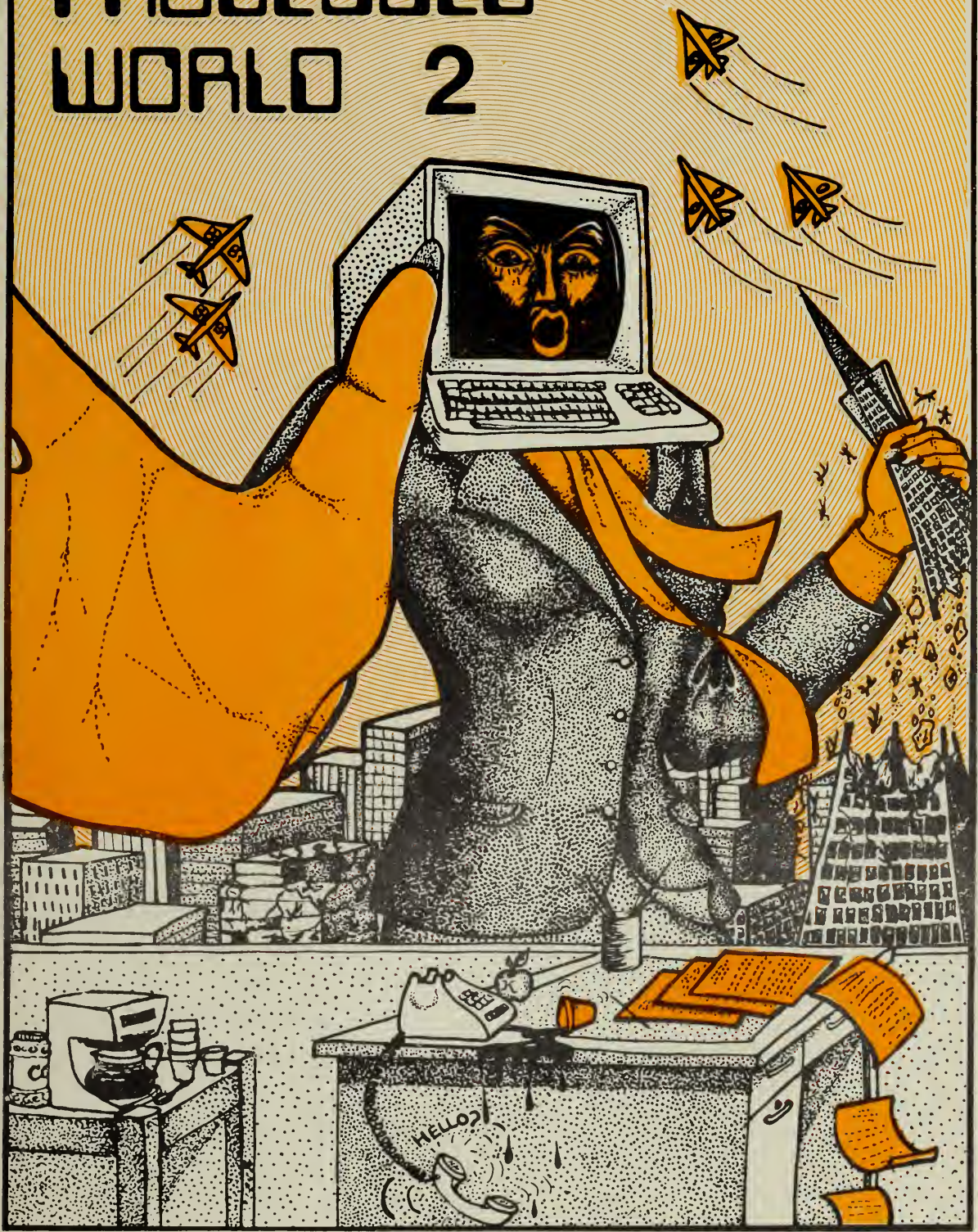


# PROCESSED WORLD 2



\$1.50 CHEAP

# PROCESSED WORLD

## SUMMER/FALL 1981, ISSUE 2

### **Editorial Surgery**

Maxine, Lucius, Broony, L.M., C.W.,  
and a host of others too numerous to  
mention

### **OB/Gyn**

Friends of the Toad

### **Photogenetic Engineering**

Althea Roman

### **Quotemaster General**

Helen Highwater

### **Translations From Old Norse**

Sven Svenström

### **Research Staph?**

Dr. Z. "Yes I did" Rocks

### **Junior President of Vice**

Lucius Cabins

### **Specialist in Tai P'ing**

Gidget Digit

### **National Insecurity Advisor**

Mel Testa

### **Merciless Mirth**

Huey, Dewey & Louie

### **GraphikAde**

H.H., C. Sheridan, Maxine, others

### **Sinophilia & Bubbles**

Douglas Dinsdale

### **Supplies, Discourtesy of**

Assorted offices throughout SF and  
the East Bay

Processed World is published whenever we have enough money and material, on a strictly not-for-profit basis. PW #1 cost \$700 to produce, of which \$400 was recovered through \$1 donations and \$5 subscriptions... Friends and supporters donated the additional \$300 for this issue #2. Look for Processed World #3 sometime in

October or November—send subscriptions, donations, letters, articles, poems, photos, drawings, etc. We do not copyright the material in Processed World but ask for credit when something is borrowed, and would be filled with chagrin if someone took our magazine and made money off of it.

Processed World  
55 Sutter St. #829  
San Francisco, CA 94104

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All of the articles in *Processed World* reflect the views of the author and not necessarily the views of other contributors or editors.

# TALKING HEADS

*In the introduction to Processed World #1, we expressed our intention to establish a network for discussion, information, and communication that would be relevant to the lives of people employed in offices. The favorable responses to our first issue confirmed our belief that many office workers feel the same dissatisfaction we experience in our own lives. While distributing our magazine on the sidewalks of downtown SF, we met new friends who are actively collaborating with us. Several people have also written to us with comments and criticism which are reprinted in the Letters section below. Thanks to donations and sales of the magazine, we were able to cover a significant part of the cost of producing issue #2.*

\*\*\*            \*\*\*            \*\*\*

*Here and there, tentatively and often almost invisibly, clerical workers in the US are questioning the situation they share and are beginning some collective efforts to improve it. As with other kinds of workers, these efforts inevitably bring them into conflict with management. One of the ongoing purposes of Processed World is to report on such conflicts as well as on the conditions that produce them. While we are often severely critical of the groups, such as unions, that are currently trying to "organize" office workers, it's not because we oppose banding together to fight for better conditions within the current set-up. On the contrary, we believe it is vitally necessary for office workers to oppose speed-ups, counter divisive hier-*



Your friendly P.W. vendor in downtown S.F.

*archies of pay and responsibility, and win improved benefits such as child-care as well as better pay and working conditions. But we think reliance on the traditional methods and forms of organization can only lead to more crushing defeats like the one experienced at Blue Shield, and in the long run, inhibits workers from finding effective ways to organize and act themselves.*

*One of the goals of PW is to bring together people seeking to develop new, imaginative strategy and tactics and to create a basis of support for future actions. Experience in self-organization and solidarity between office workers would increase our power to challenge the social relations that underlie not only our dissatisfaction on the job, but the prevailing misery and injustice throughout the world. The people at PW believe that the only permanent solution to our condition as office workers lies in a complete transformation of society. In this and forthcoming issues of PW, we hope to articulate a vision of a society where people would no longer be compelled to waste their times and talents in exchange for a means of*

survival; where profits and hierarchy would no longer dominate our lives; where social decisions would be made by those affected by them; where people would not depend on money to get the things they need and enjoy—instead, products would be made and distributed according to need and desire, and the willingness of people to produce them. The millions of economic transactions which comprise the bulk of office work would be unnecessary, and the dreary tasks now required of office workers would be eliminated.

As an organized group, clerical workers possess immense power to bring about these changes. Because they control the flow of information and money that is crucial to the circulation of goods in this society, they also have the power to subvert the whole money economy.

\*\*\*            \*\*\*            \*\*\*

In this issue, we continue to explore various aspects of office work: "The

Rise of the 6-Month Worker" offers an analysis of the changing workforce, with its new values and employment patterns. "Career Opportunities: Gidget Goes Binary" is a fotonovela in which Gidget, seeking Big Bucks as a computer programmer, loses her breakfast onto irreplaceable hard disks and consequently loses the job. "Prelude" is a short story about the conflicts and choices faced by a woman climbing the career ladder. "Raises, Rights, Respect... Alienation" and "Band-Aids & Escape Valves" analyze the limitations of two approaches to workplace reform: unionization and Quality of Work Life programs. "Processing Future Processors" likens the university to a white-collar factory using UCB as a case in point. We are also inaugurating a regular feature in this issue "Down Time", which includes accounts of recent events involving office workers.

Hope you like it—Send comments, articles, money.... **SUBSCRIBE!**



"Ever feel trapped by office monotony?"



DEAR REAL PEOPLE:

JUMPIN' JEHOSEPHAT!! THERE'S INTELLIGENT LIFE OUT THERE!! WE ARE AT YOUR SERVICE...

Hi! Nice to know that somebody out there breathes!! The disembodied voice of Mr. Brown's secretary can say more than the trite phrases we've all been taught to mouth to each other over the phone as we arrange other people's affairs and try to keep our annoyance at being disturbed from showing...

Aside from inflated rhetoric (only \$5.95 a dozen at Peninsula Office Supply), we would like to offer our services to The Noble Cause. We have limited copying capability with a high-resolution Minolta copier, if that will help. As far as our company's resources go, this office exists solely to promote and sell tax and business information to the Fat Cats to keep us in line. So, if you need detailed information on how far either side can legally go, feel

free to come up and use our library. Please call us first, as although this office has an unconventional atmosphere, occasionally someone with marginal power over our existence wanders in. Also, you'd probably prefer not to be hassled by any of our salesmen...

As for the intangibles, Anne is an artist and I am a graphicist of a sort and we love playing with words (members of the Verbal Vice Squad), so if you-all need any help with content, ideas, embellishment, etc., we are champing at the bit. The extent of our subversive activities so far has been to plan a parody of one of our periodical publications, with a possible audience of our Main Office (back East, of course) depending on how radical it gets, but we're itching to dig in to the elbows...

This has been so inspiring! I don't know if I can muster the necessary saccharin to answer the phone...

We are the Insurrection and the Light:  
Anne K. and Elizabeth B.

Dear Folks,

I enjoyed your first issue. Please sign me up for the entire program!

Things are fairly grim here in the Big Apple. A lot of people want to get ahead. Fortunately for me, my forty hours is put in doing something real and concrete—I box and ship bicycle parts to cyclists. I work for a non-profit organization—no one gets rich off my labors anyway. The “Board” (very ominous—never met any of them) seems to believe that people can pay rent and eat off of their good will. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis things function well. One of my co-workers brings her 3-month-old to work. No one objects to the breast feeding and we all spend time with the baby—probably healthy all around. Little Mary Claire is weighed every Monday morning on the postage scale.

I very much enjoyed “San Francisco 1987”. Were it only true. It’s difficult to even imagine that here. Most people don’t dream beyond Fortune smiling and getting a seat in the subway.

Your film review is much like any other film review in a left-wing paper. I don’t see the point in reviewing a regular Hollywood movie for ideological shortcomings. Deal with the movie that’s being reviewed. When “9 to 5” came out, I read the reviews and decided to wait until it came to the \$2.00 movie house. I kind of enjoyed it, although it was a Friday night. No way could I have dealt with Bergman by then.

As to Dolly Parton, I thought she was a great actress. She’s probably not stupid, certainly not so stupid as to think the way she dresses is common. Nor is she oblivious to her endowments. Maybe she likes it. If some people go around in three piece suits all day and others are drag queens all day, why can’t she look like what she wants?

Here is the old fightsong of a unit in the San Francisco Dept. of Social Services (Food Stamps). We had a merry little party a few years back when the chief cook and paper pusher went out of town. It’s written in our working language. If you don’t understand you’ve got to find an old E. W.

To the Long Vacation,  
Debbie K. — Brooklyn, N. Y.

P.S. The postage, ink and paper is brought to you courtesy of my employer.

The Eligibility Workers’ Fight Song  
(to the tune of “On Winsocki”)

On one-fifties, on 150’s  
Fight, Fight, Fight, Fight, Fight  
Run the L-M through computer  
G-Line, sure tonight  
(Fight, Fight, Fight)  
Keep on filing, keep on smiling  
Keep that white-out clean  
Ev’ry client’s glad to have us  
on the scene

UIB cards, EDD cards, ATP cards too  
Rush to cut-off, Down to intake  
Gath’ring 0-0-2’s  
(Fight, Fight, Fight)  
We won’t smash you,  
We won’t catch you  
It’s been just a year since we were  
CLIENTS, TOO  
(Fight, Fight)

*Sure, Dolly can dress any way she wants. [By the way, what makes you think her wardrobe in 9-5 was her choice?] The point we were trying to make was that the way her appearance was used to captivate the audience contradicted the ostensible critique of sexual harassment made in the movie.*

*Sure, ideological manipulation is to be expected from Hollywood movies. Does this mean we should ignore it? Besides, the progressive, feminist pretensions of this movie set it apart somewhat from the traditional Hollywood fare. We felt it was not accidental that the movie came out at the same time as a unionization drive is being launched to organize clericals.*

*In spite of the fact that many people have told us they liked the movie, we stand by our criticisms and encourage people to take a deeper look at “entertainment.”*

*Anyway, thanks for writing—we love the Eligibility Workers’ Fightsong. Say ‘hi’ to Mary Claire for us.*

Ed.



To the Editor(s):

All I can say upon reading your article of the SF takeover in 1987 is "Bravo"! It so happens that I work as a word processor (Wang) at B of A and liken myself unto that fellow in "One Flew Over the Cookoo's Nest" at the end of the movie when the big Indian has choked the remains of Jack Nicholson, smashed the window and escaped. Remember how for almost one minute he yells triumphantly and whoops and hollars—and then just as suddenly—he shuts up lest the authorities hear him.

You aim for Utopia. I see that you're trying to raise the consciousness of thousands of business people and tycoons who refuse to have their consciousness raised. It will take many many lifetimes for this to happen. I would not be surprised if your little magazine folded after the third issue, but applaud you nonetheless. They occupied UC once; perhaps it's not impossible to occupy BA—think big thoughts!

My situation here is—I've been in this section for four months. Before that I was never exposed to the Wang. I'm being paid \$1208 for a supervisory position that should pay at least \$1300. I was put on 90-day probation last month by my immediate supervisor, who I thought I got along with but who apparently doesn't think I can cut the job when I know damn

good and well I can. Things are better at this point, but I feel that he might even be under pressure to put me under pressure. He documents everything, undermines my work for me and talks down to me like a 4th grader. So I'm out looking once again.

I marvel at the power this bastard has over me. That is, all he has to do is go to his immediate supervisor, who is the Vice President of the Department, and tell him he doesn't think I'm doing the job—and the VP will go along with his decision! I have no protection whatsoever—no union, no secretaries or word processors association, NOTHING! Nothing but the Employee Assistance Division with their "Let's Talk" in 6 steps, the final step being my case would be reviewed by the higher-ups (top management) who would undoubtedly decide in favor of the Vice President in charge.

So—do you need a word processor? Or a writer? I'm good at words. Maybe (I've thought of this) I could write my experiences here as an article for you. Feel free to call (or write) me at work and if I'm not at my desk leave name and phone # with receptionist. And if she should ask you what it's in regard to, just say go fuck yourself.

Best wishes,  
James D.

Keep Those  
Cards and Letters  
Coming!



January 1981							February 1981							March 1981							April 1981										
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# THE RISE OF THE 6-MONTH WORKER

In my experience as a temporary worker in downtown San Francisco, I have met many young people working in offices who have no pretensions about the importance of what they do. They seldom have any attachment to their work, though most are usually careful to do it right, and they don't expect to keep the job longer than from a few months to a couple of years.

Most office workers are *temporary*, regardless of their official status, and feel they have something better to do with the time they are selling for a living. This something better to do is often, but certainly not always, some kind of creative expression—music, photography, dance, theater, etc. But there are not many commercial opportunities for the aspiring photographer, actress or writer who insists on pursuing his or her own desires and inclinations.

There are many women and men who would like to quit working and spend time raising their children. But in this era of rampant inflation and falling real wages, one income is not enough to support a "middle-class" standard of living.

There are also countless students and liberal arts graduates (frustrated philosophers, language majors, etc.)

who are forced into office work while they go to school or until they make a connection for a job as an editor, writer, academic, or until they develop a marketable blue-collar skill. For most, though, this temporary interlude becomes a semi-permanent condition, especially when the "good position" in the university or government turns out to be little more than glorified office work. There might be different companies or agencies, the bureaucratic procedures might vary with different jobs, but there always remains the endless stream of disconnected numbers, reports, memos and invoices to be generated, stored, processed or revised.

Meanwhile, a growing proportion of clerical workers seem to reject the notion of a career in the office and express this attitude by choosing the temporary road. This impression is borne out by statistics both locally and nationally.

The *S.F. Chronicle*, in an Oct. 19, 1980 special section on "Career Opportunities" characterized the thousands of temporary workers in the San Francisco area as mostly in their 20's and 30's, about 2/3 female and having an educational background ranging from high school dropout to Ph.D. This includes only

people who actually obtain work through agencies, but it can be assumed that there are thousands more who come and go from company to company without the "help" of an agency.

Short-term employment (2 years or less) is the norm in office work, especially in the lower level jobs. Fifty percent annual turnover among clerical workers is common. At the recently struck Blue Shield offices in SF, for example, there was a near 100% turnover in one department during the year preceding the strike.

According to *Business Week* (10/6/80) 90% of all US companies are now regularly using temporary workers. For the parasitic body shops known as 'temporary employment agencies' sales 'have tripled to \$2.5 billion since 1975 and could triple again in

the next five years.'" About 60% of this temporary market consists of clerical jobs.

## STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND INTEGRATION

For many office workers temporary agencies are offering benefits that are more in tune with what they want than what unions offer. Above and beyond the economic benefits, which vary widely from agency to agency and union contract to union contract, temporary agencies offer the possibility of *employment when it's necessary and freely chosen unemployment when there's adequate cash-on-hand* without the stigma or penalties that come with not being willing to hold a job.



Give me your tired, your poor;  
Your huddled masses, yearning to be free.  
I spread my loins & sit upon the floor.  
I raise your Hopes;  
But give you Dung-aree.

BILLBOARDS of the FUTURE.

Temporary employment also offers a certain freedom from the expectations for sacrifice and dedication that permanent workers face. As Manpower, Inc.'s "Secretary of the Year" Edi Mohr said in the *S.F. Chronicle* (4/22/81) "...because I'm a temporary, I'm not stuck there like everyone else. So I have nothing to lose by having myself a good time."

Capitalism has survived so long because it has a unique *flexibility*, a capacity to channel rebellious energies and harness them to its own needs. Wave after wave of mass struggles for better pay, better working conditions, more say in the running of society, have driven the system forward as the market forces beloved of the Reaganites could never have done alone.

A classic case from the recent past is the history of the big industrial unions, like the UAW, the Steel Workers and the Rubber Workers.

thousands of workers in turn fueled the booming consumer economy of the fifties and sixties.

Temporary agencies play a similar role in relation to the young office worker of today. They allow individuals who hate submitting to the unquestioned authority of bosses and managers, who despise *selling* their skills and time, to stay out of the work-world as much as possible.

For business, on the other hand, temporary agencies offer the ability to get rid of an unsatisfactory or rebellious worker immediately—and without repercussions. Also, companies do not have to pay fringe benefits, payroll taxes, costs for personnel record keeping, advertising, recruiting, screening or training of employees.

By using temporary agencies companies can compensate for the problems of widespread absenteeism. Bringing in temp workers also helps

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## Most office workers feel they have something better to do with the time they are selling for a living.

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Formed in the huge and often violent strike movements of the 30's, these unions were rapidly transformed into appendages of the giant corporations their members worked for. In exchange for the closed shop which guaranteed their existence as institutions, they set themselves to maintaining discipline and productivity, beginning with the no-strike pledges they signed at the onset of World War II. The young workers who entered the factories after the war were increasingly indifferent to their jobs, preferring to concentrate on making their home lives as comfortable as possible. Consequently, the unions were able to trade away the control over production and working conditions, won during the struggles of the thirties, for better pay. This steady increase in real wages for hundreds of

to cement and augment the hierarchy in the office. Lowest-level permanent workers are permitted to enjoy the responsibility and authority, as petty as this may be, of supervising the temps. In return the company may demand greater loyalty and commitment from permanents who are relieved from the most tedious and boring tasks: "One highly placed executive in a mammoth insurance company commented that 'tender minded' academics were 'downright naive' in their concern about worker turnover... It was his 'informed judgement' that clerical personnel are easily trained for their jobs, that if they stayed in larger numbers they would become wage problems—we'd have to keep raising them or end up fighting with them, they would form unions and who knows what the hell

else.” \*

## “PROGRESSIVE” TEMPORARY AGENCIES

Competing for workers, Temps Inc., a small temporary agency doing about 4.5% of the business that industry giant Manpower, Inc. does, provides vacations, bonuses, a major medical plan, and relatively high wages (\$6.59/hr. for typists to \$10.75

\* Ivar Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery*, New York, Praeger, 1970, p.152

/hr. for word processors). “We developed a comprehensive fringe benefit program to give ourselves an identity as an employer and not just a body shop” explained Barry Wright, founder and president of Temps Inc. in *Business Week* (10/6/80).

Not coincidentally, Temps Inc. and similar agencies make a big deal about how vital you are, the need for “professional” performance on the job and the “special” relationship between the agency and the temp-

## Supervisor Shredder!



“The supervisor used to give us a hard time, always hanging over our shoulders telling us to *hurry up.*”

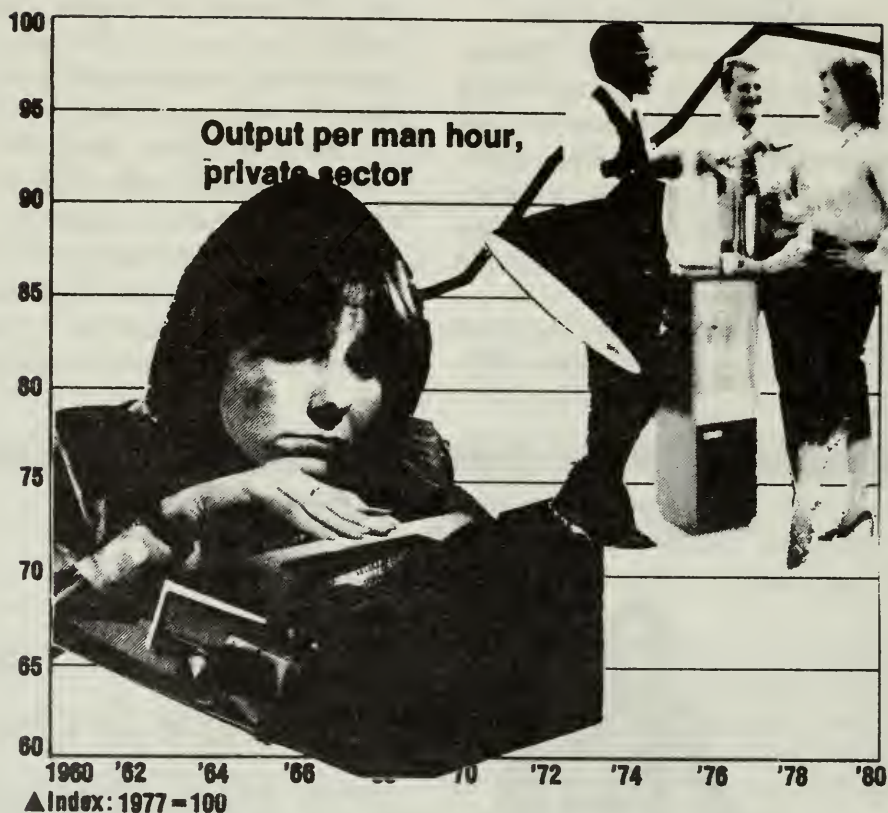
“Now, our problems are solved!”

*Shredded Supervisors  
Don't Talk!*

## Surety Shredding, Inc.

The latest in pest extermination for the office.

# PRODUCTIVITY IS STAGNANT



orary workers. They “respect” you a lot—the syrupy insincerity of their “friendship and concern” pervades every conversation.

The ability of Temps Inc., Pat Franklin Associates and other “progressive” agencies to offer comfortable wages and conditions is entirely dependent on the current prosperity enjoyed by SF’s financial district. In the 60’s France, experiencing very low unemployment rates and an expanding economy, had a similar boom of temporary agencies. (There are now approximately 80,000 temporary clerical workers in France, mostly in Paris.) Temporary work grew rapidly to compensate for increasing absenteeism and to do jobs that permanents wouldn’t. Initially French temporary workers received pay that was equal to or better than many permanent workers. Since the world-wide economic crisis of 1974-75 however, real wages have fallen for all French workers, and many temp-

oraries now get minimum wage. As economic activity has stagnated and fewer permanent jobs have become available, more French workers have turned to temporary work. Once employed as temporaries, workers are finding themselves increasingly trapped: jobs are of shorter duration with more time between jobs, wages are low and the chances of breaking out of the low-income/“underemployment” cycle are very poor.

French capitalists, through the development of temporary agencies, have gained a low-wage workforce easily hired and fired as needed. They also have undercut the unionization of banks, insurance companies and government offices.

## TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT: PERMANENT RESTRUCTURING?

The pattern of development of the ‘temporary industry’ in France is strikingly similar to that of the US

temp market. In the US the prosperity of banks and insurance companies might sustain "reasonable" wage and employment conditions for a while longer. But there is every reason to doubt that this will last. Notwithstanding the ridiculous expectations of "supply-side" economists, the long post-WWII economic boom is clearly over. The re-emergence of a highly competitive world market ensures that the current stagnation will lead to recession and probably to global depression.

In the meantime, though, capitalists around the world are scrambling to restructure their national economies for the battles ahead. "Reaganomics," with its huge cuts in taxes and social services combined with equally huge increases in military spending, is designed to transfer income away from workers and the "unproductive" poor and make it available as fresh investment funds for the most highly-mechanized, "capital-intensive" sectors of US industry. These sectors—steel, auto, electrical, aerospace—are already being hurt badly by foreign competition, especially from Japan and West Germany. As a result, they are now

years. Ever "smarter" machines and the advent of the "executive work station" (putting the managers themselves on terminals that will produce finished memos and documents) will erode the need for the bulk of clerical/secretarial work.

The increasing use of temporary office workers gives companies greater flexibility in "letting people go" when productivity gains through automation are realized. Companies don't have to worry about the severance pay and unemployment benefits they are obliged to provide for discharged permanent workers. While the new systems are first being implemented and there are still bugs to be worked out, the office temp market is booming and "decent" wages are available for some skills (e.g. word processing). But these conditions, alas, are as temporary as the jobs that currently provide them.

#### WAGE LABOR: A TEMPORARY CONDITION?

The push to unionize office workers will not avert the falling real wages or the imposition of work restructuring, though it may slow them down a bit.

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## Temporary office workers give companies greater flexibility in "letting people go."

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leading US business in a drive to cut costs and increase efficiency through automation, robotization and "job redesign."

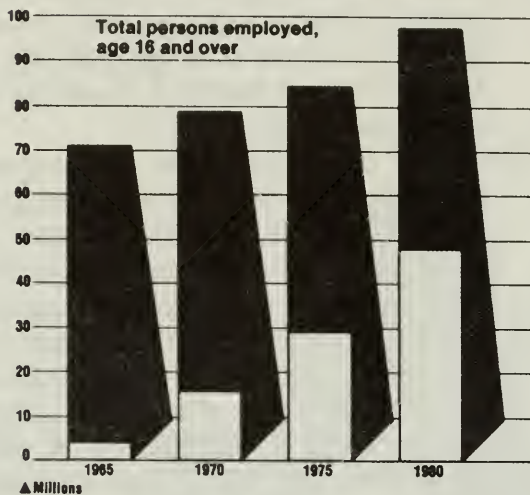
The effects of this drive on the industrial workforce can already be seen—massive layoffs, speedups, the negotiation of wage cuts by the unions. But clerical workers will soon be feeling the pinch as well.

In the office automation is advancing rapidly. There are more than 7 million data terminals operating in the US and this figure is expected at least to quadruple in the next 5-10

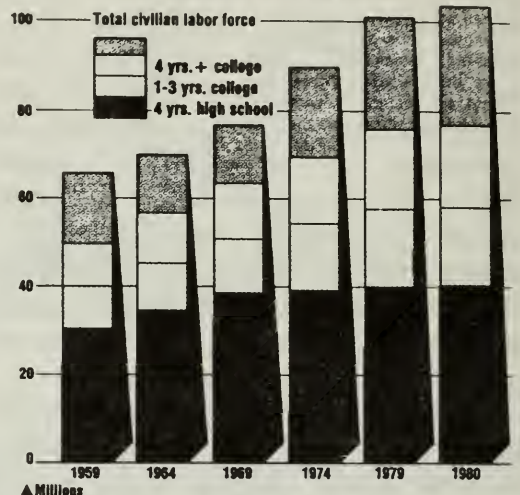
But unions are based on contractual bargains over a relatively long period of employment. During periods of expansion, they offer higher wages, more job security, seniority rights, contractually established production standards, etc. But for thousands of temps these things are meaningless since we are not planning to stay at *any* job very long, especially where there's a heavy workload with little time for breaks and conversation.

Temporary workers, and office workers in general need to develop means of communication and associ-

## THE BABY-BOOM GENERATION ALMOST DOMINATES THE WORK FORCE



## WORKERS ARE BECOMING BETTER EDUCATED



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics

ation *outside* of any particular workplace. This is essential since so few people stay at specific jobs or locations for more than a couple of years at most (usually less). Above and beyond specific work experiences, we have in common our general relationship to Corporate Office Land, and it is based around this *collective* predicament that we should begin associating.

It's time to take the typical "temp" attitude to work one step further. The problem is not only that office work is boring and useless to individuals who do it and wasteful for the society as a whole. *Wage labor itself* wastes the hours and lives of hundreds of millions around the world. At the same time it robs us of the power to decide what work should *really* be done to meet our needs and desires. The society based on wage labor is what must be challenged. In its place we can create a society where work is done directly for social and individual needs and where everyone can participate directly in determining and planning for these needs. Such a society would have no built-in tendencies, as the present one does, to constrict our intelligence and imagination into the strait-jacket of "job" and "career." On the contrary, it would *depend* on the all-round dev-

elopment of the brains and talents of every individual and their voluntary matching to the tasks at hand. The desire for variety and new experience, which is the positive motivation for so many modern workers to move restlessly from job to job, would become a basic principle of life. People could spend their time planting or harvesting one month, building houses the next, programming computers the one after, playing music every night—all without ever being farmers, construction workers, programmers or musicians. But the need for developing our brains and talents does not begin with the birth of this still-imaginary world. We can use the (relatively) free time that "temping" still affords us to create a subversive arsenal, to shatter the system's grip on our minds and those of our fellow humans.

Autonomous groups of workers, unbound by constitutions or laws, provide a starting point. If and when actions are taken and groups begin to link up with one another, goals, strategies, and tactics can be explored. The pages of *Processed World* are open to further discussions and explorations of these questions.

Lucius Cabins



Gidget, currently employed at the Federal Shark Loan Bank, was all too familiar with the tedium and lower backache associated with unskilled clerical work. What Gidget didn't expect was the anxiety and overtime without pay that awaited her on her journey into.....



# CAREER OPPORTUNITY:

*Gidget Goes Binary*

Fuck, I'll never get to Europe on the \$5/hr. I'm making here!



In desperation, Gidget had finally followed the advice of career counselors at Heel Business School. She was now qualified to become a computer programmer, and was looking for a new job.

Sigh, maybe that employment agency will come up with something...

Telephone call for Gidget from Bestial Executive Search Agency!



**RING!!**



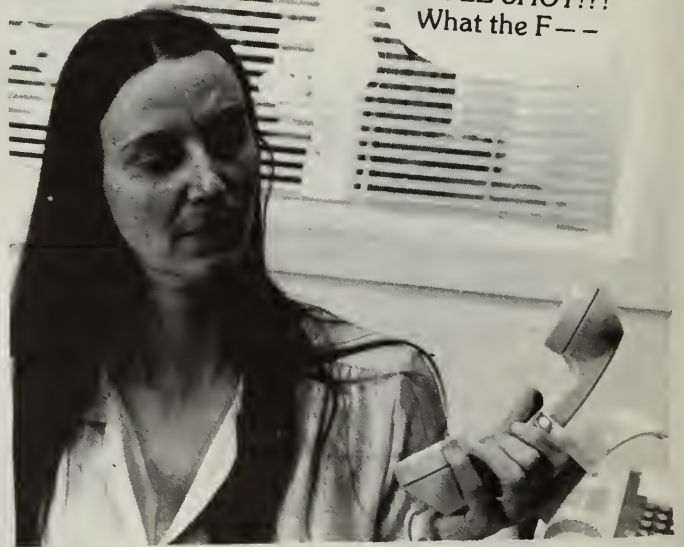
Hi Kiddo! I sent your resumé to Hokey Technology and they ate it up! You're a real rifle shot! Go in there tomorrow and Knock 'em Dead!



But who cares? I'm on my way to **BIG BUCKS!!**



**RIFLE SHOT!?!**  
What the F--



Liz fills Gidget in on how she too can attain a *Better Life!*

*In No Time at all, blah, blah, blah, with your High Salary, blah, blah, you can buy a New Car, blah, blah, blah, No Problem at all!...*



Let's see,  $\$2,000 \times 12 = \$24,000$  (taxes are 35% minus \$29.95 for one of those wigs on sale at Payless, and 60 crates of panty hose at \$10 each... 10 candy bars a day, plus 7 cups of coffee...





Welcome aboard!



This one looks like a real sucker. I bet we can snag her for 15K.

... Yes, ah that's one of the most versatile processing systems around.



So you've programmed in ULCER (Burp)? Why don't you uh, umm tell me about that?



Gidget, this is Bob, our senior programmer. Bob, can you fire up the Zyl0 1980, I want to show Gidget the simulated exchange we programmed for the military.



... stores 16 million bytes... blah, blah,... mode... versatile...

I feel sick.....



As J. Dull expostulates on the wonders of data control Laura remembers the tedium of undeclared variables, the anxiety of program demos, the terror and guilt of UNFINISHED ASSIGNMENTS.

**BLEEAH!!**



OH MY GOD! You just barfed on 30 megabytes of irreplaceable data! We're sunk, finished!

The horror, the horror!



Realizing she would not be offered the job, Gidget makes a hasty retreat.

And when I'm finished with you, you won't even be able to get a job as a Key entry clerk at McDonalds.

Heh, heh...



Coming up next week!—  
Gidget loses control of her  
bowels at a job interview at  
PG&E.



# Raises, Rights, Respect . . .

# Alienation



On March 3, 1981 the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Working Women (WW) announced a joint national campaign to organize office workers into unions. WW's executive director Karen Nussbaum proclaimed a "new chapter in labor history" and predicted that "the 80's will be for clerical workers what the 30's were for industrial workers."

Working Women was created in 1977 by the national affiliation of five local working women's groups (including SF's *Women Organized for Employment*) to advise then-President Carter on the reorganization of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Since that time they've grown to include 13 groups in different cities, with over 10,000 members.

In several previous campaigns to organize clericals, WW has emphasized the three R's—Raises, Rights and Respect. "Raises Not Roses" and

"Scrooge of the Year" were themes used in publicity campaigns to dramatize the low pay of office workers. The "Pettiest Office Procedure" campaign was conceived to draw attention to management's frequent use of office workers to perform demeaning personal favors such as fetching coffee, doing errands, etc.

At this year's National Secretaries Day in Embarcadero Plaza in SF, WOE held an "Office Workers' Olympics." One of the four events was a typing contest where secretaries competed with local officials and celebrities in order to "let the world know that typing is a highly skilled trade!" This event—and the more general demand for respect—is a response to office workers' resentment against the impersonal way they are treated at work. People demand respect from others in order to respect themselves. They need to feel that their work is appreciated as a meaningful contribution to society. What

these demands ignore is the basically wasteful and meaningless nature of office work.

Most of us would enjoy freely contributing a share of our creative abilities to the well-being of others. But since our survival depends on *selling* these powers for a wage, many of us are forced to derive self-esteem from doing our job competently. No matter how appreciated or well-paid, most office work is useful only to preserve the power of the corporations and governments of the world. To seek positive reinforcement for one's wage-labor only validates a system whose very premise is the degradation of creative human activity—the exchange of skills, abilities, affection and loyalty for money.

Beyond this unique demand for respect, WW has declared goals similar to those of labor unions—higher pay, better working conditions, seniority rights and affirmation. Until the recent agreement with SEIU Working Women has kept

unions at a distance, fearing clerical workers would not accept them. Even now, WW is calling the new national local “autonomous” and establishing separate offices in an attempt to distinguish the new organization from the image of unionism.

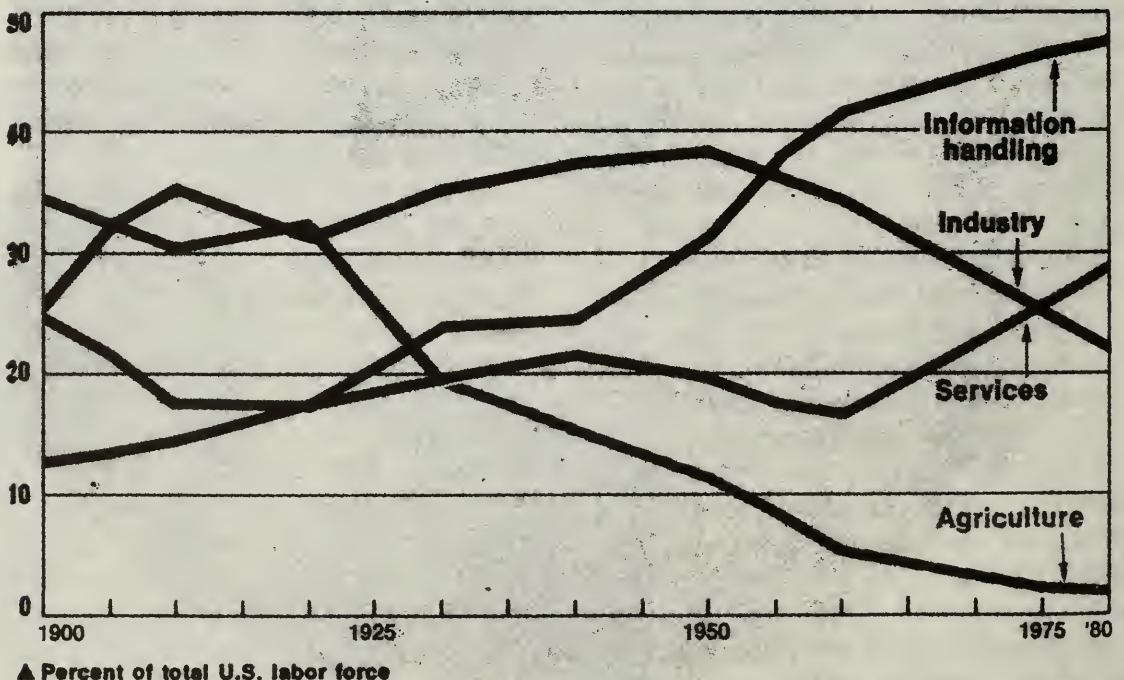
The coalition of WW and SEIU is a marriage of mutual convenience. Working Women hopes the union's money, legal aid and organizing experience will help them overcome the strategic limitations they've encountered. The December 1980 issue of *Downtown Women's News* (SF) exemplifies their limited leverage:

“The single most powerful threat that we as WOE activists hold is our ability to publicly expose and ridicule unfair employment practices.”

At most corporations will respond with mere cosmetic changes to the 2 minute TV spots WW gets to decry this or that company's prejudicial practices.

SEIU, for its part, has a substantial advantage over other unions trying to

## Information handling is already America's biggest employer



Data: Stanford University Institute for Communications Research



### *National Secretaries' Day Typing Test*

gain a foothold in the office labor market. With nearly half the US workforce now employed in "information handling" and shrinking membership rolls and dues revenues, the United Auto Workers, United Steel Workers, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, United Food and Commercial Workers, and others are rushing to exploit lucrative opportunities among a discontented white-collar working class.

The prospect of a wave of unionization and strikes among office workers is a matter of grave concern to many corporate and government leaders. In the January 1980 *Info-systems* magazine, attorney Robert P. Bigelow warns:

"Management must recognize that information is a resource... without an organization-wide information system [read human and/or electronic spies], warning signs may go unnoticed... As offices become more and more dependent on word processing equipment and upon computerized information systems, a strike by data entry and text editing personnel becomes even more serious. An organization that depends on the currency of the information in its data banks will be hamstrung if those who make the

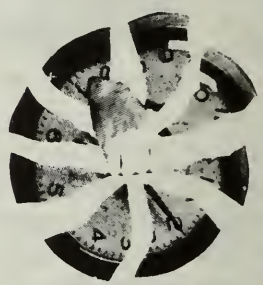
entries go out on strike..."

While most capitalists tend to resist unionization, some may be shrewd enough to take advantage of the role unions could play in disciplining and controlling the workforce. For example, the infamous productivity problem in offices has been linked to office workers' ability to resist tight control of their workloads. According to the *Wall Street Journal* (11/25/80) "Methods Time Measurement Association, a research group estimates that white-collar workers operate at only 45% of efficiency. A survey of 400 firms shows losses of four hours per worker each week to 'time theft', or excessive tardiness, absence or breaktaking." Office workers have developed their own informal methods of resisting the efficiency standards established by management's productivity experts which, if enforced, would turn clericals into automatons.

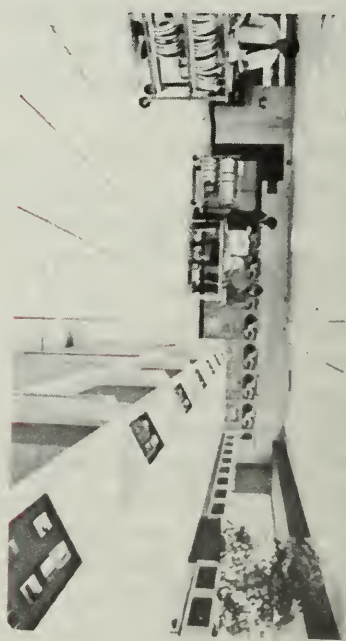
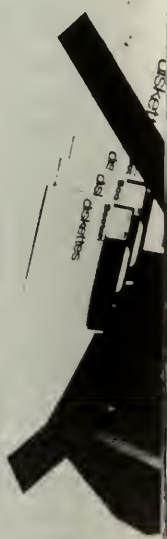
When a union gets voted in to represent workers in an office, it becomes responsible to management for enforcing work rules established at the negotiating table. By its con-

*(Cont'd on Page 28)*

## Beat The Clock



There are 45 clocks to be beaten and destroyed, scattered amongst office furniture and partitions; *points given for zeal, fewest blows, and speed of destruction.*



## Market Street High Hurdles

Beginning at the Embarcadero Plaza contestants race up Market Street, hurdling over barricades at each intersection, dodging clouds of teargas and National Guard rubber bullets, all the way to the Bank of America at Market and VanNess; *points given for speed, poise, and arriving safely.*

## Folding, Spindling, & Mutilating

Each contestant is given the keys to the keypunch storage area; *points given for origami, creative tearing, and quantity of destruction.*

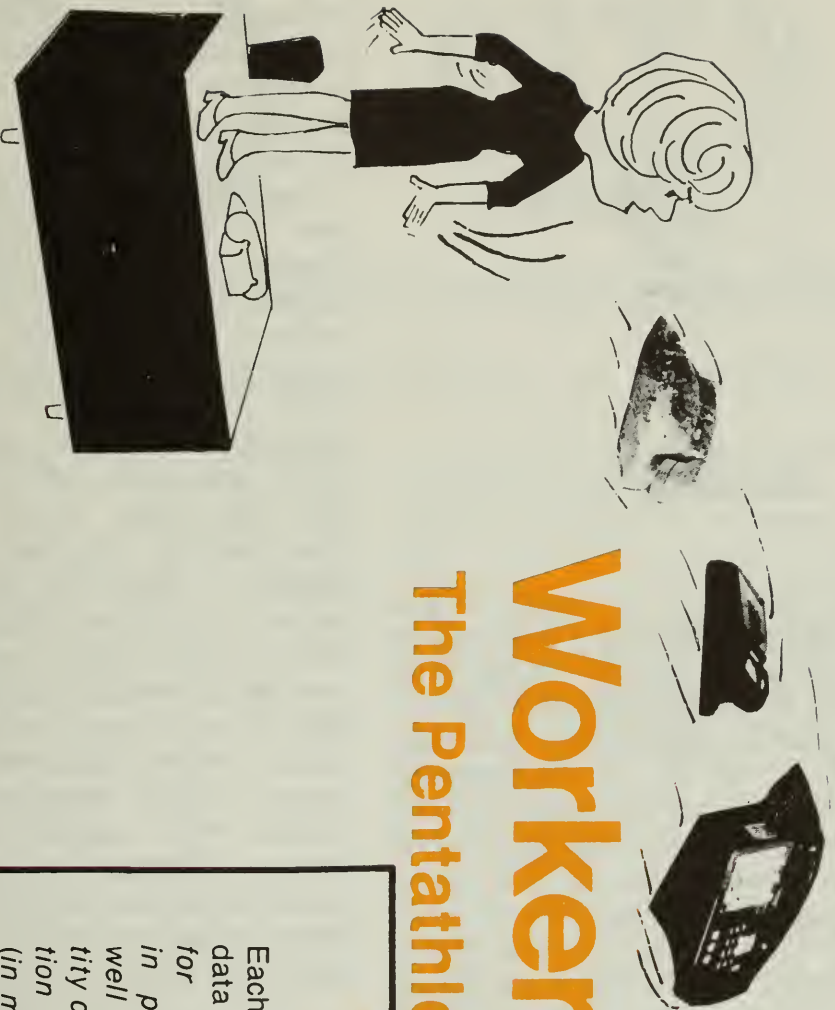
- \*\*\*\*\*
- ☆ *To Be Held:* The Offices of San Francisco
- ☆ *When:* As Soon As Possible
- ☆ *Open To Everyone, Spectators Strictly Forbidden* . . . . .
- \*\*\*\*\*



inner-voice #2

# Office Workers' Olympics

## The Pentathlon



## The Telephone Toss

Standing on top of desk each contestant hurls three telephones—one at a time—across the office; points given for style and average distance.

## The Race To Erase

Each contestant is given 30 minutes to erase the data stored in the firm's data banks; points given for originality in posture as well as quantity of information destroyed (in megabytes).



"That's excellent. Now let's try another idea"



## Is this...

tractual obligation to ensure a full day's work for a full day's pay, unions will be compelled to help combat time theft and to control absenteeism. In the context of explicit rules and regulations agreed to by management and the union, workers' ability to take their own initiatives in resisting productivity demands on the job would run up against the additional opposition of their union. Once in place, workers may find that the union is just another bureaucracy that demands money and obedience.

One of the greatest limitations of union strategy is the separation of workers into "bargaining units" or specific workplaces. Most office workers, especially lower level clerical workers, don't see their work at any particular job or company as permanent. Attempts to unionize and negotiate contracts for individual workplaces are bound to suffer under a constantly changing workforce.

A case in point is the OPEIU local #3 organizing drive at Golden Gate University. In March 1980, OPEIU won the NLRB representation election, but Golden Gate University refused to bargain. Now the University is planning to call for a new election which is expected to decertify the union—most of the original,

activists have left GGU to do other things.

Although these drawbacks to organizing attempts are discouraging, remaining unorganized is certainly not a better alternative. Individuals facing the myriad of authorities and hierarchies on their own are easily picked off one by one.

Successful attempts of clerical workers to organize themselves will depend, in the first place, on spontaneous and ongoing communication between large numbers of people in many different workplaces. Coordinated actions must be conceived and achieved; self-reliance and mutual aid developed; goals, strategies and tactics will have to be vigorously discussed by as many people as possible—rather than left up to the decisions of union or governmental leaders. New forms of allocating responsibility must be established, forms that do not depend upon representation, leaders and bureaucratic manoeuvres. This massive, qualitative change will not be an overnight process (though it could happen sooner than one might think). It is towards this change that we should direct our efforts.

*Lucius Cabins*

## ...respect?

"In several ways your work has improved..."





# DOWN TIME!

## Computer Workers Strike in England

5,000 computer workers throughout England have been on strike since mid-March. They are striking on behalf of the entire 530,000 civil servants in England, all of whom are represented by the Council of Civil Servant Unions. The 525,000 non-striking civil servants are each paying about \$2.10 a week so that the 5,000 strikers can be paid 85% of their usual salary without resorting to the unions' strike funds.

The striking computer workers have made a shambles of England's revenue collections, interfered with defense operations, and brought routine purchasing and some cash disbursements to a halt. The strike is blocking between 25% and 45% of the total tax revenues the British government gets from Value-Added tax and income tax. This is forcing the government to increase borrowing,

2.5 times more this April than last (which in turn is damaging prime minister Thatcher's monetarist policies), in order to continue most of its operations.

To combat the strike the British government has asked big taxpayers to send their checks through commercial banks. Computer workers at the banks, however, have refused to handle those checks. Other computer owners, worried about the strength and solidarity of British computer workers, are contemplating processing their information via satellite in countries where computer workers aren't unionized.

Another strategy of computer owners is to undercut potential collective action by computer workers through increasing the use of decentralized minicomputers. An industry trade association leader in England, quoted

**"Sorry to wake you,  
sir, but there's been  
a fire in the  
computer center...."**

in the Wall Street Journal, said "Big companies are already turning down mainframe computers on industrial-relations grounds. I advise getting into small computers. An Apple® a day, I say, keeps the union away."

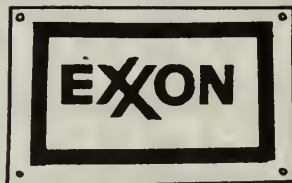
The strike has been largely ignored by the US press, so information is

spotty and incomplete. The relationship between the strikers, the unions, and management (the British government) is unknown to us—perhaps a British reader of Processed World will write something about it for us?

from Business Week 3/23/81, and Wall Street Journal 5/19/81.



# HOSTAGES



BILLBOARDS of the FUTURE



# Stanford Office Workers Reject Union

On May 7, 1981, office workers at Stanford voted nearly 2 to 1 against joining the United Stanford Employees (USE), an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The unionization drive was launched in August, 1979, when the University refused to recognize the independent Office Staff Organizing Committee as a bargaining agent for Stanford office workers. As a result of this rebuff by the Stanford Administration, the organizers felt they had no other recourse but to turn to an established union.

During the months of intensive campaigning that preceded the election, the Stanford administration issued a series of Election Bulletins warning office workers (often in a patronizing and condescending manner) about the authoritarianism of the union. They claimed that the good relations between office staff and management would be disrupted by the union's adversary role. Using endless misleading statistics they argued that clerical workers at Stanford enjoy relatively high wages, and that the University's own grievance procedure adequately responded to the needs of employees. In fact, as one worker who had attempted to use this recourse described in a letter to the *Stanford Daily*, a student newspaper, the University administration can (and does) easily dismiss grievances at any point in the process without legal repercussions.

For its part, SEIU, which currently represents 1400 technicians and maintenance workers at Stanford, made exaggerated claims about the prospects of improving wages and working conditions through collective bargaining. Surveys published in the *Stanford Daily* indicated that, although a large percentage of workers were dissatisfied with their jobs (belying the image of harmonious

worker/management relations publicized by the University) many were also skeptical about the extent to which a union would improve their overall job satisfaction.

The apparent reluctance of most office workers at Stanford to stand up to management as an organized group with collective demands and common interest is a serious obstacle to any attempts to improve their conditions. On the other hand, the office workers were probably right in believing that the union wouldn't have been able to deliver on promises made during the campaign.

Legal recognition for collective bargaining units is no guarantee that workers will get what they want. The recent settlement of unionized office workers at Blue Shield is a painful reminder of the constraints of the traditional collective bargaining process.

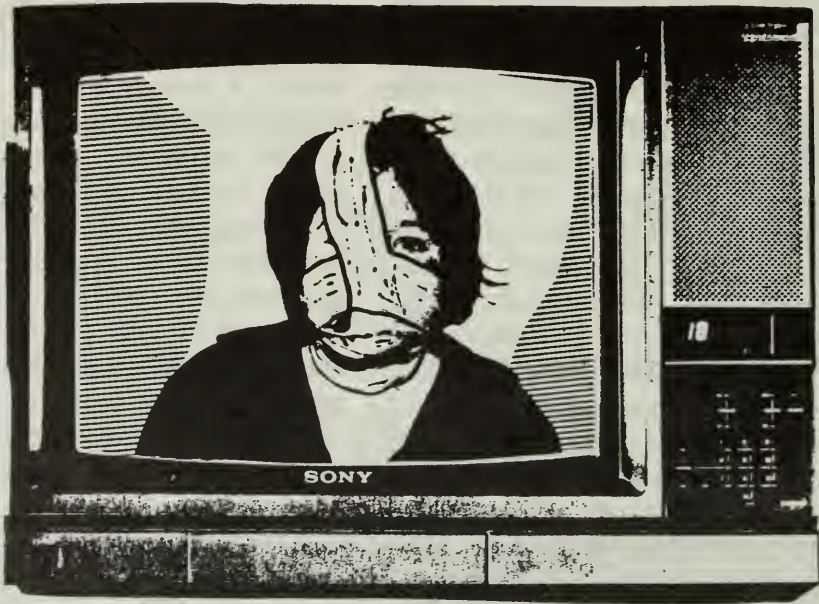
While affiliation with a union offers some advantages to organizers (protection from management retaliation, monetary and legal assistance) it also imposes strict limitations on the form and nature of organized resistance. Union-approved strikes are the only legal means available to workers to assert their power, and this only during actual contract negotiations since most unions, including the SEIU, pledge not to strike for the duration of the contract. The only recourse for workers who want to protest management practices on the job is the grievance procedure, which is notorious for delays and overall ineffectiveness.

(Sometimes even union approval doesn't guarantee legal sanction, e.g. SEIU local 715 was found in contempt of court on May 22, '81 for allowing the Santa Clara County special education teaching aides to continue their strike in spite of an injunction against it. The local president has been sentenced to 30 days in jail and the

# HOW...

Do thoughts that we have about

What might be (but isn't) get heard??



BILLBOARDS of the FUTURE.

## WHO HAS A \$AY, AMERICA?

union has been fined \$3,000. The sentence has been suspended for 90 days so workers can show "good faith" by going back to work.)

If they are to make any lasting and significant changes working people will have to find different ways of organizing, which rely less on the traditional legal institutions and union bureaucrats, and more on their own willingness and determination to act for themselves. The energy and time spent on seeking official recognition could be directed instead toward developing communications between workers. For example, during the months of the union campaign, the workers at Stanford aired their views and attitudes toward their jobs, and discussed problems and dissatisfactions with others in similar situations. Instead of directing this communication and informal networking toward

establishing a union (or now, making a *second* try to win a union election campaign using essentially the same arguments and methods) the dialogue begun in such cases could be extended to address questions beyond the traditional wages and working conditions issues. The nature of the University in modern capitalism, and questions of qualitative changes in society could be raised. New tactics could be discussed and crystallized into direct, on-the-job actions. Links to dissatisfied students could be established and the separations between workers, students, administration and society-at-large could be confronted. The immediate risk of retaliation by management may be greater, but so are the chances of success. Maybe it's time to raise the stakes.

M.H.



# Post-Mortem on the Blue Shield Strike

In *Processed World* #1 we published an article about the OPEIU-led strike at SF's Blue Shield offices. In that article we criticized the union's tactics as ineffective and pre-emptive of the Blue Shield workers' power over data banks and telecommunications hardware. We also challenged the union's analysis of the situation at Blue Shield and in the US today. The strike has since ended in a devastating defeat for the workers at Blue Shield:

- Lost wages and benefits for the duration of the 19-week strike.
- 448 Medicare claims processing jobs are being permanently relocated to other non-union Blue Shield offices.
- Elimination of cost-of-living wage increases, replaced by the infamous "Blue Cross settlement" (agreed to in the midst of the strike by "sister" local 29 in the East Bay) which raises wages a mere 27% during the three-year contract.
- No provisions for additional break-

time for VDT operators, though the company agreed in a separate "letter of understanding" to install glare screens.

- Of the original 1,100 strikers (since the strike's end the union is saying only 950 people were on strike) 350 returned to work before the strike's end. Combining the large defection with the relocation of 448 jobs, this will leave loyal union members in possession of only about 150-200 jobs at Blue Shield. Less than 300 strikers actually voted on the new contract (275 for, 22 against).

Judging from the speech given on National Secretaries' Day, organizers at OPEIU are oblivious to these consequences for Blue Shield workers. In a brief conversation with OPEIU representative Tonie Jones after her NSD speech, she claimed that, although they didn't get what they demanded, the Blue Shield workers *did* gain experience in organizing and working together. Certainly



"We have won great gains... we have shattered the myth that office workers are 'unorganizable'.. We have shattered the myth that office workers won't fight and strike for their union..."

it is true that successful collective actions by clerical workers will call for a good deal of organization and preparation. During the first weeks the strike probably did encourage people to air their dissatisfactions and helped create a sense of community and support among otherwise isolated workers. But for an experience to be worthwhile, problems have to be analyzed and errors understood so

that they can be avoided or at least foreseen in the next round.

The basic orientation and legal function of the union must be analyzed in detail. The OPEIU militants who refuse to recognize that they were soundly beaten and need to reconsider their approach are either plain dumb, or think the rest of us are.

*L.C.&M.H.*



## Labor Theory of Value?

Time is the one thing in which we are all equal. There are the same number of hours in the day, the same number of minutes in the hour, and the same number of seconds in the minute for you just as for me. We are not all equal in ability to produce, of course; but many men learn to achieve maximum production, while others never seem to realize that they have the same number of hours in their day to work and to improve their production.

The time has come when you should recognize that it is the duty of every worker to give a full day's work for a full day's pay. Too many who are on the job are job holders rather than workers. They are frequently willing to give a full hour's work for a full day's pay. That isn't the way a business

operates if it expects to survive. All employers have a right to expect each worker to produce more than he is paid to produce. That "more" constitutes the profit requisite for business survival.

The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work. The material things we want just can't come to us out of thin air; they must be produced by somebody, and that means somebody must work. The quickest way to achieve success is to work for it—the surest way to get the material things we want is to work for them. If work isn't a thing of magic, it produces results more excellent than magic ever produces. To realize all we are capable of achieving, we must learn to love to work.

Typing Test — Temps Inc., SF

# Bomb Threats In N.Y. Lengthen Lunch Breaks

## New York

Thousands of office employees were forced to leave their buildings yesterday as police, plagued by more than 200 bomb threats since a weekend explosion at Kennedy International Airport, stepped up their search for explosive devices in the New York metropolitan area.

A New York Police Department spokesman said that although no bombs were found yesterday,

the threats, many of them apparently made to lengthen lunch breaks, continued to pour into police headquarters.

"The number of calls yesterday and the number today goes up around noon, and if people leave early, we seem to get calls from neighboring buildings," the spokesman.

# Frustrations hammered out

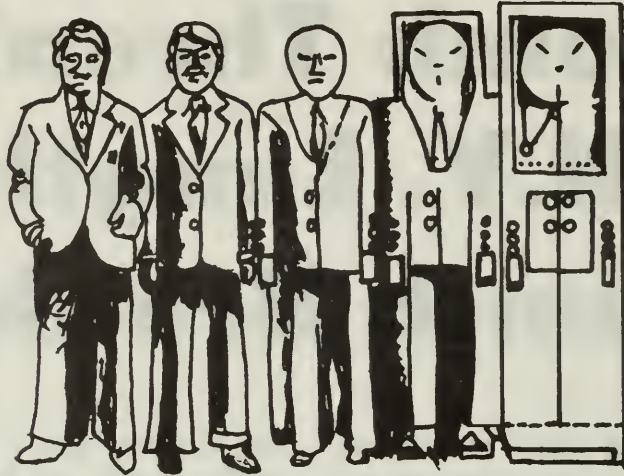
By **STEPHEN FOX**  
Associated Press writer

LOS ANGELES — For those who have always wanted to beat a copying machine into rubble with a sledgehammer but never have, here's what happens:

First, a side panel comes off. Then, dials and small pieces skitter out from the side until a front panel comes off. With more blows, interior parts resembling oil filters and air hoses come into view. After a while, tiny puffs of powdered ink billow out from inside and eventually the machine slumps forward slightly and falls over.

At least that's how one aged copier of unknown origin met its end Friday afternoon in the parking lot of a Wilshire Boulevard office building.

# PROCESSING FUTURE PROCESSORS



With the campus disturbances of the sixties a rapidly fading memory, American universities are once again trying to project the image of peaceful islands of learning, ruled by the ideals of Truth and Intellectual Freedom, timelessly isolated from the social conflicts that surround them. But beneath the glossy image of academic advertising lies the white-collar factory. As the student rebels of Berkeley's "Free Speech Movement" pointed out, the campus is in reality a vast assembly plant where thousands toil to produce trained workers for the office of the future.

## *PROCESSORS*

Large universities employ widely diverse groups of workers—food service employees, custodians, machinists, sanitation workers, lab technicians, electricians, medical staff, guards, and so on. The largest single group of university workers is the clerical staff, maintaining essential services such as financial aid, libraries and records. This staff processes and controls the massive network of information and documentation without which no campus could function.

For various reasons university clerical workers are generally unaware of the potential power this role gives them. Except in administration buildings, office workers are usually

isolated from one another in small offices scattered among lecture halls. They work most among students and faculty and usually identify with a department or office rather than with other clericals in similar positions throughout the university.

Interdepartmental and office rivalries grow out of this separation, creating a hierarchy of offices. Clerks at the office of the Chancellor of UC Berkeley, for example, feel privileged and look down on other employees.

A large percentage of campus workers are part-timers and temporaries. UC Berkeley, for instance, employs 3500 part-timers, of whom 52.4% are clerical. The part-timers and temps, like their counterparts in the private sector, show little interest in work issues since they do not expect to stay long.

All of these divisions help to maintain passivity among campus clericals.

## *PROCESSED*

"The Corporation today is the main beneficiary of the product that the college or university manufactures—the trained mind."—Louis Lundborg, former chairman, Bank of America.

A sales manager for Xerox told a UC Berkeley jobs workshop last fall,

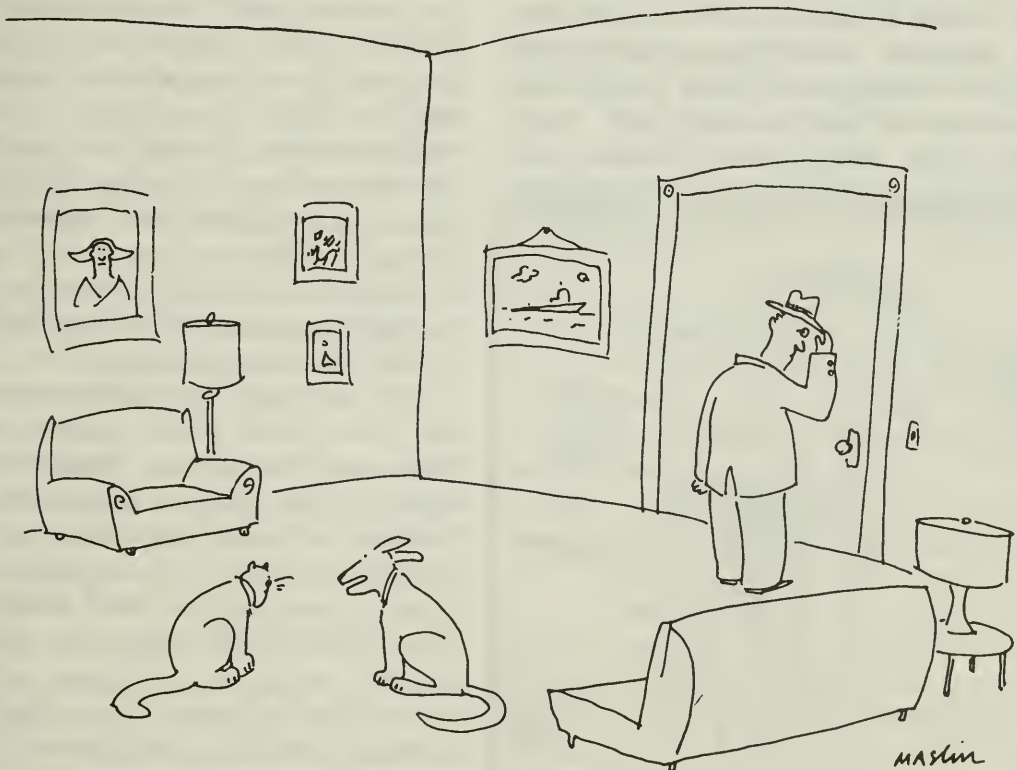
"We don't care what your major is. The important thing is that you get up early, go to classes, and do assigned work." Translation: the "form" of school education, right from the start, is its real content—unquestioning submission to authority, fragmentation of knowledge into specialized compartments, endless tolerance for boredom. University training is merely the highest level of this process, designed primarily for workers in occupations where the rhythm of the machinery itself does not automatically set the pace, as it does in the auto plant or the keypunch room. Even the "lucky" few who make it into the professions like law, medicine, scientific research and top management internalize this discipline as the "natural" and appropriate way to manage and be managed. You may forget the material the day after the final, but you remember passivity, conformity and competition.

The process takes its toll. In a study released in April 1979, tests showed the average UC student to be depressed beyond what is professionally

defined as "clinical depression." (Enter a new graduate course: "Managing Depression.") Yet despite the frustration they feel, especially during finals, most students are intent on conforming. Some wait for a rosy post-graduation future. Others can see that the world is falling apart but tend to retreat into cynicism; if they are to ride the Titanic, they figure on going first class.

The few students seriously critical of society often try to combine career ambitions with liberal activism. Hoping to "make a difference," they go into such fields as resource management, urban design, and labor or "public interest" law. But few succeed in keeping both ideals and career intact. Either they wind up as low-paid burn-outs in Public Defenders' offices, charity hospitals or "community organizations," or they shed their social conscience along with their student denims and join the rest in the ruthless scramble to the top.

Others who feel discontented, like some female and minority students,



*"When he leaves, I'm in charge."*

are less troubled by social conscience. Feeling—often with justification—that they have already “paid their dues” by being members of an oppressed group, they come to view their own success as a step forward for society at large, a proof that, despite the prejudice they face, the American Dream is still alive. Consequently, they tend to reject criticism of their conformist role—especially if it comes from whites or males—as sexist/racist.

Even for those students who reject the normal career expectations, the form of the university training leaves little time to think about a way of living which isn't based on career goals and monetary gain.

The structure of the college classroom—big lectures taught by professors who are more interested in research—affords a minimum of faculty-student contact. Many teaching assistants are too busy being graduate students to help out undergrads. Yet most instructors and assistants flood students with work. Frequently, the overworked students end up taking out their frustrations on university employees. They see them as part of a vast bureaucracy pitted against them, and form hostile impressions of the workers (lazy, rude, etc.). The employees in turn view students as mindless zombies who are

often unable to follow simple instructions, and who are insensitive to the overworked employees' situation.

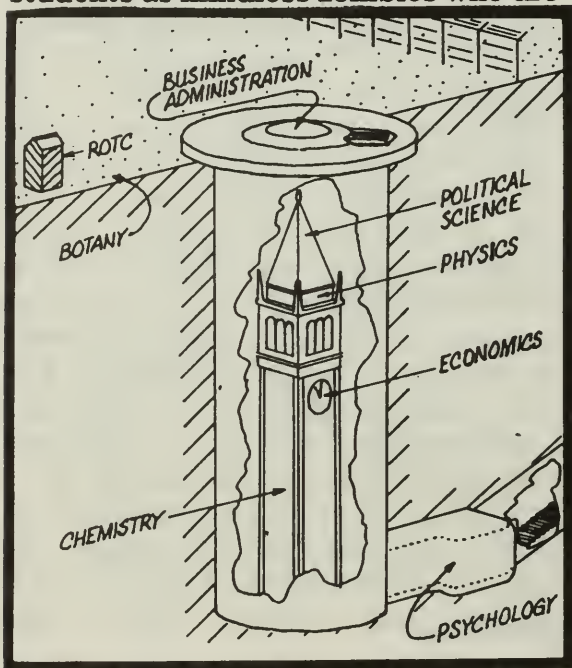
Many part-time employees are students, but they often widen the gap between processors and processed instead of bridging it. They regard their jobs as temporary stops on the way to rewarding careers, and put up with a lot in order to make spending money and earn recommendations. Furthermore, they look down upon other employees, viewing them as underachievers.

At UC's Learning Center, for example, students are tutored in a variety of subjects. Most of the tutors are students themselves. In exchange for “experience” and flexible schedules, they willingly accept poor facilities, increased workloads, and low pay for what is essentially faculty work.

### FUTURE

For most of a decade now, the university's humanistic facade has been flaking away in the corrosive atmosphere of financial and social crisis. Every quarter at UCB the pace gets more frantic, the workload more intense, the exams and grading harder. The administration strives to get by with a smaller and less well-rewarded faculty and staff. At the same time, it trims liberal-arts and social studies “fat” accumulated during the boom years of the sixties. It squeezes out all but the most compulsive and anesthetized students before they can graduate.

If the economic situation worsens—and given both world market conditions and the senile “free market” lunacy of the Reagan administration, it almost certainly will—students and campus workers can expect further cuts in real wages, still fewer services, intensified speed-up and increased emphasis on lucrative corporate and military sponsored research. In addition, tuition and other fees will probably continue to rise while financial aid dries up.





## POSSIBILITIES

There are scattered signs of resistance however. At Boston University, a bitter employee strike for union recognition in the Spring of 1979 received faculty support and national attention. At about the same time strikers at Columbia, primarily cafeteria workers, occupied the computer center and clashed with police in a wage dispute. In November, 1978 the UC Learning Center math tutors struck after failing to receive their paychecks on time, an action that paid off within one day. And at UC's main library, in March 1981 employees put up a picket line to inform others about new speed-up policies.

These actions merely express a growing consciousness among campus clericals of what they have in common with each other, and a willingness to collectively confront administrators with their demands. Should this consciousness continue to grow, and should students be radicalized by the appalling conditions in their own lives and the world at large, campuses could once again play an important role in challenging the society that imposes them.

A rising of students and other youth in France in May '68 triggered a general strike in which 10 million workers participated, many seizing their workplaces. In the hot summer of '77, Italy was rocked by aggressive mass actions against the government's austerity measures in which thousands of students and unemployed youth participated. Both of these rebellions showed how campuses can be used as centers for communication and agitation, and as gathering points for large assemblies of students and workers. The universities were briefly converted from white collar factories into focal points for a new kind of social decision-making.

In West Germany, students are currently joining low-paid apprentices and unemployed youth in aggressive mass actions against housing shor-



tages, nuclear power and militarism. In the first week of June 20,000 students marched through Bonn to protest against cutbacks in their grants. The movement in West Germany has begun to question the whole organization of society, and to reject all hierarchy and fixed "leadership".

In the society these movements foreshadow, education would no longer be rigidly separated from 'work' or 'play' or other areas of human activity. Anyone interested could pursue any field of study he/she chose, and 'teachers' and 'students' would frequently trade positions. Qualifications would not disappear—established levels of proficiency would still be required to practice surgery, say. But everyone would have equal access to information and training and no-one would have to sacrifice their youth pursuing sterile specializations to the exclusion of all other experience. For the first time the University would live up to its image—yet with a crucial difference. The campus would be only one center of learning in a world become a vast continuing school of new powers and pleasures.

*Mel Testa*

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# PSALM OF THE ANGER

I Because outside the ambulances howl at the dogs

II Because the typist is forced to eat her own fingers

III Because I come wrapped in cellophane and stamped with a blue number

IV Because brain-damage leaves a little trail of wildflowers

V Because we speak to each other only through a wire grille and our time is up

VI Because even the forests are made to tell lies

VII I want to crawl into the street soaked with burning oil

VIII I want to smash clocks in my teeth and dig graves with my fingernails

IX I want to spit out the pin of a grenade like a plumstone

X I want to splatter the maps in the boardroom with bloody continents

XI I want my screaming to dissolve cartilage

XII I want my childrens' bodies to grow thick black fur

# Band-Aids & Escape-Valves:

## Managing Office-Malcontents

Anyone happening into a corporate office can usually discern in a matter of minutes the power and rank of the various employees. From the worker's style of dress to the relative distance of their desk from the window, a hundred and one details symbolize and reinforce the office pecking order. Among these are the size, location and interior decoration of offices. Top executives almost invariably take the corner offices with impressive views. These offices are lavishly furnished with desks made of high quality wood, tasteful paintings, and plush couches and chairs. To protect executives from interruptions their offices are private and sound-proof.

Secretaries and clerical workers rarely have private offices. Their desks—scattered over vast floor areas—are separated by partitions or isolated in cubicles. Private phone calls are impossible, as is privacy of

any sort. Brightly colored carpets, cheery pictures, muzak and modern office equipment are only there to soothe stress and boredom and help maintain a fast work pace. Through the different design standards for executive and clerical offices, corporations do more than save a few dollars on cheap furniture. The surroundings constantly remind clerical workers of their rank in the corporate hierarchy and the respect and consideration they owe to their superiors.

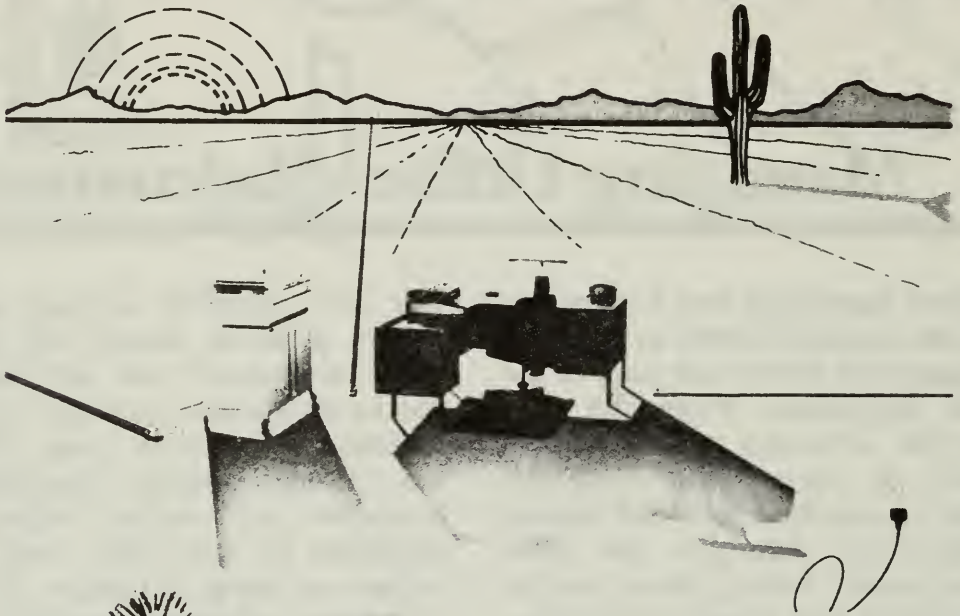
Further distinctions between grades of clerical workers are assumed by workers themselves as they follow the unspoken codes of office culture. Clothing is an important way prestige, and dreams of prestige, are expressed. A simple dress equation: Power = A Boring and Expensive Wardrobe. Conservative suits are *de rigeur* for both men and women executives. Administrative assistants, executive secretaries and other cleri-

SOLICITATION BY EMPLOYEES OF OTHER EMPLOYEES  
IS PROHIBITED WHILE EITHER EMPLOYEE IS ON  
WORK TIME. DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE BY  
EMPLOYEES IS PROHIBITED IN WORK AREAS AT ANY  
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8142 5/78 (Rev.)



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cal workers who aspire to management positions are careful to adopt the executive look. Women's magazines and various "dress for success" books promote the (false) notion that is possible for secretaries to escape the typewriter by assuming a "professional" appearance and attitude. Clerical workers who are not concerned about promotions are still not allowed to come to work dressed as casually as they would at home. While a written dress code is unusual, the unspoken rule is that you must dress well to suit the high-powered image of CorporateAmerica.

The myth of office work as a glamorous occupation is eroding. Younger and better educated employees want challenging, meaningful work. At the same time, jobs are

becoming increasingly mechanized and routine. Consequently, employees concentrate more on their lives outside of work and identify less with their jobs. Employees are producing less to cope with their alienating jobs. Officials acknowledge that clerical employees spend many hours a week avoiding work. Absenteeism and high turnover rates, also reactions against the monotony of clerical work, further hinder efforts to increase output. All of this led one executive to exclaim:

"Short of war, the greatest threat ever to confront the U.S. is the current crisis of lagging productivity." (Management Review, Vol. 67, No. 12, Dec. '78, p. 4)

Corporations have begun implementing programs designed by "en-

lightened" industrial psychologists to counteract worker dissatisfaction and improve productivity. Their strategy is to encourage workers to identify with their jobs and with the interests of the company by giving them a token say in decision-making. Bank of America, one of the largest West coast employers of white collar workers, is sponsoring new programs to foster happy and productive workers.

Bank tellers will certainly be one group of workers targeted for these programs. According to internal studies, BofA has the most discourteous and inaccurate tellers of all major California banks. With their new programs, executives hope tellers will smile and pay attention to their work.

In a January 1980 interview, former president of Bank of America (and now of the World Bank) Tom Clausen

said, "Today you question. You're more candid. So we've got to have an escape valve for you...If we're going to do a really great job in meeting the needs of our employees we've got to know where they're hurting. If we know that, we can apply the Band-aid in the right place..."

With "escape" valves like 'Let's Talk It over', 'Open Line', and an Employee Assistance Program, management hopes to create an image of fairness and impartiality in its employment practices. Nevertheless, it is clear that these programs do not challenge the corporate hierarchy. For example, Employee Assistance Officers supposedly serve as objective arbiters in resolving complaints brought to them by workers. But the ultimate power to resolve conflicts, as established in the structure of the Employee Assistance Program, rests



Productivity is what we sell.

with senior executives. When asked why there were no clerical workers on the final review boards of the Employee Assistance program, Clausen responds with benevolent rhetoric: "We chose senior people so that the review committee would have enough muscle to correct something quickly." The intended message is that Bank executives will be fair judges, regardless of whether solutions to problems lessen the profit-margin of the bank or threaten management prerogatives.

Bank of America's efforts to improve worker attitudes and performance on the job are typical of the growing corporate interest in so-called 'Quality of Work Life' or 'Human Relations' programs. On the surface, they seem to indicate a positive change in management's stance toward workers. It is important to remember, though, that corporate executive didn't decide to "humanize" their management policies

clericals is not so glaring. Liberal innovations such as flex-time or job sharing may also be tolerated if they mean employees will work harder. Like the token involvement of corporations in community affairs, programs for humanizing the workplace are at best elaborate public relations efforts.

What's more, in these attempts to encourage workers' participation in decision-making there is no room for questioning the Big Picture: the fact that office work is an outgrowth of a society strangled by *money* and *hierarchy*. The inherent meaninglessness of "memos to the files", billings, invoices, and almost all of the information "generated" in the contemporary office is simply not in question when office workers are allowed the "privilege" of deciding how to divide up their own work. Workers are expected to accept unquestioningly that all this paper

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**"If we know where our employees are hurting... we can apply the Band-Aid in the right place."**

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because they couldn't sleep from guilt about working conditions and unequal distribution of wealth and power. Their motivations lie rather in the need to squeeze more profits out of workers in order to compete in a tight world market, and to cope with employees who refuse to work at their highest productivity level.

Given this consistent pressure to lower costs and increase productivity, promises for substantive improvement will never amount to more than cosmetic change. Corporations promise, but do not produce, increased worker participation in management decisions. Visible symbols of power differentials—office size, furniture, dress—may be modified so that status difference between executives and

shuffling and keyboard tickling has a purpose.

It is glaringly apparent to many of us that we are being wasted by this system as surely as we waste tons of paper at work each month. The soft cops will not find us eager to help them keep it all going round and round. Their 'Quality of Work-Life' is nothing but a new way to get office workers to work harder—if it doesn't demonstrably increase productivity and decrease absenteeism it can easily be discarded.

If you work in an office, no one has to tell you that the *human* relations which occur always take place *in spite* of the office itself and the daily tasks on which it depends.

*Helen Highwater*



# Prelude

Half way up the mountain the trail disappeared. She saw that she would have to measure her footsteps carefully to reach the summit. "Funny," she said, watching herself from a nearby treetop, "I'm doing pretty well considering that I'm afraid of heights." After contemplating the remaining distance she proceeded up the rocks, testing every foothold, for she knew it was too late to descend. "You're doing well, I like your style," she whispered from her tree. "Just be careful." *Easy for you to talk, you just spend all day sitting on your ass.* "But you know that if you fall, you'll wake up." *I'm already awake*, and then she was at the top. It was only after taking a few steps that she realized how exhausted she was. She rode a wind current from the tree to the top of the mountain. "Congratulations, girl! Now quit looking at the ground and listen to the music." *What music, there's no music here*, and at that moment the first call of a saxophone and trumpet echoed all around her. A phrase was repeated several times as if to smash an invisible barrier, eventually breaking into a looping solo, gliding on the breeze, the player challenging himself to soar higher, followed by a few curlicues and dips, joy in the midst of defiance. The sun was beating down and the music spun around her. She stretched languidly in the heat and let each note pour into her ears until it was over with a flourish, too soon. The disc jockey identified the tune, some-

thing by Charlie Parker.

Waking was like surfacing after staying underwater for too long. She heard the clock radio several hundred feet above her head. She would have to scissor-kick her way up to the surface to turn it off. The announcer was describing a sale at a water-bed store when she broke the stillness of the water and, gasping, tried to get her bearings. *Bed. Pillow. Headboard. Blanket. Tom.* She stretched out her arm to embrace a body and found only the sheet and neighboring pillow. She opened her eyes as Thelonious Monk's piano was zigzagging through the radio speaker. *Tom. Tom's gone, remember? You told him to leave last week and he never came back.* Well, not truly gone. There were still the phone calls at 2 a.m., the hissed epithets, the click of the receiver after her repeated hellos. Now, she was waking hating him, but at the same time rolling over to assure herself that he was there.

Her head ached the way it always did after too little sleep. She lay on the bed for a few minutes to hear out Monk's message, also summoning up energy she didn't really have. Dishes were still piled up next to the sink; dirty clothes, cigarette ashes, torn rolling papers, and smudged glasses cluttered the studio.

*Karen is a neat, conscientious worker who is a real asset to any office environment of which she is a part. She has all the makings of a competent supervisor, and as her*

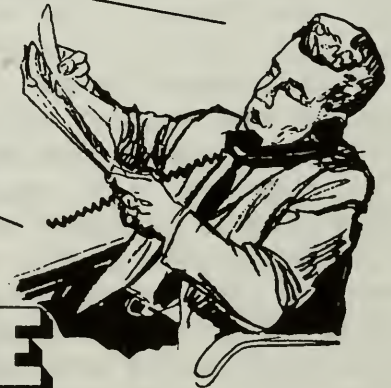
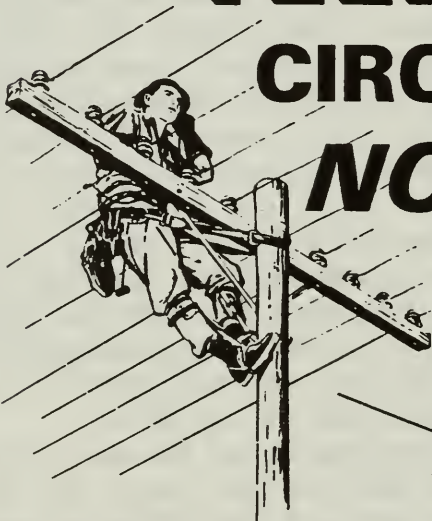
*manager, I believe that she is fully equipped to assume the responsibilities of a lower-level management job.*

After switching off the radio and engaging in a half-hearted effort at tidying up, she walked to the bathroom. She found that the ritual of washing and dressing went by more easily if she pretended that she was Dr. Frankenstein building his monster, or a clothes designer decking out one of his mannequins. First came the shower with that special soap that everyone in the office always claimed made her smell good. Next, the choice of an appropriate outfit, brown tweed skirt and matching jacket, with a rust-colored blouse. Then the make-up, just enough eye shadow to conceal the bags under her eyes. Her rites completed, she stood in front of the mirror and stuck out her tongue.

Obedying a sudden impulse, she took out her lipstick and drew a large red mustache on the reflection of her upper lip. *A perfect touch for an upwardly-mobile office manager.*

She went to the stove and put water on for coffee, knowing that a solid dose of caffeine would at least reduce her headache. While waiting for the water to boil, she dried her hair and combed it out, tugging petulantly at the tangles. After a few minutes she heard the hissing of the water and made a pot of coffee, knowing that this would be a four-cup morning. She took her first cup over to the kitchen table, lit a cigarette, and extracted a note pad from her monogrammed attache case, *a little going-away present for you, Karen, in honor of your promotion to Personnel, for as we all know, rank has its privileges,*

# **MOST TELEPHONE CIRCUITS ARE NOT SECURED**



# **KEEP TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS UNCLASSIFIED**

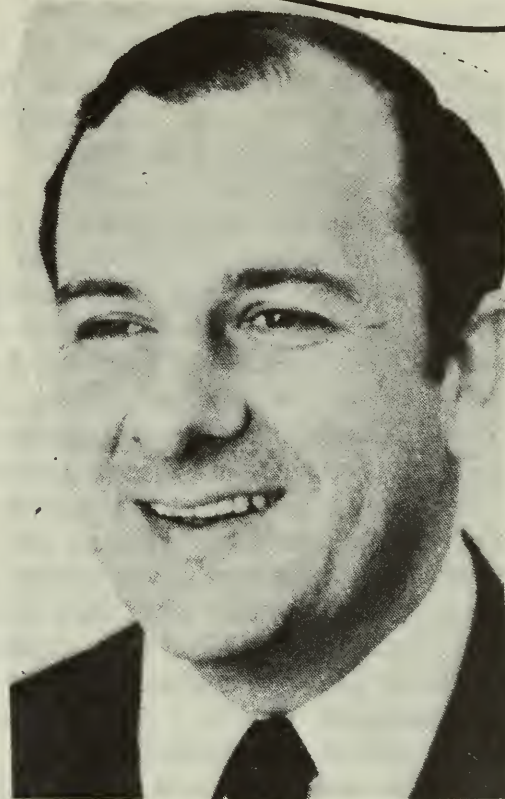


and one of them is a briefcase.

As she glanced over her neatly outlined notes, she tapped the tip of her ballpoint pen on the paper. She inhaled cigarette smoke deeply and smiled as she felt the hazy sensation of nicotine diffuse throughout her body. But for some reason, this was not enough to relax her. She felt a need to get up and walk around, even up to the nearest corner and back. Instead of getting up, she accelerated the beat of her pen and puffed nervously on her cigarette. She tried to concentrate on her notes, but raised her head, suddenly realizing that she had never looked outside to see what kind of day it was. *Our dedication to the cause know no limits, amen.* Cigarette in hand, she went to the large picture window by her bed. With one swift, economical gesture that testified to the efficiency for which she was held in such high regard by her self-styled superiors, she pulled the curtains aside and opened the window. The clear early morning sunlight flooded the room as she stuck out her head to breathe the air. Afraid of ruining the moment with her cigarette, she stubbed the butt out on the sill and flicked it onto the pavement two floors below. She need not have bothered, because the stale exhaust wafted on the breeze from the garage down the block. Disappointment gave way to astonishment when a vaguely herbal scent caressed her nostrils. She was intrigued by the odor because there were no trees in her part of town. Leaning her elbows on the sill, she closed her eyes and let her thoughts wander. *Springtime and shadows on deep water, dragonflies suspended over water lilies, secret messages written on wildflowers...*

"Hey good lookin', how about a date, baby? You're sure lookin' fine this morning." Somebody in a T-shirt with a gold cross around his neck waved at her from the street, his eyes gleaming in expectation. She allowed herself the pleasure of flipping him off as she stepped away from the

Processed World #1? Yes, I read it. Frankly, it worries me



Bank of America President  
Sam Armacost

window. The mysterious herbal smell —was it eucalyptus or bay, or what?—lingered in her nostrils. *You can't even dream for more than a few minutes at a time any more.* Clearly it was time for another cup of coffee, maybe even another cigarette, although she had once entertained hopes of quitting, but since Tom, though... She ran her fingers through her hair, went to the kitchen, and poured some more coffee; the cigarette could wait. It was 7:15 and there was no escape; she would have to polish the notes for her scheduled 9:00 presentation. Pursing her lips, affecting a prissy voice, she read her introductory remarks aloud. "Proposal for a Manual of Personnel Procedures. The unprecedented growth of our corporation over the past fiscal year has mandated a

comprehensive restructuring of the Personnel Department's priorities. My purpose in addressing you today is two-fold. First, to demonstrate the insufficiency of the current rules and regulations for employees, and secondly, to give an overview of our projected manual of personnel policies, which we hope to complete within a two-month time frame.

*Like I always say, if bullshit were blacktop I could pave a highway from here to Tallahassee.* She stared at her notes without reading. She remembered that many years ago, when she was in high school, her teachers praised her imaginative writing. her college English professors repeatedly made note of a certain talent, albeit of a certain—how to put it?—*unorthodox* variety. And her various supervisors and managers never missed an opportunity to praise what they called her “writing skills.” *From aspiring genius to salaried craftsman—my life in a nutshell.* She lit a cigarette and extinguished it immediately.

She sat with her head in her hands for a long time. Perhaps it was the coffee that was making her perspire, or perhaps she was coming down with something. She toyed with the idea of calling in sick, but could not face upper management's accusations that she was not equipped to handle pressure. Nor could she expect any

again in front of her notes, reached for a cigarette, and knocked the cup over onto the table. A brown stain spread with what appeared to be hypnotic deliberateness. *The return of the repressed.* Without moving to clean up the mess, she upended the cup, poured the rest of the coffee onto the paper, and stuffed the pad into her attache case, scattering small droplets of coffee. As if in a trance, she walked through the kitchen, checked the time, 7:45, went to the bathroom, and rummaged through the closet for a pair of spike heels. She thought of the ancient Chinese custom of binding girl-children's feet to enhance their desirability to men. She put on the shoes and once again looked at herself in the mirror. *This isn't me. This is me.* She bit her lip feeling that she would start to cry, but restrained herself since she couldn't stand the idea of fixing her makeup again. The best thing she could do was to leave immediately. She clicked her way to the kitchen table where her upended coffee cup sat pathetically, and wiped the stray smudges of coffee off her attache case. The phone rang but she ignored it, *not him again, not Tom.* The noise made by the front door as it shut behind her resounded through her head.

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## This would be a four-cup morning.

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sympathy from the people who worked for her. She had been too busy learning her job to get to know them very well. And after all, they could be forgiven for not giving a damn one way or the other about the problems of the woman who sat in a private office and monitored their work. There was no alternative but to carry the assignment to its bitter end; maybe some coffee would help.

She poured another cup, sat down

The elevator doors glided open for her on the fifteenth floor. It was 8:15 and she had forty-five minutes to wonder what she was going to do, for no matter what she was going to do could not focus her thoughts on anything. She entered the personnel department and, ignoring the muttered hi- and hello-Karen's that rose from the desks, walked straight into her office with its eastern exposure to find someone sitting in her swivel



It's Great To Be Alive!

chair. She felt like an intruder.

"Hi Eloise, hope I'm not interrupting, but can I sit down? Can I help you with anything?"

The woman sitting behind the desk glared at her briefly and with a tone far too nice to be genuine, muttered about missing forms filled out by yesterday's job applicants, and maybe Karen had inadvertently stuck them in her desk, mistakes can happen even to the best of us, and certainly she didn't mean to butt in like this but she knew Karen wouldn't mind, and of course now that Karen was here she wouldn't dream of getting in her way. Without further ado, she inhaled and exhaled noisily and left.

She knew that Eloise had always disliked her because she had been promoted from another department

while Eloise, who had been in Personnel for ten years, had been passed over. But there was something else about Eloise—she yearned for her own private office, her own secretary to type her letters and take her messages, her own power to dish out some of what she had taken for so many years. For a moment, she considered telling Eloise look, if you want that damn office with its goddam eastern exposure, here, take it with my blessings, and leave me alone. Abdication, however, while it may have worked for royalty, didn't fit into the unwritten code of managerial behavior. She imagined the corporation's entire board of directors calling a press conference to announce their intent to take a collective vow of poverty in a monastery. She was beginning to elaborate the sce-

nario when someone else walked into the office and timidly apologized for interrupting.

“You weren’t interrupting anything, Julie, I’m just getting ready for my 9:00 presentation. What’s up?” *Why do I always have to lie to everybody here?*

out of her office to where Julie was sitting. “Julie, I’m really sorry, it’s just been one of those mornings for me.” She paused awkwardly, realizing the clumsiness of what she had just said. Julie whispered without turning around, “That’s all right, Karen, I understand,” but the stiff

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## If bullshit were blacktop I could pave a highway from here to Tallahassee.

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“Was Eloise giving you a bad time again, Karen?”

“Well, you know Eloise. I kind of feel sorry for her. She’s a good worker...” the phrase stuck in her throat, but it was what she was expected to say, “and I just ignore her when she gets that way.”

“Gee, Karen, you’re really a fair person. Don’t worry about Eloise, the rest of us think you’re the best supervisor this department’s ever seen. I don’t know how to say this,” Julie glanced at the pale green carpet, “but I really enjoy working for you.”

*Jesus, that’s all I need, some meek little twit telling me how much she likes me bossing her around.* “Great, Julie. Fine and dandy, but buttering me up won’t get you very far. Now what about those monthly reports? They’re due on Friday, and if they have as many mistakes as last month’s, you won’t enjoy things around here nearly as much. You can see for yourself...” although there was nothing on the desk to indicate that any work was being done there, “that I’ve got a lot to take care of. Let’s talk some other time, okay?”

Julie recoiled visibly and tears welled up in her eyes. She muttered an I’m-sorry-for-bothering-you-Karen as she left the office, head down, her hands fumbling with the papers she was carrying. *Brilliant, Karen, a real stroke of genius.* She was remorseful for having jumped down Julie’s throat for no reason, and hurriedly walked

posture of her back demonstrated that even if she did understand, she was not going to forgive for quite some time. Having captured the attention of everyone in the office, Karen crept back to her office and shut the door.

It was 8:30; half an hour to go. She stared at the bright orange landscape that was hanging on the left-hand wall. She suppressed a violent impulse to slash it to ribbons, remembering Julie fighting back her tears. *Rank has its privileges. Good morning, gentlemen, Karen’s my name, and coordinating personnel’s my game.* Thoughts pounded through her head. She reached for a pencil and broke it in half. It snapped with a crisp, percussive sound releasing a faint aroma that recalled to her the herbal scent that she had detected earlier that morning through the smell of exhaust. She closed her eyes and concentrated until the walls and windows collapsed and she could feel the cool, biting air of the mountains.

Somebody was knocking at the door. She folded up the mountains and restored the office to its former condition. Startled, she glanced around and instinctively thrust her hand into her attache case, dragged out a soggy wad of paper, and stuck it in the trashcan under her desk. The knock was repeated. “Karen, it’s Jake. Shall we be off?”

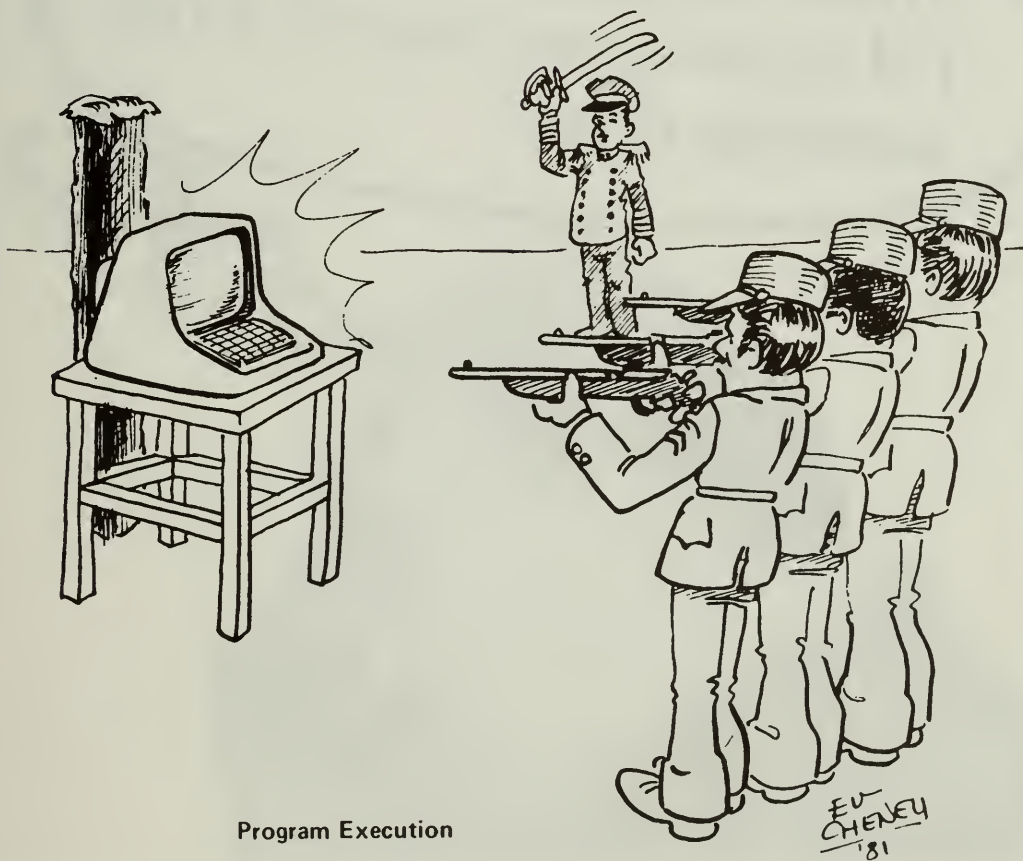
“Give me five minutes, please, Mr. Corcoran, I’ll be right there,” she said in her best sing-song voice. He

assured her it would be no problem and that he could wait. Panic seizing her, she searched frantically for a cigarette to calm her shaking hands, only to find that her last pack was as soggy as her now-useless notes. She smiled thinly, *doesn't it just figure*. Suddenly, the dream of earlier that morning, ended by her clock radio signalling another working day, came back to her with unusual clarity. Once again she watched herself clambering over the rocks and felt the sharp edge of the stone cut into her hands, scraping the skin. A saxophone sounded in the distance as she scaled the sun-drenched peak, singing to her in a way that words could not express, *now's the time*. Now she knew what she had to do. She focused her energies on the closed door of her office, as if to shatter it, and, clutching her attache case, walked out into the work area.

Ignoring Jake Corcoran's extended hand she went straight over to Julie's desk. She put her hand gently on Julie's shoulder immediately feeling

the tension from the other woman's body. Julie wheeled her chair around abruptly meeting her eyes. Karen tried to say something but faltered and bit her lip. Julie was staring at her in astonishment. Karen tightened her grip on the younger woman's shoulders and stammered, "I hate myself for what I did to you, I hate this place for what it's doing to me. And all I can do about it is take it out on all the wrong people, on you." She knew that everyone there was watching her; Jake was probably wondering if she had gone hysterical on him. A half-smile appeared on Julie's face: "Do what's best for you, Karen, let the right people know about it sometime."

She leaned closer to Julie and whispered "Any minute now," pointing to the clock above Julie's typewriter. Julie's eyes opened wide: "At the meeting, Karen?" Julie glanced nervously at Mr. Corcoran pacing in little circles and looking bored, and quickly, tentatively, she embraced the older woman. "If you get into trouble



Program Execution

from *Recreational Computing magazine*

