
REVOLUTION IS THE ONLY SOLUTION!¹

Just look at the conditions we live under!

- chronically high unemployment;
- a stagnant economy;
- declining real wages;
- long hours at jobs that are stunting and demeaning, with bosses breathing down our neck; and
- innumerable social ills such as neuroses, substance abuse and brutality - all arising from poverty and alienation.

These conditions are appalling and unnecessary. Changing them requires a revolution that replaces the present social system based on private ownership of economic resources with one based on collective ownership.

Eliminating unemployment

Attempts to solve the problem of unemployment by tinkering with the present system are futile. The cycle of booms and recessions is an unavoidable part of capitalism.

We need a revolutionary government that takes over private industry and uses control over its revenue to ensure sufficient spending to fully employ economic resources. This takeover would begin with existing large scale industry and eventually cover the entire economy.

Process of continuing revolution

With the capitalists deprived of power and ownership, a process of continuing revolution can begin which will eventually transform society and people's lives.

¹ This is a revised version of a pamphlet that appeared in *Red Politics No. 1*

Workers will come to control production rather than being controlled by it. They will change their work from a form of slavery into an activity that is satisfying and fully exercises their creative powers. It will become an end in itself rather than an irksome means to an income. The purpose of production will change from profit making to serving the common good. The average person will become a part of the political, intellectual and cultural life of society, and cease to be an alienated outsider.

Transforming work

On coming to power a revolutionary government, at the head of a mass movement of workers, will undertake a number of immediate major changes to the nature of work. These include:

- security of employment;
- the elimination of petty bossing and authoritarianism;
- greater democratic involvement in workplace decision making, and worker supervision and scrutiny of management decisions and actions;
- the reorganisation of work to provide greater variety and a more equitable sharing of the thinking and creating;
- shorter and more flexible working hours to fit in better with the rest of people's lives;
- more time for training and education; and
- an increase in the pace at which menial tasks are eliminated by new technology.

More fundamental changes in the nature of work will develop as the average worker acquires the skills and ability needed to perform work that is diverse, interesting and empowering. In particular these include organisation and communication skills, and technical and administrative knowledge.

The ground is being prepared for these changes even now under capitalism. The average worker is better educated than in the past; and the division of labour that confines people to narrow tasks is being undermined by new technologies. These

have eliminated many menial jobs and require a broad range of abilities based on a general education rather than the old narrow craft skills.

A critical feature of the transformation of work will be the elimination of the managerial hierarchy that we presently take for granted. A lot of what managers do stems from the fact that work is performed by alienated 'wages slaves'. This requires a hierarchy of petty bosses whose job it is to tell those beneath them what to do and to make sure they do it. These people are also responsible for ensuring that production processes are working smoothly and that the quality of output is up to standard.

To the extent that workers experience work as a something they want to do and are willing to use society's resources responsibly (as discussed below), the need for supervision vanishes. This changing attitude to work plus the acquisition of the requisite skills and abilities also means that they can take on the monitoring of processes they are involved in and of product quality.

Once the abilities are acquired and the division of labour eliminated, much of the intellectual labour that is monopolised by management such as the planning and organisation of production can become integrated into the activities of the average worker.

This process of changing the nature of work will be protracted and involve much trial and error. It will also require a struggle against conservative habits and those who actively oppose change.

Production for use rather than profit

The revolution will transform the purpose of production from profit to use. Resources will not only be fully employed, they will be used far more efficiently to meet people's needs.

- competition will be replaced by coordination and cooperation.
- there will be greater commitment to meeting consumer needs
- there will be an orientation towards consumption rather than accumulation;
- more efficient technologies will be employed. Under capitalism, the profit motive leads to the use of excessively labour intensive methods of production

because of price distortions that **under** value labour relative to other inputs. These have two causes. Firstly, rather than prices tending towards cost, they are distorted by the going rate of **return** on investment that acts as a 'tax' on the use of plant and machinery. **Secondly**, the capitalists only has to pay part of the cost of direct labour but the **full** cost of the indirect labour previously incorporated in non-labour inputs.

While unemployment and the business cycle can be eliminated simply by government control over revenue, the development of a new impetus to production to replace the profit motive **will** depend both on the transformation of work into something people want to do for its own sake (as already discussed) and on the desire to serve the common good.

A new relationship to society and a change in human nature

This desire to serve the common good will result from a basic change in 'human nature' and the individual's relationship to society. This in turn will stem from both the new empowering role in production plus a fundamental change in all other areas of life which will see people becoming full participants in the political, intellectual and cultural life of society. While they were wage slaves this was not possible both because of their limited level of personal and intellectual development, and their subordinate mentality. And of course it was ruled out by elites maintaining a stranglehold on these areas of life. There will also be more leisure time to engage in these activities, both because of on-going increases in productivity and a greater freedom to choose shorter working hours than was the case under capitalism.

A better upbringing will be an important part of the individual's new relationship with society. Children will be surrounded by adults with healthier personalities and a greater range of abilities. They will no longer be segregated into schools, which sever the link between thinking and doing. Instead they will participate actively in production and in society.

Withering away of the state

The supreme reflection of the revolutionary transformation of society, and the individual's place in it, will be the withering away of the state. This will occur

over a number of generations. With social ownership there will no longer be mountains of legislation relating to private property rights and the regulation of industry. Where rules and standards are needed they will be voluntarily agreed to without the sanctions of law. The economic and social development accompanying the revolution will create a global society, so there will be no national wars and no armies. Police forces will become a thing of the past. With people no longer alienated from society and with an automatic right to a share of output, theft and misuse of property will be rare. For the same reasons anti-social and pathological behaviour will be far less common. Where somebody needs to be restrained this can be achieved through informal measures rather than through a standing police force.

Drawing on past experience of revolution

Modern history has seen a number of working class revolutions. The main ones were the Paris Commune, and the Soviet and Chinese Revolutions. Each took the struggle further than the previous one before being overcome by the strength of the counter-revolution and by unfavourable socio-economic conditions. In the case of the Soviet and Chinese revolutions these defeats were inflicted not by counter-revolutionary armies but by concealed reactionaries holding high office in the revolutionary government.

The regimes established in the Soviet bloc by these reactionaries are the ones we saw crumble a few years ago. Despite empty talk to the contrary, no one can seriously argue that these regimes were communist or that their demise represented the 'death of communism'. Revolutionaries welcome their overthrow - it has increased the pace of change in these countries and assists the eventual re-emergence in them of revolutionary movements.

There is nothing surprising about long term historical processes meeting short term setbacks. Nothing in this world develops smoothly. Take, for instance, the long and arduous transition from feudalism to modern capitalism. Feudal ideas and practices turned out to be very resilient indeed.

These defeats were not the result of an inherent flaw in the revolutionary agenda. They were defeats of a fragile and immature process taking place under the

unfavourable conditions of socio-economic backwardness and limited experience. They were not the defeats of developed and robust communism.

In its early stages socialism is still essentially a capitalist society. There is still the division of labour and elites. There is inevitably a faction within the political leadership who are keen to make themselves into a new bourgeoisie. They do not want to push society forward; instead they want to preserve and even strengthen the capitalist aspects of the new society.

Capitalist legacies have to be transformed as conditions allow and conservative elements in society defeated. This will not be a smooth process but rather a series of revolutions over a whole historical epoch.