

Hours of shift-work of the man - 8 hours

Hours of overtime /part-time wage work of man - 4-6 hours

Hours of overtime /part-time wage work of woman - 2-4 hours

Hours of wage work by children and elders - 4-6 hours

Total 26 - 32 hours

Time for commuting to and fro between place of work and residence is besides these hours, and so is the drudgery of domestic work.

The 8-hours working-day - an official fiction

It is difficult to believe that there exists a myth that we have a shorter working-day than earlier. It is merely an official. This is definitely a case of seduction at work .

There is an ambiguity between the meanings of the eight-hour day and the eight-hour shift. This ambiguity actually obscures a significant setback for workers in this century. What has been implemented in industries is the eight-hour work-shift - it is deceptively called the eight-hour workday.

Workers, who are supposed to believe this, work twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours a day. Presently, ten hours of work is the minimum that is put in by most workers in a day. The working time for an individual includes shift-time, over-time work and part-time work. The working day is made up of the working times of man, woman and children constituting the domestic unit.

If the Haymarket incident in Chicago in 1886 was a watershed, it did not mark a victorious culmination of the struggle for an eight-hour day. Rather, it was the beginning of the reversal in which the struggle for the eight-hour working-day got assimilated in the move towards the implementation of the eight-hour shift.

There has been an immense increase in the working-day because of the increase in the number of people forced to do wage-work to maintain a domestic unit.

Managers of extraction rave and grunt "labour is costly".

Managers of seduction amplify this into a hysterical chorus. Jokers chime in with a 4 -hour working-day !

The 4-hour working day !

"A 30-hour working-day ?

Poor souls !

While our company has announced a four-day 36-hour week !"

World Bank's 'Human Development Report 1994' propagates a slogan 'work less, earn less and everybody works' as the answer to the simultaneous problems of overwork and unemployment. In a situation where today's minuscule families are finding it difficult to subsist even after a wage work of 30-hours, the overseers of the present system seem to suggest that if the presently employed workers worked lesser hours and earned lesser, it would solve their problems .

The document (HDR 1994) is meant to be transformed into strategies, its implementation by policy makers and managements finally necessitating, as always, violent means. This strategy would mean that wage-workers must somehow divide their ever shrinking share of global produce amongst themselves, and must not eye the excessive expenses of governments, militaries and institutions.

The Report calls for the shorter 4-hour shift, and 3-4 days work a week with a corresponding cut in wages. This implies that workers have to work at more jobs to be able to survive. Shorter shift necessitate

multiple jobs and managements can pocket the lunch break and the tea break, beside increasing the pace of work as the hours in each job are less !

The report goes on to say :

"The idea of job sharing is gathering momentum.. Rather than a five-day work week for some workers, with others remaining unemployed, the work week should be reduced to, say, four days with a corresponding pay cut, so that more people can share the available work."

Planners and executors are using a rhetoric of 36-hour week while implementing a 36-hour working-day. What this 'job sharing' actually implies is that workers be made to move beyond the present state of two or three jobs for sustaining a small family, to a state where every individual would need multiple jobs just to sustain himself or herself. Whether workers are able to get and continue in even one job is another issue.

If this sounds too harsh a judgement on the present system, then one must take care to note that the number of people doing two and even three jobs simultaneously is multiplying. Even according to government statistics, where obfuscation is always the norm, seven million Americans do fifteen million jobs. Most multiple jobholders are married and, increasingly, nearly as many are women as men.

The World Bank report continues :

"In France, subsidiary of the computer company Hewlett-Packard has introduced a more flexible four-day week for workers. This has enabled the plant to be run seven days a week, round the clock, rather than five days on day shifts. Production has tripled, employment has risen 20%, and earnings have remained unchanged. For France, it has been estimated that the universal adoption of a four-day, 33-hour work week with an average 55% reduction in salary would create around two million new jobs - and save \$28 billion in unemployment insurance."

It requires little reading between the lines to figure out that the Hewlett-Packard plant runs for at least thrice the time it used to operate before the 'reforms' ; production has increased by 200% while workers have increased only by 20% ; and wages remain the same, or actually money wages remain the same and buying capacity has therefore decreased.

The substantial increase in working hours and intensity of work is obvious, but it is sought to be hidden behind the rhetoric of the 4-day week. The reduced expenses on unemployment dole are additional incentives for the state.

These are only some of the examples of the reforms being implemented all over the world. The turbulence which became visible in France during late 1995, and which is hapening in Seoul in early 1997, is therefore only a prefiguration of workers' response to governmental attempts all over the world.

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION ? !

"An honest woman and a broken leg are best at home".

- Miguel Cervantes (1547-1616), 'Don Quixote'

*"Motherhood is the sweet dream of the maiden, the glad hope for the wife, and the deep regret of the ageing woman who has not had this yearning satisfied."*²

"For men must work and women must weep , And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep."

- Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), 'The Three Fishers'

Soon after the beginning of the factory system and wage-work, women were bombarded by propaganda that idealised motherhood and women's domestic roles - and created the notion of men outside,

² E.S. Riemer & J.C. Font, 'European Women : A Documentary History', Schoken Books, New York 1980.

and women at home. This came to be accepted as the natural order of things, even though the ideal often conflicted with reality.

Over the course of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, many a woman started doing piecework at home and some began leaving homes to take paid employment. Many a reasons are flaunted for this : the husband is no good, the woman is greedy, the family wants to rise What is usually not talked about is the lowering of wages, which turned women into wage-workers inspite of patriarchal wisdom which said :

A DISSATISFIED MOTHER ON DOMESTIC SLAVERY AUSTRIA 1899

"... the causes of my discontent, my anxiety, my neurasthenia, lie much deeper ; they lie in the unavoidable circumstances which nature has conferred upon me as a consequence of motherhood. Oh yes, be amazed, horrified, whatever you want, but believe me, we women, we who have thoughts and aspirations, we who through serious intellectual activities have come to a higher state of civilisation - we are so far removed from contact with nature that the so-called sweet joys of motherhood cause us more tortures than a quiet thinking man can imagine.

I know for certain that for many women the moment a child is born their world dissolves, their own ego no longer exists, their selflessness goes so far that they no longer know any of their own pleasures, and since they continuously descend to the level of the child's intelligence, they are ultimately lost to any other kind of intellectual activity. As the child begins to develop his/her mental powers and widens his/her circle of interest, he sets an intellectual standard for the mother educating him. Then he is left to his devices because other children follow whose care and protection now completely consume the already mentioned mothers. These are the mothers who through tradition, education and talent have become 'true women', who personify all the attributes so highly regarded : resignation, sacrifice and an absence of 'ego'... You don't know how much pain it causes to be dragged down by unavoidable conditions into a morass of dullness and indifference towards the outside world ...".³

Lower wage women into wage-work

Initially most women doing wage work were young and single. Women would quit work when they married or soon afterwards when they had children. Privation and declining living standards did force a number of married women to work for wages, but a working married woman indicated her husband's failure.

This 'failure among men' to be able to earn a wage sufficient to support a family (which itself is shrinking, sometimes out of existence), has been on an increase. The fall in wages, increase in the minimum required amenities to survive as wage-workers, high rates of disease and injury due to harsh working conditions, unavailability of continuous work - all these factors, primarily, have merged to push women into places of wage-work.

By and by, people in many parts of the world came to terms with the fact that most women would spend a period in the labour market before marriage. However, this permission rarely extended to 'respectable households' in the 19th century in Europe and USA, and in other places till later.

Women, and especially married women, have entered the labour market in rising numbers in the twentieth century. What has been emphasised in such developments is women's freedom to choose from amongst different options. What is not talked about are the restraints on women's freedom.

Another step in the increase of women's wage work was that young wives began commonly not only to have pre-marital experience of paid work, but frequently stayed in their jobs for a few years until the birth of their first child. Often retiring from the labour force in their mid-twenties, they tended to produce two to four children in relatively quick succession. They then devoted energies and talents to

³ Ibid.

the home front until the youngest was in primary school or beyond. When children were regarded as safely launched, their mothers were increasingly likely to return to remunerated work. This return, or the second stage of marital paid employment, was another step in the increase in wage-work.

Wage-work is not emancipation

Women's opposition to patriarchal norms and their compulsion to take up wage-work have blurred the image of domestic slavery as well as wage-slavery. Many people argue that work outside the home is a liberating and rewarding experience for women, one that allows them to fully develop their intellectual and human potential. Wage-slavery is portrayed as emancipation. At the time when wage-slavery began, and primarily men were drafted into the ranks of wage-slaves, wage-work was theorised as emancipation from feudal bondage or 'peasant idiocy'. Now wage-work by women is theorised as emancipation from domestic drudgery.

Wage work in factories or workshops, in clerical posts, in schools & laboratories, in the sports-field or in retail stores with regimentation, repetition, physical burdens and spiritual turmoil is hardly liberating, creative, or fulfilling. For working class women and men work is neither joyful nor creative. Wage-work is meaningless. Jobs are boring and repetitious, they provide no intellectual or spiritual rewards and provide no satisfaction. The severe regimentation of factory life, which now pervades all spheres of life, destroys vitality and intelligence. It is not paid work but rather free moments away from jobs and housework that give meaning to life.

TRIPLE TOIL GERMANY 1930

*"... I have been forced to go to work... Since I have almost an hour's train ride, get up early...(4:15 a.m.). the train leaves at 5:10 a.m. and arrives at 5:55 a.m. Since our work day begins at 6:00 a.m. I have to run a long-distance race from the train station to the factory in order to be on time. At the factory I clean carding comb machines until 2:15 p.m. My train for home does not depart until 5:13 p.m. I have to wait so long at the train station. I am home about 6:00 p.m. Then there is more work to do at home... As a rule my Sunday starts about 7:00 a.m., since there is house cleaning and clothes to do. Then lunch is prepared. About 2:00 p.m. Sunday actually begins for me..."*⁴

⁴ Ibid.

8. Planners' plight

Working women/domesticated women

Opponents of wage-work by women frequently harken back to a 'golden age' of household suffocation and of sex roles sharply defined by patriarchal values. According to them most married working women work for frills. They work for a car, for owning a house, for a colour television set, or for a new refrigerator - classified as luxuries. They contend that women should give up such immoderation and devote themselves to being good wives and mothers.

On the other hand, champions of increased wage-work by women peer into the future and declare that, thanks to advanced technologies, household duties would soon be accomplished in a few minutes. They direct women that unless their children are of pre-nursery school age, they should be working, at least part time, in the business or profession they were trained for before marriage. Stories of "new" women feeling wasted outside of a job become the material of glossy magazines. The career woman has been made the most coveted image of "woman". Scholarly journals highlight the 'joys and thrills' of wage-work.¹

They say that women of today want to be freed from the inferior duties of mother and housewife, in order to devote themselves to higher callings, as self-supporting and independent members of the society. Since these 'higher' callings, however, consist of monotonous labour in factory, store, office and other similar occupations, it is difficult to conceive how these tasks can possibly bring greater freedom and happiness.

The debates in the popular press maintain a studied silence about the fact that most women and their families can not survive without women's paid employment. Unless they seem exotic or especially pitiful, working class women attract no attention. Instead, the media has framed an image of a middle class majority who face relatively unconstrained choices about the labour they perform. It is such "free choices" rather than the realities of most women's lives that are highlighted.

Of Rights & Duties

Wars and other 'national emergencies' introduce their own vicissitudes and bring many an ironical situation into focus. During wars women are called upon for extensive volunteer work. Governmental agencies campaign to attract women to the workplace. Popular songs, newsreels, movies and newspapers tell women of their duty to go out to work. They drumbeat about women's emancipation and new women. At war's end the same propaganda machine reverses its gears to push women out of shipyards and airplane factories into lower wages and jobs with worse working conditions. Family values and women's traditional roles are high on the agenda. During economic depressions public opinion and governmental propaganda castigate married women who work on the grounds that they have no right to "take a job away from a man".

8.1 Family - thwart or support

The present system is based on the extraction of upto 99 percent of the total produce. This implies :

- An increase in wage-work by women and men.

¹ See Veronica Strong-Boag, 'Canada's wage-earning wives and the construction of the middle class, 1945-60'. Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 29, no.3

- The breed of student-workers and child-workers multiplies.
- Retirement effectively becomes a mere shift to lower paid jobs.

These result in the decline of the family.

For the planners, however, the family is an important bulwark of the present system.

Women's, and also men's work, at home provides unpaid labour for the reproduction of wage-workers. This work is important for the reproduction and the daily regeneration of a new generation of disciplined and useful work-force. As the working day lengthens these activities need to be paid for. This brings on a pressure for the increase of wages. The family is also the site where the dominant values of this society are taught - the twin manoeuvre of mother's tears and father's fear does more tricks than many other institutions put together.

Thus, the continuation of the present system simultaneously demands a weakening of the family and its perpetuation. These conflicting requirements of the maintenance of the present system, make the planners shift their allegiance from one horn of the dilemma to the other :

a call to save the family values, followed by an appeal to overcome family values.

8.2 Children: Avoid, train or employ

Government policies on the number of children in a family vary, alongwith perceptions of 'the national interest'. In some countries one or two children have been advocated by the state to be a service to the 'growth of the nation'. In other countries governments are worried over the low birth rates as a cause of low 'national growth'.

In China the government has terrorised the population to accept its one-child policy.

The Russian state was meanwhile busy instituting awards for alluring mothers into bearing a dozen children.

In India the forcible implementation of the two-child policy back-fired for the state.

Governments in Scandinavian countries do not know how to arrest the decline of birth rates.

Meanwhile, unable to look after the children themselves, working parents have to rely on understaffed and over-crowded pre-school nurseries and creches. Even the minority who can afford to keep children at home, have to send them to these centres because nursery schools assume that children should have a pre-school education and have made that a criterion of admissions.

A worker who needed childcare for her infant son so she could go back to work was disgusted by what she saw. "What do you do, except quit and raise them yourself?" says she. "For a lot of us, that's just not feasible."

Children in industrial centres had started calling their fathers 'Sunday Papa' in the 19th century. For today's children Papa and Mama are both available only on an hourly basis.

Strategists are worried about the losses caused by the absence of working parents from their jobs to care for sick children. Experts, being experts, are even more worried ; they say that addition to this is the lost productivity as parents reach late for work, leave early or are unable to concentrate because of problems related to children. Corporations with long-term strategies have taken the cue. Twenty-one of America's largest companies have announced an unprecedented six-year, \$100 million effort to improve child care and elder care for their employees. These companies are renewing a smaller initiative launched in 1992. Participants include IBM, AT&T, Citicorp, Aetna Life & Casualty. Hundreds of smaller companies are expected to join the effort. They will help fund more than 1,000 projects over six years under an umbrella group called the American Business Collaboration for Quality Dependent Care.²

² Financial Times, Delhi, Saturday 7 October 1995.

9. Resistances vs. managers of discontent

a jataka tale of our times

Early in the morning, on the 12th of December '95, a monkey got shot in the compound of a police station in the Domjoor area of Howrah district in West Bengal, India. Furious at the killing of their associate, a gang of monkeys picketed the police station. The monkeys then attacked the police with stones and chased them off !

Sakya Muni of our times enlightens Given the level of policing achieved by our times, resistances, collective resistances have become indispensable for survival.

HIT THE BOSS

The managers of discontent have their jobs cut-out to counter resistances. Management schools, engineering institutes, public administration services, media studies, etc. co-ordinate their efforts in their dual enterprise of increasing production and managing discontent. In Japan a new frustration release sport has been invented in the course of this endeavour. This game is played with a machine by one player at a time. The player carries a small wooden bat. The machine has a number of holes, roughly the size of human heads. As the game begins, heads made of rubber pop out of the holes, and the player has to hit them back into the holes.

Each head has a designation : supervisor, foreman, works manager, senior manager, managing director,

In the view of the management of discontent, such games are problematic for management as they erode the acceptance of hierarchy and discipline among workers. Nevertheless, they say, this is a small price given the opposition to work among workers. Coming in support of this interpretation is the fact that, unable to take the beating by workers, a number of these machines are 'out of order'.¹

Play of resistance

There is a game that everyone knows, which changes its name from one place to another. All you need is a piece of chalk and a steady hand. You draw a number of squares on the ground and then hop - changing leg each go - from one square to the next. But urban planning and architecture combined with traffic and concrete pavements have almost eradicated this 'nuisance' from cities.

Apprehensive about unoccupied children, planners and architects in some places tried to supplant the game to the parks designed by them. At least in one instance they drew it ready made but found no takers. Children instead preferred playing in what looked like a dump - a pile of rubber tyres and poles which they had built themselves. Here children had invented their own defence against the planners.

Our resistances to discipline, to seduction, to extraction and to work takes diverse forms, varying from stopping work to working for free. Resistances are directed against governments, against managements, against planners, against media, against wars, against authority, against surveillance, against representatives and against dominant values. Some times they appear as collective defiances of authority, at other times they may even be masked as individual submissions to power.

Even the dutiful "yes, sir" and "as you say, ma'am" can act as covers for resistance. Opposition to work masked by "Yes, ma'am", "We are trying our best, sir" and silences are legendary in the annals of wage-workers' history. Talk to the most inarticulate and even the great scribe Ganesha will faint by the time he has taken short-hand notes of instances of such opposition by any group of workers .

¹ 'Sans Soleil', film by Chris Marker, produced by Argos Films.

... through collectivities

Collectivities give enhanced dimensions to resistances. Small collective steps percolate our everyday existence. Small everyday actions taken after mutual consensus arrived at through diverse means, without necessitating the 'learned leaders' or the 'committed cadres'. These are the measures most feared by authority, because of the advantages they have for the protesters :

Nobody can be marked out among the participants. This makes it difficult for management to victimise singled-out individuals - by charge-sheets, suspensions, police, goons, etc. Or to make a deal with the representatives. The first step of the managers of discontent is to create representatives/leaders when confronted with collectivities.

Such resistances can spread very fast, as there are multiple connections between different groups of workers. Also because there is no leadership whose influence can be threatened by such expansiveness and which would thus attempt to contain the spread.

As the steps taken are small, and arrived at by mutual agreements, everybody participates. The seeming innocuousness of these methods makes them ubiquitous, and difficult to be managed.

Methods of resistances to managements can serve as good illustrations:

Not talking to managers and supervisors ; not even greeting them.

Not accepting greetings from the management on festivals and other occasions.

Confronting managers together in groups as a daily routine.

Behaving dumb when questioned alone by leaders and managers .

Not openly challenging managements demands, but acting only as per the collective decisions.

Taking an off-day or avoiding over-time when production is required urgently.

Contractor's workers in Sapna-Sobhag Textiles, Faridabad, India usually get their wages after much delay. In one such instance, the workers operating the texprint machines did not start the machines in the morning shift.

All of them went and sat in the canteen.

The MD-Chairman came to the canteen and started shouting and screaming at the workers, "Tell me, who is your leader ? I'll just kick him out !"

The workers maintained a silence.

After some more raving and ranting by the managers, the workers went to the shopfloor and started the machines.

The MD, having found no leaders, took out all his anger on the managers.

The workers got their outstanding dues the same day.²

Unities - A Threat to Collectivities

"Unity is a blank cheque which we sign, and is encashed by the unions and managements when it suits them."

- A worker in Faridabad with 25 years of experience as a factory worker.

"All that happens in closed door meetings is always against the interests of workers." - A worker in Faridabad with 15 years of experience as a factory worker

"Last fall (1994), striking tele-communication workers stormed an executive board meeting by crawling through air conditioning ducts, then bursting out of the ceiling into the meeting and yelling their demands." - A letter from South Korea³

² FMS January 1996.

³ The Poor, the Bad and the Angry, Issue 2. Address all mail this way only : PO Box 3305, Oakland, CA 94609, USA

Collective resistances, collective struggles, collectivities are inimical to hierarchies. For quite some time now our lives are being pulverised by hierarchies. Delegates, representatives, leaders, heroes, masters, messiahs and stalwarts are exercising domination over us.

All authority, all hierarchy opposes collectivity ; and unity is its prime weapon of seduction.

"We do not believe in a procession of the blind where only a handful of people have both eyes. Instead, we believe in a procession where everyone has at least one eye."

- 'A Draft for Discussion' for a student meeting in J.N.University, New Delhi Aug'96

Unity within the particular arena, unity within the sect is an unquestionable postulate propagated by those occupying higher rungs in various pyramidal establishments. Ironically, unity - a mainstay for hierarchy - is even presented as the panacea for ills engendered by hierarchies, especially by those attempting to replace one hierarchical structure by another hierarchical structure.

In their everyday existence wage-workers at each and every step find unities (and their corresponding identities) to be counter-resistance, anti-struggle. The response of the management of discontent to the spread of collectivities is to impose the confinement of unities. A cardinal principle of the strategies of the management of discontent when faced with resistance by collectivities is to create representatives and leaders.

"Unify or else be terrorised .."

When management fails to unify a collectivity under a leadership, it has lost the main battle, and terror remains the last option for the managers of discontent.

Terrorism as state policy

Support by all governments to terrorist activities in other countries is a well known fact, but here we unravel a more debased role of governments vis-à-vis terrorism.

The enormous interference of the state in our lives has led to a situation where governments are blamed for all kinds of problems ; governance as such is being questioned. Representatives and representation are having a hard time. Weakened to the extreme, the strategy adopted by governments to counter such a threat to their existence is to create an entity so mysterious, perfidious, hideous, omnipotent and obscure that people call for the state to intervene and protect them. This entity is terrorism. The state, then, takes upon itself to stage the spectacle of defence against the terrorist monster, and in the name of this 'holy mission' it extracts from the people a further portion of their manoeuvrability by reinforcing police control of the entire population.

As if to inaugurate this strategy, on December 12, 1969 a secret organ of the Italian government exploded a bomb in the crowded Piazza Fontana and killed 200 people. A few years later Aldo Moro, presidential candidate, was kidnapped ; the media was inundated by this farce, and when it was judged that people were convinced about the existence of terrorists independent from all the competing factions of the government, Aldo Moro was murdered.⁴

This method travelled fast and is now a much used weapon world-wide. This is not to say that it was not used before. To cite an example of a hundred years ago, Okhrana - the secret service in Russia - feeling the upheavals of 1905 in the air, on the 28th July 1904, had the Minister of Interior, Plehve, killed. Sensing it to be insufficient, on the 17th February 1905 they had Grand Duke Serge, the Czar's uncle and the head of the Moscow military district, killed. The Okhrana was just a puny little outfit compared to the secret structures of today, whose deviousness is exponentially related to their size.

It is true that there are some spontaneous outbursts of some terrorist violence against the present system, and terrorist organisations are formed without the hand of the secret organs of the state. However, these illegitimate non-government groups are essentially learning the tricks of governance with the mission of forming their new governments. Moreover, such outfits are more often than not infiltrated by secret services who have much superior resources at their command. All terrorist organisations must have an hierarchical structure, enmeshed with secrecy. This makes them an easy prey for the intelligence

⁴ Gianfranco Sanguinetti, 'On Terrorism and the State', London.

services, who finally control them for their purposes. Such organisations become adjuncts to the terrorist organisations conceived by governments.

All these organisations are used to make the whole population, which is struggling against the governments, believe that it has at least an enemy in common with the government, from which the government defends it on condition that it is no longer called into question by anyone.

To counter growing resistances and struggles which prompt the questioning of representation and governance as such, and to create some justification for their own existence, governments have made terrorist violence an integral part of their policies in the last three decades.

That power is weak that seeks omnipotence

The increasing use of violence against wage-workers and the expanding military-bureaucratic-terrorist apparatus is not an indicator of the strength of this system. On the contrary, the necessity of the use of force is an unequivocal evidence of the threat which the present system faces.

Factories, offices, institutions, airports, powerhouses, government buildings and their representatives concealed behind the cover of barbed wires, thick walls, electronic devices and assault rifles are more besieged than victorious. *The threat to this system comes from the questioning of its very premises:*

- Questioning of the reverence towards work.
- Questioning of the importance, the necessity and the utility of representatives and delegation of power.
- Questioning of the blessings of growth and progress.
- Questioning of the boons of science & technology
- Questioning of the very necessity of governments and governance.

once people begin to question all is lost, as subversion takes over. - thus fears the management of discontent

Ways of enforcement

Discontent and the workprocess are two sides of the same coin. They affect one another continuously and one cannot be separated from the other. Together they form the whirlpool that production and reproduction is today. To keep afloat in this whirlpool, the work-process demands increasing work intensity, increasing working-hours, decreasing share of wage-workers in what they produce. These lead to an increase in discontent at every workplace. This incessantly increasing discontent has to be perpetually managed for the perpetuation of the furnace that is the workplace. Managements' attempts to channelise and control discontent take place along tried, tested and well propagated methods - processed at knowledge producing centres and circulated through mass media.

Two of the main pillars on which this control is propped are :

- Bureaucracy
- Representation

Some methods by which these two pillars of control operate are :

Charge-sheets by bureaucracies and replies by representatives. This is a routine method to browbeat individuals and groups of workers.

Such is the tuning and resonance between bureaucracies and representatives that in workplaces, bureaucracies frame the rules and the representatives implement them, while in society at large the bureaucracies draft, the representatives pass and the bureaucracies implement the laws.

Demands of workers are framed by representatives as demand notices and handed to managements. The process of closed door talks between bureaucrats and representatives begins wrapped in theatrical

performances (hunger strikes, token strikes and threatening thundering speeches). Behind closed doors representatives and bureaucrats cut and edit workers demands and sign agreements. Parts of these agreements are hidden and parts are presented to wage-workers.

A homogenised and unified mass is amenable to efficient control as it can be led. Therefore it suits hierarchies, who try to foist leaders, both through dividing (unities at different levels) and uniting. The whining at the increasing lack of unity is an expression of the anguish of managements of control.

A clarification : Even when leaders emerge from among those resisting and are bold, intelligent and honest, today they do not stand a chance in confrontations with the gigantic institutional structures of surveillance, control and extraction. Leaders are easily bought or crushed.

In South Africa,

*"Riding public trains for free and refusing to pay rent ... were once seen as legitimate protest (against) apartheid Now the 'culture of non-payment' has become ingrained among the impoverished black majority, despite attempts to erase it by the black-led government ... "*⁵

BLOW HOT, BLOW COLD

Blow Cold : Workers are constantly reminded of the glorious tradition of work culture to which they are said to belong : "Laborere est orere"

The whip of ethics

"You take a wage, so you must work".

General good

"What is good for the company is good for you."

Threat of the legal noose

"Law is for your own good, but do not take it into your own hands".

Incentives as bait

"Work more, earn more" .

Neglecting contentions as small issues

"Don't be petty".

Blow Hot : The system is geared to deal with 'do or die' situations. It needs exemplary punishment to instil fear among people.

Lockouts by bureaucrats and strikes by representatives involve direct intimidation of workers. Dismissals and physical attacks are what wage-workers bear during both lockout and strike, and from representatives and bureaucrats.

"We Are All Hooligans"

*"The movement resisted the media's spin tactics ... just as the movement wasn't 'captured' in the media's framework, it also didn't submit to the control of union, or political organizations. 'Representative' orga-nizations were generally distrusted, considered to be dividing and co-opting the movement."*⁶ - Youth Revolt in France, March 1994

Collectivities

Despite all these ingenuities of managements of control, discontent is increasingly expressing itself in newer and newer creative forms and opening up the possibility of subverting unities and overcoming hierarchies.

To these creative phenomena of struggles and resistances we give the name collectivity. We attempt to define this phenomenon through an exploration of the struggles of industrial wage-workers. The need for this exploration comes from our fifteen years practice in an industrial area (Faridabad, 300,000 factory workers).

⁵ 'USA TODAY', August 1 1996, quoted in The Poor, The Bad and the Angry, Issue 2

⁶ 'We Are All Hooligans', quoted in The Poor, The Bad and the Angry, Issue 2

We find it tragic that it took us all these years to recognise the all pervasive presence of collectivities in wage-workers' resistances, struggles, and defiances. This has been because our seeing was veiled by a certain theoretical obduracy. Now, however, we argue that all concepts are constructs to understand complex, dynamic and stratified realities. Our attempt here at conceptualisation is to make an understanding possible in order to aid emancipatory practices. Elaborate it if it helps, discard it if it doesn't. But we hope that the reality we are trying to describe will be looked into.

Collectivities are embedded in the daily activities of wage-workers. Collectivity recognises differences, it does not suppress them. It's strength lies in recognising multiplicity, diversity, dissidence, doubt and criticism.

Collectivity accepts varying levels of helplessness, weakness, fear, hesitation, ignorance, lack of articulation and insignificance within wage-workers.

Acts taken by a collectivity are analogous to what in mathematics is called the Highest Common Factor (HCF), i.e. the highest number which is common to a group of numbers. In a collectivity, then, these would be acts of which each involved individual is convinced of, and takes willingly. In general these are very small steps. There are no leaders. There is a general refusal to be represented and to represent. This refusal is because of the fear of betrayal and also due to the risk that those from amongst them will face if they represent. There are no heroes, there are no martyrs. Collectivity has neither a centre nor a periphery. It has a multi-facetedness that could be called faceless.

There is no attempt at face-saving and steps back and forth are taken for granted. There is no desperation as it is an everyday affair. Sentiments and rhetoric of 'now or never', 'do or die' find no echo here. Openness and continuous discussions are its life-blood.

Direction is not predetermined, rather multi-directionality emerges because of constant discussions and desires that create newer and newer innovative channels of resistances, defiances and struggles .

Whom to threaten ?

Whom to bribe ?

Whom to arrest ?

Whom to dismiss ?

Whom to kill ?

And finally,

whom to negotiate with?

Systems of surveillance and control stand baffled when faced with collectivities. Though it may be said that it is good business for pharmaceutical companies as bureaucrats, managers and representatives need aspirins to combat daily and persistent headaches.

Collectivities seem to be a means par excellence against institutional monsters that we face. Hence they are feared by hierarchies as they undermine their very existence .

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING

Collectivities

Wage-workers have internalised through mutual interactions, oral culture and sharing of experiences as to what steps to take and what not to take in specific situations. Collectivities as subterranean flows of resistances and struggles have always existed. Now with the credibility of representation smashed, collectivities have surfaced. The need however is to recognise their infinite potential to topple the pyramids of discipline and extraction.

Efforts are needed to enhance conversations amongst collectivities and to create multi-nodal and expanding channels for linkages. Concurrence and simultaneity in actions of collectivities dispersed in space is needed to maximise their subversive potential. Anti-hierarchical links alone can do this.

Does collectivity not prefigure the future?

Sources

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