PROCESSED
WORLD 8

PROCESSED WORLD
SUMMER 83 -- ISSUE EIGHT
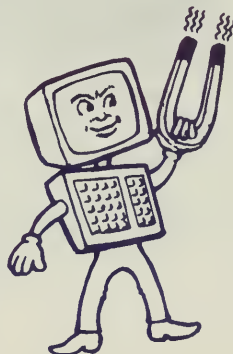## MENU

Cover Graphic by: Jim Ludtke

All of the articles and stories in **Processed World** reflect the views and fantasies of the author and not necessarily those of other contributors or editors.
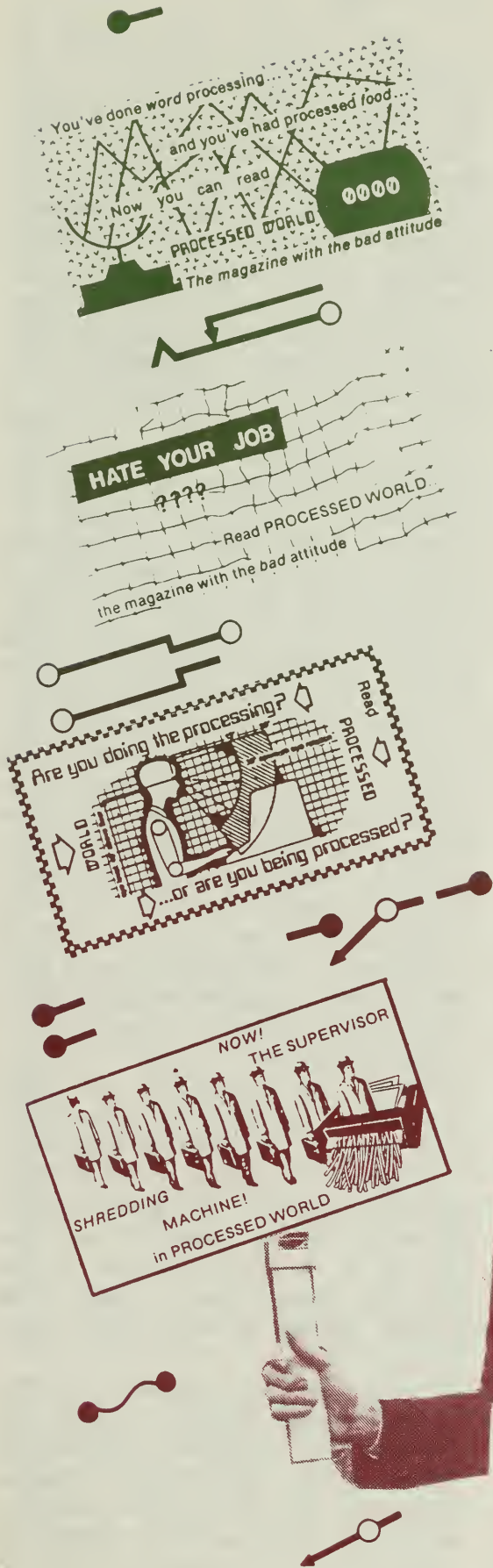
TALKING HEADS

Welcome to the 8th issue of Processed World. We hope that this issue will continue to incite your interest and sense of controversy. PW #7, the "Special Sex Issue," nearly sold out in three months (proving once again that "sex sells"). Regrettably PW #7 is almost unavailable. Due to increasing demand, we printed 4,000 copies of #8, instead of last issue's 3,000.

To you readers sitting on hot stories for fear of losing your anonymity, fear no more! The Blue Shield article was sent to us anonymously. We're always interested in whistle-blowers, dirty laundry, articles, exposes, and stories from the work-a-day world — So send 'em in!

In our letters section JG criticizes PW for its narrow focus on single, white office office workers. While certainly not the first reader to insist that PW encompass a broader view, JG goes further by suggesting that PW actively seek out material on racism and its application in the modern day clerical world. In fact, racism is touched on more in this issue than in the past. Both Debra Wittley's Blue Shield piece, and Steve Abbott's story "First Steps" address racism in the office, illustrating in particular the "communication problem" and how it is exploited by management hierarchy.

In our "DOWNTIME!" section, we have reprinted a copy of a leaflet, "Workers' Representation: New Carrot/Old Stick," which some PWers circulated at a microelectronics conference at UC Santa Cruz, followed by an opposing view from a member of both the PW and Motley collectives.

You've done word processing...

and you've had processed food...

Now you can read

PROCESSED WORLD

The magazine with the bad attitude

HATE YOUR JOB

????

Read PROCESSED WORLD

the magazine with the bad attitude

Are you doing the processing?

Read

PROCESSED

WORLD

...or are you being processed?

NOW! THE SUPERVISOR

SHREDDING MACHINE!

in PROCESSED WORLD

For those who revel in dynamic satire, Shirley Garzotto's ''Bad Girl'' has increased from one to seven pages in this issue. The bike messenger ''underclass'' of the Financial District is humorously portrayed in ''Tale of Toil'' and poem by Zoe Noe. Chris Winks' review leads this issue, exploring the role of intellectuals in (or against) power, while Tom Athanasiou's ''World Processing'' concludes it with an analysis of the impact of micro-electronic technology, breaking down existing divisions of labor, and changing social stratification.

And there are a number of excellent poems in this issue.

We present these articles as a springboard for further debate. We invite controversial comments and responses from our readers, so don't be shy! Our mailing address remains: ''Processed World, 55 Sutter St., #829, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA.''

PW is sent to subscribers via 3rd Class Bulk Mail (so it costs us $.11 each instead of $.71). Some copies invariably get lost, so if you don't get yours, write us and we'll send you another via 1st Class Mail. Thanks for your patience.

LETTERS

Dear PW:

I have the title assistant manager at a copy store downtown.

I hate working 50 hours a week for a salary. Fortunately, my immediate supervisor, Janet (the manager) is very disorganized and very relaxed with us 95% of the time. I just recently realized that an hour's worth of **my** time is certainly worth more than the crummy $4+ and all the **stress** and anxiety.

I can't see any alternatives yet though — only getting a **different** job that pays a little more.

But **FUCK** — I'm only 23 and I can't see any end to this **ever** unless I find the time/concentration to work on my music with my luckily unemployed friend. Then I'm hoping we can make/sell home cassettes and become self-supporting.

Processed World couldn't've come at a better time.

take care,
T.G. — Ohio

Dear Folks:

I only bought your Issue #7 because it looked titillating. Once I got over my anger at getting ripped off, though, I was very impressed. Michelle La Place's article, for example, successfully highlighted the irony of all this ''Corporate Image'' bullshit now impressing women who feel compelled to ''make something'' of themselves. My only comment is that its well-aimed criticisms overshadow the sorriest part of this subject: that a woman today still has only three options available to her in this society — housewife, corporate fellationist, or anarchist/nobody — and that this heart-wrenching demise introduces ALL WOMEN to precisely the same position of impotence which MOST MEN have been familiar with all along. Despite the fact that all influential persons in this subtly-closed society are men, it is not in fact the case, and never has been, that all men do or even could rescue themselves from this same pathetic demise women are only now discovering. This regimented society of ours may be governed by men, but let's not kid ourselves — the rulers form a very tightly-knit oligarchy. What is sad is that young women today are — understandably, I think — taking the bait and embracing the hope that what little pittance of materials they gain by cooperating will offset the pain of failing to fight this damned system. It is the same promise others before them believed. It is the promise whose making creates the system, and whose failure to materialize sustains it.

I also was very impressed by the article on pornography. It was simply excellent. Its author argued her points fairly, sensitively, dispassionately, and without the casuistry which so many writers employ to reduce very complicated conflicts to

simplistic "us versus them" diatribes. At the same time as Ms. Holz unveiled the chauvinism and duplicity of the hysterical anti-porn groups, she made every effort to fairly represent the legitimate criticism which porn must face. I was pleasantly surprised to see all this accomplished without polarity. If a few more of us could discuss this subject like adults, I might feel less threatened by the implications such groups create for the First Amendment. My compliments to Ms. Holz for the quality of her article — and for her bravery in writing it.

If you people are organizing a gathering in hopes of generating some ideas, please do let me know. I lean toward Marxism, but with some hope that I can relate it to the American spirit of individualism and civil freedom, which, alas, is not faring well these days at the hands of its younger brother Capitalism. I tend to think that violent confrontation is not an intellectually sound basis for advancing the cause of this freedom except as a last resort, and that today's America fails to represent such a "last resort" in spite of our racism, sexism, disinclination to compromise, our growing militarism, our growing nationalism, our use of education as an arm of state thought control, our materialism, our mandates, the irrelevance of work, the stupidness of money and consumer goods, and the private ownership of things necessary to human survival (food, clothes, housing). I am also a Financial District drone. If, in such discussions as you are planning, you think I could either provide ideas or paperwork or merely assist you, by means of my complacency in the face of the status quo, in preventing yourselves from becoming another psychotic band of anarchists obsessed with the few shortcomings of this great country of ours, and this damned fine laissez faire system please contact me. Thank you.

<div align="right">M.H. — SF</div>
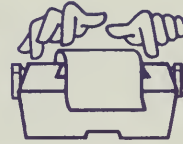
Dear PW:

Though I've never done "office work," unless you include mopping office floors in that realm, I **do** consider myself a part of your "audience" of marginalized political-cultural misfit/Workers. There are important things about PW that distinguish it from the countless other publications by discontented or radical workers. Many people who dislike PW's "politics" say they like the humor. I agree it's your strong point. But why? To me it's because you get to the heart of the barrenness of our working lives and because you convey a **vision** of a different world. Not the vision of permanent cost-of-living allowances which so many worker newsletters are obsessed with, but the vision of work-as-play among freely associated individuals, the end of wage work. People **hate** their jobs, and PW conveys a sense of how deep that hatred goes.

Reading "Roots of Disillusionment" in PW#6 gave me a sense of your general outlook and how you see your origins. It also set off a series of questions in my mind about your long-range perspective. I think it was a good attempt to give us a "big picture" of recent changes, mainly the growth of the info processing industry and how a portion of the 60's rebels find themselves sucked into the world of office work. And yet... I have different views about being **marginal** workers and about **race**.

The "Roots" article said that PW's "typical readers" are 60's-

influenced rebels who do secretarial jobs, often as temps. They do jobs which are **below** typical office supervisors, but one step **above** the data entry and file clerks, who are most often ''younger women, especially Blacks, Chicanas, and immigrants from Asia and Latin America.'' This ''new breed'' is ''restless and mobile,'' unlike the older generation more schooled in the ''traditional secretarial role.'' PW's style, sensibility, and humor spring from that layer of office worker, which seems like an honest and solid place to initiate a political project.

But these people are only a small fragment of office workers, who live and work with everybody else in offices, not in a 60's rebels compartment. Whenever collective rebellion breaks out, very different layers of workers and even several different types of marginals will unite (and unfortunately come into conflict). To me this means special attention must be paid to not ''ghetto-izing'' your concerns, to only addressing the young, the white, and the ''hip.''

On the one hand that means doing your best to educate yourselves and your ''typical readers'' about how other office workers see things, how they struggle, resist, get co-opted, etc. On the other hand, that means reaching out to ''un-typical'' readers/workers who have their own language, humor and styles of resistance, which may clash with your own but are no less valid. I don't mean trying to reach some non-existent generic office worker rebel by sanitizing your style, but somehow trying to consciously ''stretch'' it in order to unify people. Unity means conscious struggle amongst ourselves, not waiting for the nasty bosses to unite us.

All of the above goes double for the issue of race and racism. This element of reality barely emerges in PW, which appears **color-blind**, in contrast to its emphatic awareness of sexism expressed in articles on that theme and a more general concern diffused among all the writing and graphics. Yet for all this color-blindness, PW is particularly ''**white**'' in its style and content. But there is no such thing as a ''white'' vision of change in 1983.

Again, does this mean you deny who you are (''whites''), start an affirmative action program, or give ''those poor third world people'' a token page? No, but if you have half a brain it means that institutional racism must be rejected by all workers if this country, or world, is ever going to change. This means race is a priority issue for all rebels, white and non-white, not because we're good christians, but because most of the world's workers are non-white and the structure of racial privilege in the U.S. has been instrumental to keeping ''whites'' in a wage-slave mentality (privilege? See any statistics with racial breakdown on unemployment, occupations, income, housing, education or health).

A whole set of enslaving, disunifying, alienating identities have to be tossed in the garbage so we can come together against our existence as passive wage labor. The rejection of white skin privilege only has meaning if it is simultaneously the expression of a new human being, unbound by the stupid conformity of global capital.

To return to the issue of **marginals**, it has been pointed out many times that the very concept of ''hip,'' ''outsider,'' etc., is at base an interpretation of the subversive sub-cultures of urban Blacks. We all know where ''white'' rock came from, yet we can see even today Men At Work making millions off their honky-fied reggae. It's true that subversive cultural identities

are often based on rejecting cultural "whiteness" (hippie, punk), but capital's re-absorption of subcultures through media, fads, etc., always assist the "white-ish" (acceptable) tendencies inside subcultures. Then of course there are rebel subcultures which are self-consciously "white" (supremacist) like British skinheads, the old greasers here, or our local WPOD's (white punks on dope/white power or die for those outside of SF).

To end your color-blind approach would also increase possibilities for Asian, Black or Latin workers to contribute to PW themselves, and to deepen the dialogue we need so desperately. To treat race as a key issue is not tokenism but realism, if we seek to turn over the world rather than destroy it.

For Workers Autonomy
(not Lobotomy),
J.G. — SF

Dear JG:

Because I'm gay, when I first saw copies of Processed World I naturally looked for material by or speaking to gay people. What I did notice immediately is what you refer to — a consciousness of sexism that pervaded the magazine. That was good enough for me, 'cause I've found that most folks who are anti-sexist are usually anti-homophobic, too. And as I began working with the people who put out Processed World I did in fact find it easy to participate as a gay person.

Just as I was reassured by seeing sexism continually exposed and ridiculed in PW, I imagine people of color would be reassured by seeing some similar treatment of racism. It's not enough for Processed World to simply say that the abolition of work and the decentralization of society will make life better for everyone. People who've encountered racism in even the "progres-

☆☆

☆☆

John F.

YOU ARE
HERE

sive'' movements of women, labor, ecology, and socialism — as I've often encountered homophobia in those quarters — will want to know exactly where Processed World stands on racism.

We live in a racist society. Racism is built into our institutions and racial exploitation is built into capitalist, industrial development. Anyone who is born and raised in America cannot help but be tainted by racism. Only conscious effort to SEE and CHALLENGE racism can raise us from our racist social heritage.

There are straightforward and routine ways that can be accomplished. Just by talking about it I think we will begin finding ourselves more and more aware of racist assumptions we may have internalized. Contributors and producers of PW can PAY ATTENTION when we hear racist jokes in the office, or disparaging comments by white managers about third world workers, or complaints about ''communications problems'' with workers for whom English is a second language (see the Blue Shield article in this issue). We can get into the habit of citing racism when we talk about coercion and hierarchy, using Processed World to expose racism when we see it in the office world, and including the subject in discussions of whatever critiques we develop. I think this is the best way to let our readers know that we are talking and thinking about racism.

— Stephen Marks

Dear Processed World:

After reading some of the letters in P.W. 5 and 6, and Bob Black's critique ''Circle-A Deceit,'' I have come to the conclusion that the PW collective appears to be foundering on an age-old question: how do revolutionaries play an ''avant-garde'' role without playing at vanguard? How do they play an educative role without in any way diminishing the self-activity of people and promoting their dependence on ''leaders?''

Joe Hill notwithstanding, the answer, in my opinion, is: Don't Organize, Agitate! People are quite

capable of organizing themselves when they see the point in it. As every revolution in history has shown, when people get it into their heads that they're going to change the world, they do a much better job of organizing themselves than we ever could. If they don't **see** the point, no amount of us trying to rabble-rouse around shop-floor and other petty reform-type issues is going to move people into motion. That's not to say that a radical change in the objective conditions necessarily will either, as the Great Depression demonstrated. (Contrary to popular opinion, the American people were quite docile in the 1930's, and, when they did act, they rarely challenged the terms of the struggle set by the system.)

What's needed is for people to see the possibility, desirability, and **necessity** of smashing the old world and creating it anew. All **three** of these elements must be present. And this is where revolutionaries can play a helpful role. By applying a critique of everyday life to people's day-to-day experience (much as **Processed World** has been doing with the experience of work), one can help pinpoint the frustration people feel, can help them articulate their underlying needs and aspirations, and help make clear the possibility for a different state of affairs which liberates human potential instead of suppressing it. Someone characterizing the Situationists in a recent issue of **Open Road** [available from Box 6135, Stn. G, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6R 4G5] put it like this:

"The task for situationists was... not to support a revolutionary movement which did not yet exist but to create one by revealing the contradiction between people's desires and their perceived needs."
and
"Modern capitalism is impoverished precisely because it has cre-

ated the preconditions for material abundance while only providing an abundance of boredom and a denial of possibilities. When the reality of desire conflicts with the appearance of needs manufactured by the spectacle of commodity culture, revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary movements will emerge."

Finally, I just want to say that **Processed World**'s greatest strength has been that it is virtually the only organ of workplace agitation that doesn't reduce itself down to crassest economism. It treats every aspect of the work experience — as indeed it should. In other words, maybe you were on the right track all along.

R.H. — Toronto
[RH is part of the **Kick It Over** collective, an interesting publication available from P.O. Box 5811, Stn. A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P2.]

Dear PW:

Interest has been waning of late in PW. Women seem reluctant to look at anything that might cause waves on their jobs because of all the tight employment situations. Also, management is fully exercising its right to fire at will, particularly in private employment, and there is virtually no recourse.

Are you facing the same thing in SF? I know of two cases here that come readily to mind of women who were summarily fired after having worked capably on management jobs for 5 years or more. Human Rights Commission was ineffective (one case was not brought; the other was thrown out for lack of evidence). A more recent layoff in a restaurant affected 23 workers, with 18 others fired before the layoff. The owner said it was a cutback and possibly it was, but there are

unhealthy undertones relating to the number of gay women who were fired, for example, and the almost certain feeling that those laid off will not be rehired.

I hope there are answers other than creating a legal fund and bringing suit. A newspaper article in the case of the restaurant brought the plight of the fired workers to the attention of the folks in Anchorage. The reaction was mixed. Some thought the workers were just spacey do-nothings anyway and others were outraged at the firings, the poor quality food and the attitude of the manager/owner, and the increase in prices.

Life continues and we keep fighting the same battles. Over and over and over again...

For a better world,
R.S. — Anchorage, AK

Dear PW:

PW7 is just wonderful — couldn't get enough of it, as usual. Read every word and wanted more. And it looks great, too. I prefer the personal testimony over the socio-political analyses (Harragan didn't invent corporate feminism just as Marx didn't invent communism). The Letters column was lively and it's good to see PW's influence spreading from Berkeley to Toronto.

Like Linda (although our histories are different) I have never fit in either. I think that's why we need the annual Christmas consuming hysteria and other ''national'' holidays. Their celebration gives the sense of false community. Every time I've thought I fit in I was deluded. I'm still wide-eyed around the office cliques who seem to be having such a good time, except

that when I'm finally admitted I don't have a good time at all. I've rationalized it all by preferring a stranger's life, and if I look at it closely enough it just doesn't hurt as much as it used to. I wish I did fit in, but that's only a wish for the elusive community. But doesn't community exist by excluding others? I'm just not sure anymore. Maybe that's why PW gets accused of pragmatism and lack of direction. It's simply naive to believe that labeling a group creates a community. Defining direction sounds a little too much like management rhetoric.

Corporate feminism and the dress for success thing are part of the mindless snobbism fostered by the panderers to the bloated managerial class. Was it one of you who scribbled on an office building, ''If you think you're middle class, top management knows better''?

A couple of months ago I met a former GM worker, now ready for retirement. We talked about the Great Depression and the depression-that-isn't and I asked why he thought the U.S. was going broke (he was worried about ever collecting Social Security). He talked about his years on the line, working without coffee breaks, having a half-hour for lunch (which he ate in the middle of the night), turning out GM cars that were the standard by which others were measured. He spoke with that sense of pride I've found in others — factory workers and miners — and blamed the U.S. decline on the unions and their insistence on coffee breaks and lowered productivity. Surely, I said, managerial decisions and short-term profit motives had had some influence. The look crossed his face that I'd also seen before, kind of quizzical, the am-I-in-the-presence-of-a-slobbering-communist look accompanied by a change of subject, usually to the weather or the 49ers.

Oh, I know all the reasons for this — the fascist potential of the working class, the power of the elite to instill shame in the workers, the pride in the product, the fading of memory, but it still doesn't explain it all. No more than I can understand the identification of a secretary with her supervisor, a vice president. If management consultants advise executives to have no loyalty to the corporation (and they do advise them in just those words), then why should an office worker with one of the most menial jobs have such a strong sense of loyalty that she spies on others on her own or a lower level, that she cares? According to the *Wall Street Journal* only 5% of secretaries are male, so I feel okay about thinking about the other 95% as "she," by the way. In the early days of feminism, way back in the sixties, we called these women "agents," and so they seem to be.

Being without a job shatters my identity. Mostly it's about *buying* things, so I spend a lot of time in the Safeway. I have to keep buying things and food is okay. But since I'm so often without a job I have to deal with this problem of identity. I don't think of myself as rebellious, but I act as if I am. It's the fantasy of security I can't buy, especially if it means fitting in. What's wrong with me? There must be an easier way. People in offices are dada, seem totally nuts to me, with a few genuine psychotics fortunately tranked out with long lunch hours spent at the therapist's. Yes, it would be nice to trust someone, but the passions in control don't encourage trust.

Good luck at your new world corporate headquarters. And thanks again. I'm glad you're out there.

B.C. — SF

Dear Processed World,

Just recently I was fired from my job as a restaurant cook. For the year and a half I worked there the owner constantly reminded me that I was expendable, easily replaceable. I persisted in taking on more responsibility and asking for the appropriate raise. At this time I was inevitably subjected to the business owner blues: "do you know how much my electric bills are for this place? Bringing up a family and trying to run the restaurant is expensive. There are a lot of people who would take your job for $4 an hour. Why should I pay you more?"

"Because I'm worth it" I would start to explain, and I would list all the tasks I perform, convincing him that I was worth $.50 more an hour. This was humiliating. Was I supposed to feel guilty and withdraw my request for a raise? With my last raise came a cut in hours, cancelling out the increase.

Last summer I was working at least 50 hours a week without overtime, because they didn't have to pay it. The restaurant offered no benefits, no health plan. Just the friendly reminder that I was lucky to have a job. "Stay in your place, don't push your luck and remember who's the boss." These working conditions were unbearable. I knew they wanted me to quit, the hints were not very subtle: "What are your plans for the summer, you're probably tired of being in Boulder. You don't have to do that anymore, Don can do it." They slowly chopped away at my responsibilities, and casually suggested that I take an extra day off this week, "business has been slow."

It finally came to a blow out. I had been ignoring the scheme to make me quit. The owner brought me the office one day and told me he didn't need me Thursdays or Fridays anymore. This would have cut my work week down to 16 hours. I

refused to accept it, so he suggested that I give him my "resignation." I refused to quit as well. He fired me on the spot. I'm filing for unemployment. I can think of no greater relief than to not be working in a restaurant now.

I'm looking for full enjoyment, not full employment. Being unemployed is not a disadvantage. Imagine if everyone was out of work. We would not be subject to the machine. It's time to break the machine.

E. — Boulder, CO

Dear PW:

I'm an independent computer consultant. Computers don't do things to me; I do things to them. In a sense, I view your world from the other side of the mirror.

I recently ran across a copy of PW6, and I like it. It tells me how the things I make are experienced by their victims (although we in the trade prefer to call them "end users").

Up until 1977 I worked as a grunt programmer for a big corporation, so I have had many of the experiences your writers discuss. I used to talk to my co-workers about how we were being exploited, and I got a lot of blank stares. Most of them weren't even aware that they were being treated like solid waste matter. The ones who were aware thought my concern was fatuous. Work was work, they said, and I shouldn't expect the working environment to be humane.

I'm pleased to see that office workers are beginning to be aware of themselves as a group and to demand change. That's not to say I agree with the things the writers in PW are demanding.

I was troubled to see that many of your contributors are indulging in petty sabotage. That bothers me not so much because it's illegal (although there's that, too), as because it's counterproductive. It's a cheap ego trip for the saboteur that hardens the establishment's attitude without hurting it significantly.

Dogshit-Digit's letter is the clearest example. D-D seems to think that pouring salted coffee into a video terminal's keyboard is a meaningful act of protest. Bullshit! D-D's employer writes off that sort of vandalism as a cost of doing business, and passes the cost along to its customers. If D-D escalates it to the point where it really hurts, the company will just "correct" the situation with increased surveillance and repression.
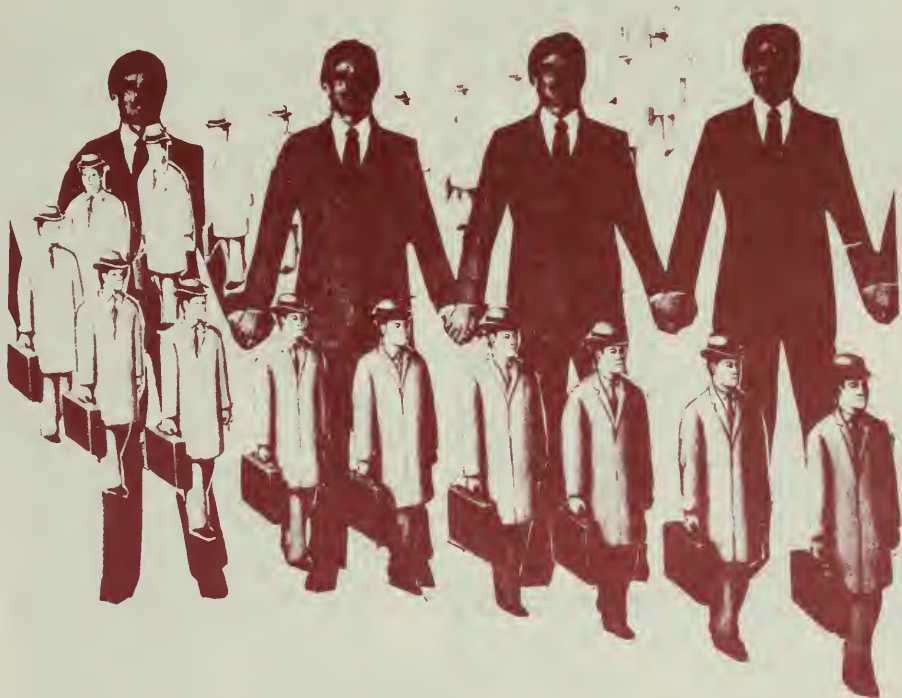
Now consider the effect of D-D's sabotage on the repair person who must fix the terminal. She's in a worse position than D-D is, since she moves in and out of strange offices all day and can't develop a support network among her co-workers. She derives her job satisfaction (if any) from keeping terminals in working order. She's got a territory to cover, and her manager will probably jump on her if she spends too long on her average repair call. And here's this self-styled urban guerrilla dreaming up new ways to make work for her — unnecessary, frustrating, **meaningless** work.

"Drive the repair technicians crazy!" D-D chortles. Hey, turkey, they're supposed to be on **your** side!

If this revolution is going to get anywhere, the participants have got to have as clear an idea of what they're **for** as of what they're **against**. Otherwise they're just going to run around flailing at shadows and hitting one another.

At this point I can hear D-D and several others muttering, "OK, wise guy — tell us what **you're** for." I'll get to that in a minute. First let me state some general principles

Amazing Corporate Management Clone Program Pays Off!

that I think office workers have got to accept before they can deal with their problems effectively.

Principle #1: information is important. It may be fun to pretend that data banks, Apple Computer and the service economy are a lot of bullshit, but it isn't realistic. They're central to the way our world works. Never mind "should;" they

put your life in a
holding pattern
reassess your sexual identity
enlarge your penis
eat anything
and still lose weight

dress for success
learn new skills
soften facial flaws
remove unwanted
body hair

(answer these questions
in twenty words, or less)

have you ever tried consulting
a hypnotist
are you getting the most
out of your career
do you like   what's the
kosher yogurt   body count?

are. They have something approaching total control over many of our lives. How are we going to deal with them if we don't take them seriously?

All writing is information. PW consists largely of writing, and thus largely of information. Is PW therefore largely meaningless? Certainly not.

Principle #2: information processing is not evil. Shane said it best. ''Ma'am, a computer is a tool. It's as good or as bad as the person who uses it.'' Use it! If you reject the use of information processing, you let your opponent have all the loaded weapons.

Principle #3: a revolution is a process, not a movement. People just don't get together and decide to change the social order. Revolutions happen when a multitude of people move in the same direction — usually with differing goals, differing motives, and differing theories or no theories at all. Out of the resulting shifts of power, a new logic and a new order emerge. After the revolution has run its course, the appearance of unity is imposed on it by despots or historians.

I believe "the revolution" is already happening. It's the computer revolution — the most profound change in the way we live and think that has occurred in at least a century.

If that sounds like a commercial for Apple Computer, it's because Apple is pushing this particular revolution for all it's worth. The Computer Revolution makes a great sales pitch because it happens to be true. The fact that some big corporations profit from it does nothing to disqualify it as a real, card carrying revolution (see Principle #3). Nor does that fact destroy its potential for good (see Principle #2).

The prime question on my mind is this: are we going to talk about a revolution that isn't happening while the one that **is** happening rolls over us, or are we going to jump on board and try to control the thing? I favor the latter.

I'm very excited about what's happening in the small computer market. Real information power is now within the reach of any steadily employed person, or any viable organization. Prices start at about $3,000, and they're still dropping.

Once you have that computer you can tap into tremendous amounts of on-line information (see Principle #1) and use it for constructive purposes if you choose. You can typeset and distribute PW more easily and cheaply than you otherwise could. You can set up your own cottage industry and become relatively independent of the men in the glass buildings. You can find like-minded people through computer networks and communicate with them. Name a human activity; a computer can probably help you with it in some way.

To me, the most encouraging writer in PW6 was the one who said, "I have found myself relating to, and in some ways fascinated by, a technology that two years ago I

"We just stuffed the boss in a mail bag and shipped him to Toledo."

"Great!"

dismissed in favor of gothic cathedrals." I'd like to hear more from that person. Anyone who can move comfortably between VDT's and gothic cathedrals has my unqualified approval. I think such people will be the salvation of us all.

End of sermon. I suspect I've alienated most of the people reading this. That's OK. If we all thought the same thoughts we'd be dead.

IBM's motto is THINK. My motto is THINK FOR YOURSELF. Do it in both a creative and a selfish sense.

Very truly yours,
J.S. — Richmond, CA

Dear J.S.:

Thanks for your letter and views on PW. It's great that you enjoy reading it, and that you enjoy it enough to criticize it too. Our critics have helped us grow.

You mention that you are pleased

to see office workers beginning to be aware of themselves and to see organization as a potential method for creating change. CHANGE is indeed the key word here. I once attempted to organize the small insurance brokerage office that I worked in. I was rather naive about it, and in retrospect, I am glad it didn't happen. Had we become unionized, we probably would have all gotten better salaries, and I'm sure that some of the "conditions" would have been improved. Would I have been happy? No. Why? Because the things I wanted changed through organization are not attainable in this world. What I really wanted was not to be there at all, or at least for my boss to stop being such an asshole. Unions can do nothing about "conditions" which are resultant upon emotional factors. Organizing does no good unless it is on such a massive scale as to be paralytic to the entire business community. Yet I do not remain so naive as to ever believe that "we" can ever make a big enough impression to create a change in the fundamental thinking of corporate America. This is my cynicism showing through. I am 31 now, and honestly do not expect to see any significant social changes in my lifetime, as regards the working world. Others in PW (some others anyway) feel differently.

"Petty Sabotage": You say it is counterproductive. I argue that point, because any small act of revenge that can be taken should be taken. It is not an act of sabotage that is truly taking place, in my opinion. What is actually occurring is that someone's heart, soul, spirit and body is slowly being robbed of meaning, that someone is dying inside. Sabotage is a loud scream, an attempt to survive. I am sure that you are correct in saying that it really doesn't affect the corporations. I don't care if it does or not.

Sometimes all you can get is a cheap thrill. Since "life" in the working world has been reduced to that, I'll take it, anyway I can get it. Digit Dogshit is an anonymous reader who sent his or her stuff in to PW, so you're wrong to presume that he or she is sitting around muttering in response to your words. Insofar as driving the repair technicians crazy goes, and your admonition that they are supposed to be on "our side," well, at least sabotage gives them a job to do, and adds spice and challenge too. As for "our side" — who says? I know some pretty gung-ho technicians who do not at all appear to be on my side.

As for your "Principle #1, information is important" — hell, we know that. Processed World has never implied that information is unimportant. Without the help of computers, PW would be more hard work than it already is, and it's already plenty. Of course we just have to sweat it out that the information we have to (it's our job) process is not information that we choose to process, or that we need something from. That perspective is far from being anti-information. Which brings me to your "Principle #2". Our opponents already have all the loaded weapons whether we use technology or not. We help them load their guns everyday by our very existence. The lower class gives the "higher" class something to stand on.

I too believe that the revolution (such as it is) is already occurring. It occurs with each breath I take, it is in process continually. So we agree on the point of revolution being a process. I do see too that the Computer Revolution is one which is changing the course of history and the world. I have a versateller card, and I'm glad of it. I like the way I can get information easily through the use of computers, and when I worked on one, I enjoyed it

sometimes. However, jumping on board and controlling the thing is, my dear, and you will realize this probably too late, nothing more than being sucked into the vortex and becoming ''processed'' into that world. It is a seduction that takes you bit by bit until you too are dreaming of how you can get hired on at a nuclear plant and be the one that refuses to deploy the weapons when the big one is called out. No ''worker'' will ever be in that position. Under the present system, no worker will ever be in a position to effect change. Our place is underfoot.

As you dream away, believing that you are independent of the men in the glass and concrete buildings, it is easy for you to propose that Processed World become a cottage industry and operate inside its own economic system. In other words — exchange one form of capitalism for another. That's change?

I am glad you were encouraged by the person who wrote about computers and gothic cathedrals. I too believe that the poets of the world will ''save'' us, if only from each other, by forcing us to think. Speaking of thinking, you end your letter by saying we should think for ourselves in both a creative and selfish sense. I see this as both a blessing and a curse, for to think for yourself in a world which takes oneself away from oneself is a challenge indeed, and if you really do it, promises guaranteed isolation. It is a challenge that I have upheld, I believe, all of my life, and I intend to carry it through, even though it has already cost me more than I ever intended to pay. I leave you with the same challenge, and in that spirit, hope I have not alienated you, like you suspected you would alienate us with your letter.

— Linda Thomas

P.S. You said that we should say what we are for and what we are against — We're for LIVING, and against its opposite disguised by a slick technology.

FOR TERMINAL ILLS: DADA PROCESSING

Anti-Torpor League, 181 Union Street Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

POWER OF KNOWLEDGE AGAINST POWER

(*A review of* The City Builder, *by George Konrad, translated by Ivan Sanders, published in 1977 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich*]

Modern society is a vast accumulation of hierarchies in which each individual is forced to participate. Success is measured out in shares of power — and whether wielded directly or indirectly, this power is always over others. And if it is true that "knowledge is power," then the so-called "possessors of knowledge" are allotted a relatively privileged position in the division of labor. These intellectuals are rewarded for their knowledge with access to the mechanisms of power. But they are valued less for the extent of their knowledge (although this is important) than for its compatibility with the dominant society's priorities. This restricts their prized "free exercise of thought," and brings them into conflict with what they perceive as the bungling stupidity of their patrons. However, their remedy for the abuses of power is to demand more of it for themselves, on the grounds that those who have been trained to conceptualize the general interest are best equipped to represent it.

Intellectuals encounter numerical barriers to their mobility within the bureaucratic machine: there are simply not enough slots they can profitably fill. At present, there is much talk of "overqualification" and "underemployment," and worried conjecture about the adverse social effects of a multitude of frustrated, unfulfilled "brain workers" trapped in the lower echelons of bureaucracy. Certainly most workplace conditions are enough to undermine any ethically-oriented world view. Quite properly, college graduates who find themselves in such situations often complain openly about the predominant regimentation, petty harassment, and infantile rules.

However, it is not easy to dissolve the evident social and cultural barriers between "underemployed" intellectuals and their less-privileged fellow workers. Those without any opportunity to climb the corporate ladder tend to be skeptical of people who speak of oppression while possessing skills that potentially entitle them to a more "responsible" position in the hierarchy. Historical experience bears out such wariness. Ever since the triumph of Bolshevism (whose authoritarian ideology and political structure were devised by intellectuals), ostensibly rebellious intellectuals, rejoicing in the oxymoronic title of "professional revolutionaries," have, with a few honorable exceptions, used popular revolutionary struggles as mere springboards for their own ascent into the ruling circles. Similar motivations governed the behavior of many New

Left activists in advanced industrial societies. When it became clear that the liberation of oppressed peoples was a more complex proposition than anticipated, these aspiring power-holders were quick to exchange their verbal militancy for the relative comfort of a salaried position in this or that bureaucracy. Meanwhile, their former constituents remained no better off than before.

Of course, the acquisition of power is not the intellectual worker's exclusive preoccupation. Like any worker in any field, intellectuals can use their skills to undermine as well as reinforce the system that monopolizes their time and energy. In a world with the motto ''what you see is all there is,'' ideas — the intellectual's alleged stock-in-trade — are noticeably absent, especially from the totalitarian ambience of the workplace, where anything that does not serve a ''productive,'' corporate-bureaucratic purpose is automatically suspect, or at least irrelevant.

Those intellectuals who take seriously the injunction, preached everywhere but seldom practiced, to think for oneself and inquire into hidden causes, will inevitably encounter the fear, suspicion, and eventual ostracism of their bureaucratic superiors. For hierarchy lives on silence, and people who have been brought up to believe in the emancipating — or at least civilizing — powers of discourse are less likely to adapt to this. Today, with economic depression drying up the channels of mobility, increasing numbers of educated workers will be permanently stuck in dead-end jobs. They will then confront, and perhaps reject, the futility of striving for the phony privileges handed out by a dehumanizing system. In this event, they should neither treat their intellectual qualities as marketable skills nor as characteristics of ''genius'' from which their benighted fellow-workers are excluded, but as fortunate talents which everyone can benefit from and enrich in turn. The educator must be educated.

Self-examination is central to this process. If the social role allotted to intellectual workers is capable of both positive and negative resolutions, this role should be examined on an individual and collective level. In his novel *The City Builder*, the Hungarian writer George Konrad provides a starting point for such an inquiry.

I TRAINED THESE MEN

Without Drugs

Unfortunately, this searing self-portrait of that *bete noire* of the bourgeois intellectual — the bourgeois intellectual — has been allowed by its United States publishers to vanish into oblivion, another example of how the arb(e)iters of both the Eastern and Western culture industries conspire, each in their own way, to prevent the circulation of critical thought. It must also be said that this novel makes no concessions to its readers. Its style is often willfully obscure, lapsing now and then into strained, noisy rhetoric, and Konrad's images, while often powerful, suffer from sameness of construction. But the undeniable weaknesses of the book derive from Konrad's valiant efforts to immerse himself in the welter of existence, to come to terms with the sometimes intolerable choices it imposes, and to express the things that often resist expression.

Konrad has devoted most of his literary and political activity to analyzing the role of the intelligentsia in the system of bureaucratic socialism, and his sociological essay *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, written in collaboration with Ivan Szelenyi and clandestinely circulated among Hungarian dissident groups, sparked wide discussion and led to his arrest in 1975. Since his return home after a brief exile, Konrad has participated actively in the Hungarian democracy movement. He possesses the ability, rare among academics, to synthesize a wealth of social observations and political ideas with a sensibility that transcends cultural and ideological boundaries to strike directly at the heart.

The City Builder consists of ten monologues, some of them phantasmagoric streams of consciousness, others straightforward narratives. The aging city builder, alone in his apartment, haunted by the memories of his dead wife and incarcerated son, surveys his life with an unflinching honesty born of profound disillusion.

Rejecting self-pity, he dissects his role in maintaining a system that he profoundly despises and his ambivalence towards his privileges. The cities he builds exist inside him as well as around him; just as each building, street, and square of the provincial Eastern European town which he designed is a backdrop for countless personal and social dramas, his own life is itself a vast, chaotic city where past memories and present hopes and fears collide in an "intersecting point of labyrinthine human relationships." Throughout the book, the city builder yearns desperately to break out of the social constraints of his profession and to harmonize his life with that of the city. "As an architect," he remarks, "I can easily match the city's dense networks with my own. But rather than coordinating them, I subordinate the city's interests to mine."

In an eloquent passage, the city builder expresses his utopian dreams of a city "where action is synonymous with change, where I have a right to my surroundings, where I don't exist for the city but am wooed by it." Despite his skepticism and world-weariness, these visions of a better life continue to haunt him. He wants to revolutionize things; he sympathizes with the harsh criticisms his rebellious son makes of him; and even in his loneliness he never abandons the possibility that somehow, some day, he will at last be at home in the world. But he cannot forget the similar dreams that motivated him and his fellow intellectuals when, after World War II, they briefly had the chance to remake society.

With bitter irony, he repeats all the fine slogans that resounded through that era, which was to have represented a complete break with the past. In the end, the "universal solutions in behalf of the dispossessed" propounded so fervently by would-be utopians served to conceal the omnipotent ambitions of techno-

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TIME

"Uphill? I'm almost over the hump. Then I'll be coastin'!"

cratic planners. Whereas the city builder's wealthy father and grandfather, themselves architects, measured their success by money, their outwardly rebellious descendant measured his by power. In a situation where "those at the bottom for the most part stayed at the bottom, and those at the top for the most part stayed at the top," the drive for total change could only be carried out by means of total repression. Behind the benevolent rule of the experts lurked the violence of the police, a violence whose necessity the city builder never ceased to proclaim until he himself fell victim to it and was imprisoned and tortured.

After his rehabilitation, he once again made his way into the hierarchy, this time without disguising his drive for power in "the classic radicalism of official interference," but in the detached pragmatism of the specialist. Having achieved his professional goals and gratified his longing for a position of authority, he knows that in the general scheme of things, his privileges are miserably petty, nourished on corruption, inefficiency, and crude self-preservation, and buttressed by coercion. "Every kind of planning is an exercise of power, in favor of someone, against someone, or at times only for its own sake. My presence here is an act of violence," he confesses. Bureaucratic rationality conceals an urge, fueled by hatred and resentment, to remake humanity in one's own image. What the planner does not know — and what the city builder mercilessly emphasizes — is that the failure of his deluded project will reduce his universe "to his own feces, with only an old-looking child whining over it."

The futility of the planner's worldview emerges from two descriptions of natural disasters encountered by the city builder, the first in his role as an expert inspecting the chaos caused by a flood in a provincial town, which

he will have to rebuild, and the second as a victim of an earthquake that devastates the city. In his account of the flood, Konrad contrasts the undisciplined, instinctively cooperative behavior of the peasants resisting evacuation, with the pragmatic functionality of the city builder, concerned less with helping people than with calculating the arrangements of their

future dwellings. In the earthquake, though, the city builder sees nature's power to destroy even the most perfectly-planned creation, and he boldly compares it to a "machine-wrecking bungler and a disheveled dreamer." To him, revolutions and natural disasters are holidays of the spirit that bring people together and allow them briefly to discard their roles before

When Our Nausea Becomes Collective...

routine reasserts its dominance.

Because he is a shrewd student of society, the city builder knows that he and his fellow intellectuals are not alone in sharing the blame for injustice and misery. *The City Builder* is fundamentally a novel that deals with complicity and the psychic scars it inflicts on otherwise intelligent, sensitive people. As our wretched century has demonstrated time and again, almost everyone is willing to make a deal with oppression in exchange for a suitable price. Towards the end of the book, the city builder descends into a cellar bar and somberly meditates on its prior existence as an underground prison: "Remember, decent craftsmen built torture chambers for modest wages and promised secrecy, knowing all along that it was their fellow citizens who would be put on the rack. (...) All the people who worked here ... could have refused the job. But they began to relish the idea of being able to do anything with a man who was somebody outside and nobody in here." He hints that these torturers were true professionals, well-versed in their specialized competence, and desirous of maintaining the power that had fallen to them in the division of labor.

On the face of it, the relationship of the torturer to his victim is the most horrifying example of the reduction of human beings to abstract otherness. But in this relationship, the city builder uncovers a strange paradox, whereby each searches for the confirmation of his humanity in the other: "...The victim must know that the tormentor, too, has a drop of that otherworldly fuel that he is trying to dry up in his prisoner." Absolute alienation is impossible; while we may be accomplices in each other's misery, we also depend on each other to exist. When individuals discover how to "look for reflections of (their) own fate in every puny organism," the tormenting separations between Self and Other will begin to crumble.

SANCTUARY

A plain place, all tile and porcelain—
airless, with an echoing of heels,
prone to leakage, soiled
in spite of constant disinfecting,
ill-lit, paper-strewn...

But also private, with a row of doors
to dream behind, a row of doors
to slam whenever a slamming's
                  necessary.
Near these, a row of sinks
to rinse the day off our corporate hands.
And how useful the mirrors are,
reflecting a taut chin or a troubled brow,
guiding as we powder them to
                  realignment.

Tears are welcome here, for men are not.
Talk is welcome here, for no one works.
Is it any wonder that we enter here so
                  often,
moved by needs more urgent
than the ones the room was built for?

No, my envyers, peering sidelong
beyond the closing door....

It isn't vanity that draws us to the
                  mirrors
nor filth that keeps us in the stalls—
we are here because of the trials of
                  there.
We are here for sanctuary.

by Catherine Shaw

The city builder's Other is his creation, the city, and by extension the lives of all its inhabitants, past and present, including those who shaped his own life — his wife and son, in particular. Despite his remorse at the harm his knowledge has caused, he refuses to sever his links to the city and join the perfect democracy of the dead. He knows that his intellect is as capable of healing as it is of wounding, that he has the power to "stretch (his) experiences until they resemble others'." In the centuries of its existence, his city has experienced all kinds of collective shame — wars, murders, tortures — but its inhabitants have also known how to resist, to act in solidarity with their fellows, and to "begin work on

TIME...
...THE BAD MAGAZINE WITH AN ATTITUDE.

freedom by first demolishing their own obsessions.'' On this hope he pins his dreams for the uncertain future.

The final scene depicts the eruption of a New Year's Eve celebration in the street of the city. A hallucinatory carnival of freedom, it sweeps away all social and institutional constraints. Wandering among the joyous celebrants, the city builder exhorts them to ''destroy the silent night, reclaim the world with joy, banish routine... live, don't snuff out your senses.'' In a masked crowd, roles lose their meaning, and at last the city builder is able to discard the artificial privileges of his position and become simply another human being taking part in an all-out assault on taboos, decorum, and order launched by ''dazed vandals... on the march.'' Just as the narrative is about to vanish in a wild whirl of fireworks and dancers, the celebration is cut off abruptly. In the end, it was a short-lived festival, a ''revolution of trumpets and horns'' ushering in another year that will probably be no different than the last. The city builder will return to his job, brood about the past, and wait for death to claim him. Or else the celebration will inscribe itself into the city's collective memory, perhaps to return some day on a less ephemeral basis.

The plight of Konrad's city builder — and the dilemmas he faces — are similar to those confronted by all of us who are able to name our misery and even analyze its socio-economic origins, but who are prevented by our isolation and ingrained habits from developing a consequential opposition to it. Overwhelmed by the weight of circumstances despite our best intentions, we often repress our knowledge that our work, our time, and even our deepest thoughts contribute to an intolerable situation. Unless we use this knowledge to speak openly about the objects of our labor, and about the kind of system that benefits from them, we will be reduced to silence, or at best impotent rebellion answered only by general indifference. As George Konrad says, through his protagonist, ''Defy them all and say the word that takes your breath away (...) carve your ideas on tree-trunks, your freedom on blocks of ice.'' We must learn to take chances.
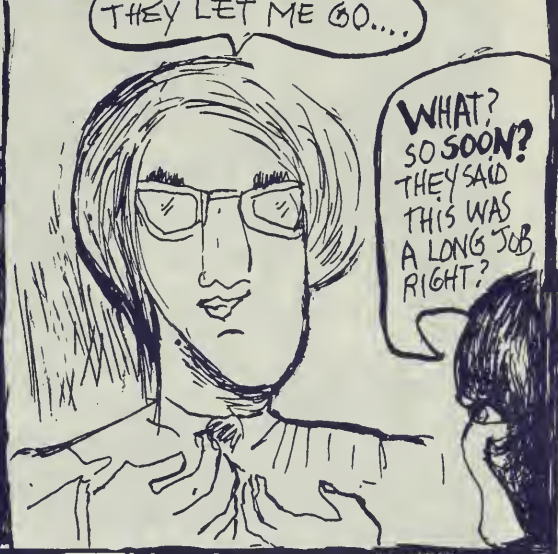
— *by Christopher Winks*

PROCESSED WORLD
THE MAGAZINE with a BAD ATTITUDE!

First-Ever Bankworker Strike in Mexico

Company unions, organized to contain and control bankworkers, are proving to be a bad investment for Mexican banks. Far from submitting, the workers have begun to mobilize — work stoppages, meetings and collective absenteeism are helping them consolidate their own organizations autonomously. Until now these organizations have not been officially recognized.

The banks' investment project consisted in a plan to enlist the 200,000 bankworkers in the country into the new unions (called ''sindicatos blancos'' in Mexico) through personnel departments of each bank. From one day to the next the personnel offices, formerly centers where unionists were punished and terminated, were converted into centers for union affiliation. The resources available to them are limitless.

This kind of ''unionism'' contrasted with what had been practiced until September 1, 1982. The old clandestine meetings, underground distribution of propaganda, and limited funds were undermined by the ''dynamic union militancy'' of the newly arrived leaders.

Converted into active unionists, the directors, bosses and managers of personnel departments improvised their unions with no risks and in great comfort: travel in the banks' airplanes (or in worst cases with commercial airlines), luxury hotels, convention centers, budgets for personal expenses, rented cars, and printing have been placed at the disposition of the directors. All of this was financed by the bank.

As if this were not enough, the legal representation of these unions was guaranteed. The Federal Tribunal of Arbitration and Conciliation addressed only the demands of the company unions. The demands of democrats, the bankworkers themselves, for recognition of their organization went unheeded. Nor were the internal pressures by workers on their locals of any use.

Despite their resources and five months of activity, the company unions have been unable to gain the support of those they claim to represent. This was clear on February 17, 1983, when the Union of Bankworkers of Credito Rural (Banrural) struck for several hours to demand the recognition (official registration) of their union.

With this action, bankworkers set a precedent in the history of Mexican banking. This was the first time bankworkers resorted to the oldest form of struggle of wage-workers: the strike.

In this case, Banrural workers had already formed an organization, even before the bank gave the green light on unionization. The management of the bank had already formed an organization, even before the bank gave the green light on unionization. The management of the bank had already dealt with the organization as a union. But neither the strike nor subsequent mobilizations stopped the Federal Tribunal for Conciliation and Arbitration from officially registering the *company* union.

Banrural, which has always given the peasants the worst possible deals,

has a long history of corruption and bad management. This lucrative relationship provided the resources which allowed the bank to channel over three million pesos to promote the company unions last November.

Instructions from bank directors to their personnel managers were precise. One memo from early November states: "By means of this notice I am bringing to your attention the need for the Human Relations Dept. to participate more directly in managing the unionization process of the workers of this institution."

Nonetheless, the strike by union members at Banrural challenged the effectiveness of employers' attempts to disperse, reduce, and destroy the bankworkers' actions to gain the right to union self-determination. Demonstrations of worker discontent at Banrural reveal that with regard to workers' rights, force, and not just reason must prevail if workers demands are to be met. In this way bankworkers create their own history. Neither the channeling of resources to promote company unions against them, nor the continual threats of dismissal will stop this process.

— from *Proceso*, Mexican weekly

Getting Even Through Embezzlement

Relatively few commit their crimes because they need the money, police and psychiatrists say. Whatever the motivation, authorities are reporting a near epidemic of female embezzlers. Among the women accused or convicted of bilking their Bay Area employers out of huge sums in the last year:

• A 37-year old cost-accounting manager of Nabisco, who admitted embezzling $2.1 million from her employer over the last 6½ years.

• A 33-year old loan officer at the Bank of America, charged with making loans totaling $650,000 to non-existent customers.

• A 52-year old accountant forged 375 checks from the general accounts fund of URS Corporation, for more than $2 million.

• A 35-year old senior secretary at the Bank of America, arrested on charges she embezzled more than $451,000 during the last five years.

"It's approaching an epidemic," said deputy U.S. attorney Peter Robinson. In 1982 he prosecuted more than 100 suspected embezzlers, about 80% of them women. About 50 such cases is normal for an entire year. Robinson's figures don't include hundreds of cases prosecuted by county district attorneys or the numerous embezzlement schemes uncovered by companies and settled quietly when the employees make full restitution.

A male embezzler, according to a criminal psychiatrist, typically steals because he needs the money to cover a dicey business deal, stock market speculation or a gambling habit. Women, on the other hand, are motivated by deep emotional and psycho-

'Secretary of the Year' On Probation as Thief

ROCKVILLE, Md., May 3 (UPI) — The woman selected by a branch of national company as "secretary of the year" had pleaded guilty to misappropriating funds from a former employer, officials said today.

The secretary, Kathy Cody, 29 years old, was placed on three years probation by the Montgomery County Circuit Court last week after admitting that she took $8,762 from the Gaithersburg Health Center, a court spokesman said.

Two days earlier Miss Cody was named "secretary of the year" by the Gaithersburg branch of Manpower Temporary Service, a large secretarial company.

The award said she "exceeded the highest level of proficiencies as a temporary."

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I Love My Job! ♡

logical needs, he says. "Except for the amount of money involved, it's similar to shoplifting — the psychological dynamics are the same."

Some women turn to embezzlement to strike back at employers. One woman, according to court records, told a court-appointed psychiatrist she bilked the URS Corporation out of $2 million because she felt abused and unappreciated after 25 years with the firm. "Good old dependable me, someone who would work overtime, late into the evening, on weekends or go anywhere I was needed," is how she described herself in a letter accompanying her probation report. "They made you feel as though they were doing you a favor to keep you," she said.
— SF Examiner 11/21/82

Workers' Representation: New Carrot/ Old Stick

On the factory floor, in the office, at school, and at home, increased "efficiency" is being sought by separating people from the conceptualization or control of their own activities. Once-skilled craftspeople are now reduced to button-pushing "technicians." Capitalist development seeks to make the whole of daily life fit the predictable and systemized reality of the techno-elite's circuit-board fantasies.

A number of trade-unionists, scholars and activists are addressing these authoritarian developments. The alternative being heard more and more is "workers' representation," which is offered to "democratize" production and undercut the dehumanizing way modern technologies are being implemented. The best part of this strategy is its implied critique of the hierarchical relationships that permeate society. The most radical visions of workers' self-management propose

sweeping social changes, changes that would give individuals decisive control over their social environment.

Unfortunately, the most visible proponents of workers' representation in the U.S. seem to be more concerned with the efficient integration of workers into the existing productive apparatus. This perspective is represented by the divergence between "Theory X" and "Theory Y" forms of management. (To a certain degree, this divergence parallels the difference between U.S. and Japanese management styles.)

According to "Y" theorists, people want to be productive and creatively involved in their work. If given the time, space, and resources, they will *get the job done* — faster, better, and cheaper than the workforce laboring under the watchful, authoritarian eye of Theory X management.

The movers and shakers of the hi-tech world are among the first in the ruling class to recognize that authoritarianism, whether chrome, computerized, or khaki, simply does-

– – inner-voice 6

n't work. A much more subtle and psychologically engaging form of social order is needed to maintain the ''free'' enterprise system, and that form is ''workers' control.'' Theory Y, then, has gotten its biggest test in the hi-tech world of computers, especially in software production. Here it has been found to work quite well, especially in conjunction with profit- and stock-sharing plans, whereby the workers are able to ''invest'' their sweat and get a small piece of the company.

Worker ownership and self-management, while they can end overt authority regulating your work, necessarily lead to the internalization of management concerns, of the problems of running a successful business. Grow or perish, the eternal imperative of capitalism, comes to dominate the plans and purposes of the participants in any ''alternative'' business, as they necessarily seek to become more like other businesses.

Self-managed workers must perform at competitive levels of productivity (i.e. self-exploitation) for the company to succeed. Also, workers' control cannot guarantee job security. If the self-managed company doesn't reduce the labor component of its production costs through automation, the workers will necessarily have to work much harder to keep up with increases in productivity industry-wide.

A May 11th *New York Times* article about worker ownership illustrates this with some questions worker-owners face: What is the competition doing? How can the company compete with the Japanese and other foreign nations? Can wage increases be made now? If we forego wage increases, will that help the stock price? If dividends are raised, the stock price might go up. But the cost of raising the dividends might be a smaller wage increase. Yet if the stock price goes up, the company's credit rating might improve, making it able to borrow money at a lower interest rate for working capital and new plant and machinery investments.''

No matter how ''fairly'' paid or free from petty authoritarianism self managed workers may be, the basics that comprise their workday don't change. Telephones, assembly lines, and computer work stations become the new supervisors. Workers' control does give workers a greater stake in the company that pays their wages but it does not provide any control over the nature of the work itself, *why* it needs to be done or for whom. The existing division of labor, and the existing choices of *what work is worth doing*, go completely unchallenged by strategies advocating greater worker participation in production and management. One of the major ironies of workers' representation ideology is that in the U.S. it has been most discussed and implemented in areas of least real social utility — insurance, business software, and the ''service'' sector generally. Would people really derive more creative fulfillment from processing memos about dividends if they self-managed this work? Additionally, workers' control within companies doesn't change a system that generates more and more useless work at the same time as leaving more and more people unemployed.

While workers' self-management blurs the lines of hierarchy in a given enterprise, it leaves the basic social arrangement intact. This is as true of ''socialist'' countries like Yugoslavia or Cuba, as it is of ''self-managed'' companies here. Self-management schemes allow workers to plan the details of executing their jobs, but the fundamental choices are still made higher up by corporate or state planners. The planners, in turn, make decisions in response to the pressures of the world market, i.e. global capitalism. Besides nobody expects the really large blocks of capital to become self-managed — General Mo-

tors, for instance, or the USSR. It is not merely work that needs to be "self-managed," but the whole of social life. And not *this* work or *this* life, but their complete transformation.

— *Nasty Secretary Liberation Front*

IN CASE OF NUCLEAR ATTACK

1. REMAIN CALM

2. Avert Eyes From Flash

3. Brace For Blast

4. Duck and Cover / Place Newspaper Over Head

5. Reserve Medical attention For High Priority Evacuees

6. Have Food and Water For Several Weeks of isolation

7. Comfort the Dying

8. Isolate corpses to prevent spread of disease

This was originally done as a poster, designed to perfectly fit BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) car emergency evacuation information instructions. Approximately 30 people simultaneously boarded BART one early morning last winter and placed the poster in countless trains and stations. Rumor has it that the placement of these bogus notices continues at random to this day.

Workers' Controlled or Out-of-Control?

The main criticism I have of PW is its focus on what *isn't* revolutionary — without suggesting any positive project that might make things revolutionary. Mostly, readers get a singular analysis of what *won't* fundamentally change their lives. The 'Workers' Representation' leaflet continues this tradition by only analyzing how workers' control is recuperated by capitalism. Following the same non-dialectical reasoning, as a self-managed publication, PW is a new scheme to placate office dissidents from translating their fantasies into radical practices.

That simply isn't the case and neither is the notion that worker self-management will "necessarily lead to the internalization of management concerns." Such a one-dimensional view hides the real history of the flip side — how workers get out-of-control when they develop the power to do so. There are many historical moments which illustrate that when *workers with a radical consciousness* obtain some self-managed power, they externalize their own interests rather than internalizing management concerns. Among numerous worldwide examples, the Polish uprisings of the 80's are quite pertinent. Here is a strategy of revolt that utilizes self-management not only at the workplace or as leverage against bureaucratic domination — but to fundamentally change the organization of production and distribution. The call for (and initial development of) the 'active strike' exemplifies this. The point of the Polish 'active strike' was to sidestep state control by making production freely organized and utilized by those workers and communities affected. Clearly, whether workers' control is a modern way to maintain capitalism or the breeding ground for larger rebellion largely depends on *who* creates the control.

When workers' participation develops from the leaders in the modern silicon world of microprocessing, the terrain for opposition is severely limited. One of the biggest problems is that the social background and relation to power for many white collar workers gives them a real interest in preserving capitalism and their position in it. But even if one *only* analyzes this sector, workers' control can translate into a number of possibilities. One is the sophistry of 'participation' toward "...the efficient integration of workers into the existing productive apparatus." But another possibility (among many quite unintended by the ruling class) is the replacement of the obedient worker with someone whose experience of greater power at the workplace engenders a desire for more control in all aspects of life. Rising expectations tend to cultivate even higher demands. Indeed, 'quality of life' is precisely the new demand by the hi-tech worker/managers. And the demand isn't just for the oxymoron of 'rewarding work,' but for an integrated package that includes: quality education, ecological preservation, and meaningful community.

These demands for qualitative fulfillment at and beyond the workplace have put management huns in a bind about organizational strategy. Particularly in the U.S., they realize workers are increasingly hard to placate. Theory Y is as much an unwanted response to that bind as the ceaseless drive for production efficiency. To the extent the system cannot meet the new qualitative demands (e.g. toxic contamination of drinking water in the Silicon Valley or the psychological stress generally intensified in the micro-technologized workplace) these workers will be compelled to seek more radical, larger solutions.

But if one looks beyond the hi-tech

strata, which often aspire and are trained to climb the managerial ladder and 'buy' the consumer package, the prospects become quite a bit more interesting. Of particular concern are those workers who have even less power *and* engage in socially useful production. Why wouldn't they derive creative fulfillment from the self-management of food and energy production, health care, or other human services? They may not *now* if they are aware of the global system dominating their lives.

But for the majority who are forced to work to gain *any* power over their lives, workers' control must be an integral part in abolishing the socially unnecessary appendages of production-for-profit. A politics that only analyzes how workers' control *can* be employed to perpetuate business-as-usual simply is not dialectical. It negates those moments when the whole of social life has been radically changed through such organization. Is there no model for productive organization that isn't exploitative?

That is a question PW has never attempted to answer. I think it is important to seek such answers because they lead to the larger drama created by the limitations of workers' self-management. For instance, the need for workers' control to be linked with the *popular control of community* — whether it be based on geography, race, gayness, feminism, etc. As radicals we (hopefully) optimize the liberatory potential in all situations. Regarding workers' control, we should settle for nothing less than a workplace and society that practices direct democracy through general assemblies with instantly recallable delegates. Perhaps then, freely-determined activity will obliterate the age-old custom of forced work.

— *by Whitson of The Motleys*

"This chair ain't goin' nowhere!"

Asleep On The Job?

An assistant professor at the Harvard Medical School, Charles A. Czeisler, in testimony before a Congressional hearing, cited studies showing people are capable of appearing to be awake and functioning while their minds are asleep as measured by brain waves. "This failure to cope with human factors may be the Achilles heel of modern industrial and military technology," he said.

"Researchers in Sweden have documented that train drivers fall asleep by brain wave criteria on one out of every six night runs. Nonetheless, the train drivers continue throughout such 'naps' to keep full pressure on the accelerator pedal, remaining unresponsive to red stop signals." Czeisler said the ability to stay awake and alert at times the human body clock says the person should be sleeping — at 5 a.m. for example — bears little relationship to how much sleep the person has had.

The purpose of the hearing was to accumulate a body of research that would be available to employers wanting to adjust their work schedules to the biological clock as much as possible.

— Associated Press

TALES OF TOIL: A BIKE MESSENGER WITH A BAD ATTITUDE!

I picked up my last paycheck on Friday. Afterwards I passed by the usual crowd of bike messengers hanging outside Harvey's 5th Street Market, buying beers on credit and shooting the shit at the end of a working day. I turned the corner and entered an alley, where I ran into a young black woman, unkempt and shabbily dressed. She practically grabbed me for a handout, and someone to spill to:

"I was a good biker. I could fly — do 40 tags a day. And then they fired me — they fired me! I went in this afternoon, but they wouldn't hire me back. Nobody will hire me, and here I am in this alley now, reduced to... to PANHANDLING!" She screamed the last word, and went on. "I need a job! I'm going back to that motherfucker and say, 'I'll kill you motherfucker if you don't hire me back — I'll kill you...'" She raved on with spite, kicking and screaming. It was useless for me to stand there with her longer. There was nothing I could do for her.

I myself could fly on occasion, and make pretty good money at it when I wanted to. Yet when I was working, I felt oppressed by a different kind of poverty — a poverty of spirit, of time trapped. I worked over 40 hours a week, with plenty of unpaid duties. I would get home after dark with no energy left for anything else. It was life on the run, without medical coverage, expendable, unprotected, easy prey to any maniac behind the wheel of a Cadillac or MUNI bus — any driver who doesn't believe in turn signals or decides to open his car door at the wrong moment. I was vulnerable to horizontal showers in rainy

MORNING

I race death through the streets,
bicycling the blurred thread of self
between buses and taxis,
swerving away sharply

from the harried rage
of private cars idling to work
not of our choosing,

the illusion of careers
tailspinning us all
down the narrow funnel
of Market Street.

Friday. The weariness of the week
brittles our bones, we greet each other
with the smallest "Hello"s,

while the word processors anxiously
print
processed words not ours
on non-stop forms
of someone else's design,
black and white, black and white...

Morning. I've outraced death today,
my goal, this blank screen...

by David Steinberg

season, and ticket-happy cops who hate bike messengers. I endured the hatred of men in 3-piece suits who depend on bike messengers and yet look upon them as something less than human. I challenge any of them to try being a bike messenger for even one day!

I had never seen bike messengers before I had my first job in San Francisco, as a legal file clerk/part-time secretary in the Financial District. I was fascinated and inspired by crazy long-hairs in propellered baseball caps, howling loud and long as they hurtled down hills. I saw a subculture in action as they zipped about the city on their one-speeds. I *wanted* to be a bike messenger!

I landed a job with Fly By Night Messenger Service in June. There were days it was such fun that it hardly seemed like work, but after half a year and months into the rainy season, I lost most of my enthu-

siasm. I felt I was wasting my days, chained to a dangerous dead-end job, and I knew I could do a lot more creative things with my time.

The comforting delusion that I was at least making an honest living was amusingly shattered for me one day in November when I was dispatched to a law office in 1 Embarcadero Center for a return trip going to a copy service and back. A matronly secretary handed me a manila envelope marked with strident instructions for the copy service: that this was the third try, to color-xerox it, and could they please get it right this time. She also handed me a five dollar bill. I arrived at the copy service in the basement of a building on California Street and perused through magazines while waiting. I overheard snatches of conversation from the back room — that these were transcripts, so both sides needed to be registered perfectly. That seemed odd, and I asked the woman behind the counter why transcripts would need to be color-xeroxed. She confided to me that they were the lady's daughter's high school transcripts, and a couple of grades needed to be "changed," and that color-xerox was the only way to duplicate it to look authentic.

"In other words it's called cheating," I said.

"She keeps sending it back to us, bugging us to get it right. We're making money off it, so why should we complain?" she answered.

I felt like a partner in crime. I got the completed transcripts, had the tag signed, and was off with the return. In the elevator, to satisfy my own curiosity, I opened the unsealed envelope and had myself a look. Sure enough, two tiny "C" 's were pasted on the original transcript. The copy looked perfect, as if it had been printed that way. I peeled the C's off, revealing two "F" 's underneath. For a moment, I thought of aborting the mission, but realized I couldn't be

that moralistic either. I was part of the scam, and had an extra five dollar bill in my pocket. It was such a mild scam, but symptomatic nonetheless, and I was thinking, "I don't even *want* to know what's inside the rest of the innocuous-looking manila envelopes I deliver!"

Like most delivery services, Fly By Night did not pay its bikers an hourly wage. Pay was based on a strict commission — a percentage of the delivery cost. That meant having to bust your ass to make any kind of livable wage. When you tried your bloody best to go fast and make money, everything and everybody seemed to be doing their best to slow you down. In such situations I occasionally lost my temper (and perhaps supported certain people's assumptions that bike messengers are indeed something other than human.)

For instance, I have the distinction of having been banned from the Pacific Telephone Company building at 666 Folsom Street. PT&T offices are a bike messenger's nightmare. Each "room" is like a labyrinth: a whole floor of partitions, each bearing a different room number. Room 500-F might be next to room 512-G, but nobody can tell you where any of the other room numbers are. I was in a hurried mood on a busy afternoon, and I had to pick up a super-hot payroll delivery on the 8th floor at 666 Folsom, rush it over to another PT&T building on 3rd Street, get it signed and then rush the return back over to 666, nonstop. Most phone company buildings make you sign in and out; a cumbersome process if one is in a hurry. I signed in and out at 666, flew, and was back at 666 in 5 minutes with the return, and refused to sign in again. The lobby guard, a short, grouchy man with a pencil-moustache, was furious that I actually just walked right by him, completely disregarding the rules.

"Come back here! You have to sign into the building!"

"I just signed in 5 minutes ago, and I'm not going to sign in again. This is a super-rush that has to get there yesterday!"

"Well if you signed out last time, you have to sign in again!" I was struck with the absurd logic that if I had not signed out the last time, I would not have to sign in again this time. I ignored him and boarded the elevator, and he immediately gave chase, stopping the elevator before it could move. Another bouncer-type appeared out of nowhere to assist him in removing me from the elevator, where I stood defiant and a few secretaries stood surprised, their routine interrupted. The guard led me back to his station, towards the door, and said, "You're never allowed back in this building again!"

I laughed back at him. "That's fine — I hate this building anyway, and would never come here if I didn't have to."

"By your conduct," he stormed, "you're showing that you have no respect for the phone company and its employees!"

"You're damn right. I have no

"Whaddya mean I can't see what's going on around me?"

respect for the phone company at all!'' How I had always wanted to say that! I thrust the package at him and said, ''Since you won't let me upstairs, you'll have to do the delivery yourself. They're in room 880. Get hot!—They're dying on it!''

On another day, truth serum ran deep when I went into Crank Litho, one of Fly By Night's biggest accounts. Crank got anything it wanted: till 5:15 p.m. to call in overtimes, instead of 5:00, and a handsome price break of $1.25 per delivery instead of the $2.00 we normally charged. They generated enough business so that Fly By Night could turn a tidy profit, but we messengers were the ones getting screwed. We even had to chronicle our own oppression by adding the price of the delivery to the tag, which we never had to do for anyone else. Most of us bikers resented this insult — I remember that one guy, whenever dispatched to Crank, would always emit an obnoxious foghornish ''Rog!'' over the radio, instead of the customary ''10-4.''

One day I showed up to work wearing a large button I had fashioned, that read ''I ♥ Crank Litho's Prices!'', and managed to cause quite an uproar in their office without even saying a word. Later that day when I was back, the president of the company pulled me aside and said, ''I would appreciate it if you don't wear that button anymore.'' I smiled, and calmly removed the button.

On the return trip, I encountered the man next in charge (who handled the business end of the account with Fly By Night), and he shit a brick when he saw the delivery cost — $11.25 for an overtime rush — and at first refused to sign the tag. He called up my office and bitched for a few minutes, then hung up and turned to me. ''I'll sign it, but I'm going to take it up with your boss in the morning. How do you figure your price for overtime deliveries? Your regular price is $1.25—''

I cut him off, sensing the opportunity. ''—Our regular price is $2.00. You guys are getting a break at $1.25, which I think is scandalous, but that's from my point of view as a biker.'' He looked surprised, yet surprised me by saying that he could understand it from my point of view. Of course, not another word was ever said about the matter.

Around that same time I knew my days as a bike messenger were numbered. My attitude was garnering numerous complaints from miffed customers, and I started taking days off to refund my sanity. The taste of life off the treadmill just made me more dissatisfied. The rainy season was becoming endless, and my favorite dispatcher was now out on bike; obviously the result of a power-struggle. The boss had frequently complained that he was being much too close with the bikers, telling us things about the company and about our paychecks that we weren't supposed to know. I had fond memories of late evenings when he was behind the boards, when a few of us would have our own little ''proletarian office parties,'' when the office was ours and we spent hours bitching about the bosses, or got crazy and sent me out with bike and radio, and dispatched me out for coffee and donuts. Somebody had to pull the plug soon. My boss got to it before I did, and I was fired.

About a week before I got the jerk to the big desk in the back office and the ax came down, I had taken an unsolicited day off — it was storming and I felt miserable. The next day, a rare sunny one I arrived early, feeling better and ready to roll. The boss, trying to put the fear of authority into me, said, ''I'm not ready to *let* you roll. I haven't decided what I'm going to do with you! Come back tomorrow.'' (It was too obvious to me what he would have done with me had it been raining as usual.) I figured

myself fired, and wasted no time getting out of there. Walking up Kearny Street that same morning, with a spring in my step, enjoying the sun without having to "get hot"; I felt like somebody had unlocked the door of my jail cell, woke me gently and said, "You're free to go."
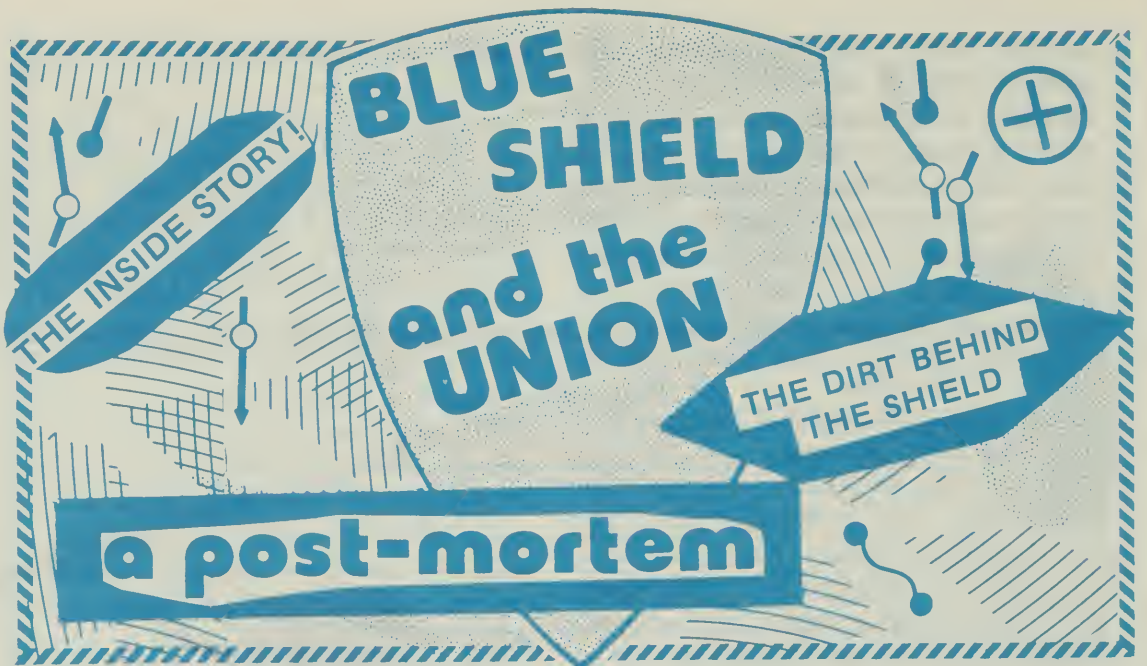
— *by Zoe Noe*

Author's note: Some of the names have been changed to protect the guilty. But it's not that I wanted to single anybody out or hide the truth — that they're all Fly By Night. —ZN

POETRY IN MOTION (a geography primer)

I got off the bike.
I took a journey up Kearny,
got weary by Geary,
drank a beer on Spear,
smoked a joint on North Point,
and lost my way on Clay.
I'm looking handsome on Sansome
and feeling wholesome on Folsom.
I met a coward on Howard
who lives in a garrison on Harrison,
and a sailor on Taylor
who lives in a gutter on Sutter.
We drank tonics on Masonic,
met the Hulk on Polk,
who was straight on Haight
but turned gay on Bay.
We met a witch on Ritch
who reads the Tarot on DeHaro—
and tried to save us on Davis.
I saw a politician on Mission
who made a speech on Beach
about a welfare cheat on Treat
who uses food stamps to buy wine on Pine.
I saw a Giant on Bryant
who teamed up w/ a 49er on Steiner,
& went around beating up Dodgers on Rodgers
and Raiders on Shrader
(not to mention Lakers on Baker
and A's on Hayes).
You met a whore on Dore
who tried to rent'cha on Valencia;
I used to ball her on Waller,
& we'd fuck some on Bluxome,
& she would give great moans on Jones,
& would always come on Drumm.
I remember you well — you drove a bus on Russ
until it lost a wheel on Beale,
& then you used to park it on Market.
"Did I get your package to you quick enough, sir?"
"Thanks, Zoe Noe, You're humble and lovable."
"Fuck you, sir!"

by Zoe Noe

R. Godollei — 1983

BLUE SHIELD and the UNION

THE INSIDE STORY!

THE DIRT BEHIND THE SHIELD

a post-mortem

Being a temporary office worker occasionally gives me interesting opportunities to learn about the inner workings of the corporate world. I recently finished a temporary assignment at Blue Shield of California where I had the opportunity to learn some very interesting things indeed.

Blue Shield was one of the first companies in San Francisco with unionized clerical workers - represented by the Office and Professional Employees International Union Local #3 (OPEIU). In September 1982, however, Blue Shield announced plans to move operations out of San Francisco and, in the process, fire its entire clerical staff and break the union.

From December, 1980 to April, 1981, the OPEIU led a strike against Blue Shield. *Processed World* #1 included a critique of the Blue Shield situation: "OPEIU is affiliated with the AFL-CIO, and it pledges allegiance to the labor laws of the U.S. in its constitution. These laws impose severe limits on what workers and unions can do to achieve their demands (for instance, it is illegal to occupy a workplace). Their primary tactic in this confrontation with Blue Shield is the strike....Out on the picket lines, however, workers no

longer control the machines and data banks that are in their control daily when they are on the job. This divests them of the tremendous leverage they would have if they stayed in the offices and prevented their replacement by scabs."

Based on files I saw, memos I typed and conversations I overheard, I can offer the following confirmation and elaboration of PW's critique of the OPEIU approach.

Overt and Covert Reasons for the Relocation

Blue Shield is in some ways unique among service sector industries. Technically, it is a non-profit organization. That fact, combined with the competitiveness of the health insurance industry, means that Blue Shield has little opportunity to create "working capital" which can be invested in long-range plans or operational improvements. "Doing it as cheap as possible" is the corporate philosophy. This is typical of the non-profit management mentality. No matter how liberal their programs may be, non-profits provide notoriously bad wages and working conditions.

So Blue Shield grew, and data processing and clerical functions be-

came increasingly complex, the various clerical departments multiplied without rationalization or planning. The whole realm of "management support" functions is nearly absent at Blue Shield — training, operations standards, work-flow monitoring, etc. The clerical jobs themselves are so complex as to defy belief. Blue Shield seems to have finally recognized this by allowing for more than three months of training for the employees to be hired at the new location. The current clerical staff never received training this extensive and if they had their jobs would have been more tolerable.

As a result of this spontaneous, unplanned growth, Blue Shield management literally did not know what was going on within their own bureaucracy. The knowledge of how to process claims and all the other paperwork was in the heads of the workers, undocumented in any other form. A good number of these workers are Asian and Black women and from Blue Shield's point of view, they have a "communication problem" because, for many, English is not a native language. So the critical storehouse of operational information that Blue Shield workers had was even more inaccessible to management.

Blue Shield finally appreciated this vulnerability at the time of the strike in 1981. Consequently, the motivation behind the relocation has to be seen as not merely to break the union. It is also part of a concerted effort to establish full management control over clerical production and thereby end the dependence of management on worker knowledge. One part of this involves more training, supervision, and standardization of procedures. A second part, of course, involves getting rid of the current workers.

But in this light, the relocation has to be looked at more closely. Gaining control over clerical functions means that the "communication problem"

has to be overcome. That is, of course, communication FROM Blue Shield TO workers. Blue Shield needs workers who will receive and conform to management controls, who will follow management's standardized procedures, and not their own. Non-native users of English are not only unfamiliar with specialized corporate jargon, they may be equally unfamiliar with corporate thinking patterns. That is, the skills of abstract, objective thinking — what is involved in translating years of job experience into standard procedural language —

If only my kids were as predictable as this machine...
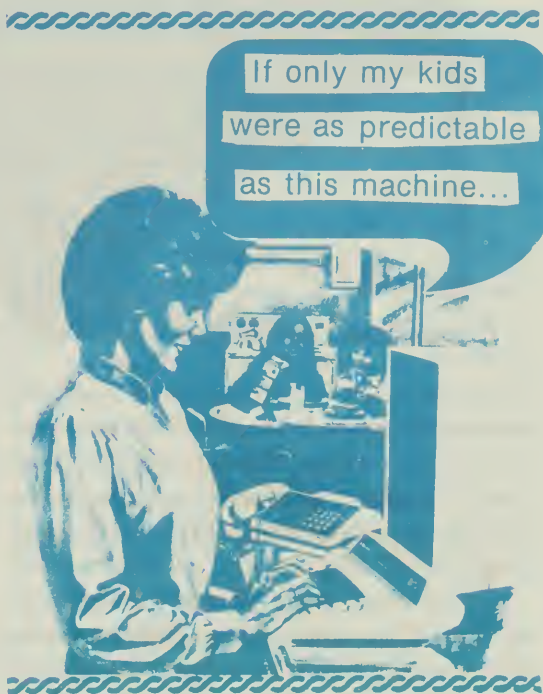
may not come easily to those who have not spent 16 years in the American system of education. A Third World clerical worker may know very well how to do a job, but not have the particular language skills to put it into words or writing.

So addressing the "communication problem" boils down to getting rid of workers who cannot conform to this use of the English language. Which of course means minority workers. Blue Shield wouldn't necessarily have to fire all minority workers if it was willing to pay higher wages to attract non-white workers who've been

through the American public education system. But Blue Shield wants to retain its ''cheap as possible'' philosophy and so has addressed the language problem without paying higher wages.

To do that, Blue Shield had to find a white labor market willing to accept its wages. This is why Lakeport, a resort town on Clear Lake, has been chosen as the site of the relocation. Blue Shield's intent is clear. While there are bigger California cities with a largely white work force (say, Sacramento or Redding), only a small town could provide both white workers AND a depressed level of wage demand.

Blue Shield's relocation is not only motivated by an anti-union ideology, it is clearly racist as well. I found this conclusion continually reinforced during my time at Blue Shield by managers who made references like ''THE Filipinos'' and told bald jokes based on mimicking Asian accents.

How the Union Helped Blue Shield Bust the Union

''We learned a lot during the strike'' is the comment I heard Blue Shield managers make.

What Blue Shield learned was all the detailed job knowledge that had previously been ''in the heads'' of the workers. Blue Shield used the four months of the strike to begin developing a management system to end this dependence. Without the strike, Blue Shield would never have been able to fire its workers and move out of San Francisco because until the strike Blue Shield managers had no idea how to run their own business.

The OPEIU never seemed to appreciate this source of worker leverage, nor did it understand how the introduction of rationalized management controls would undermine the workers' position. In fact, the union's own bureaucratic approach contri-

buted to the standardization process. Unionization provided both the incentive and the means for Blue Shield to rid itself of its SF workers.

Even after the relocation was announced the union might have been able to obtain concessions by adopting a stand of "non-cooperation" that would have made it more difficult for Blue Shield management to extract all the information needed to effectively set up operations in the new location. But, needless to say, it did not do so. Nevertheless, some workers on their own are apparently engaging in uncoordinated forms of non-cooperation — records and data are being intentionally "fouled up." Blue Shield managers blame the union, of course, but that's not only unfair to the union — which has never endorsed such tactics — but unfair to the workers as well, who have undertaken these activities on their own creative initiative, in defiance of both management and union authorities.

The Taboo Issue

Another source of worker leverage was also left unexplored by the OPEIU. The same poor management (by corporate standards) that allows workers at Blue Shield to consolidate operational knowledge, also results in fiscal losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars every year (according to estimates I overheard). In the absence of adequate controls, losses due to errors and fraud are rampant.
For most corporations today, controlling quality, costs and losses is the "profit edge." One would think that Blue Shield's penny-pinching managers would shudder at these losses. But in fact, their own "cheap as possible" philosophy is the cause of these losses.
The union might have been able to do something with this issue, by taking advantage of the unique position the workers had because of their knowledge of operations. Today,

many companies are using the Japanese "quality circle" programs to tap the knowledge of their workers by teaching them a few basic management techniques that they can use to solve on-the-job problems. What if the Blue Shield union took this initiative themselves, retaining worker control of job knowledge by introducing quality circle concepts itself? The concession from management would have to be the distribution of recovered losses in the form of wages and benefits to workers, and, possibly, worker representation on Blue Shield's board of directors.
That, of course, raises the debate over worker self-management. Rather than delve into that here, I will just point out one way the issue of Blue Shield mis-management could have been used by the OPEIU that circumvents the self-management issue.
Normally consumers could care less whether a company is well managed or not when they decide to buy one of its products. But in the case of health insurance, consumers are aware that the cost of their coverage is based on risk tables which are pretty much standard for the insurance industry, PLUS the cost of administrative overhead. This suggests that Blue Shield customers would have just as big a stake in seeing losses controlled as do the underpaid workers of Blue Shield. If the union addressed this issue, it would be aligning itself directly with consumer interests and raise the possibility of a new alliance that increased worker leverage.
But of course, the OPEIU took a typically short-sighted stand in regards to the whole area of quality control and management productivity plans. That is, they simply opposed them outright. This position pretty much eliminates workers from playing a role in this crucial area of their jobs — it falls, be default, into the prerogatives of management. And inevitably management will find ways of preventing losses, and keep the

profits for themselves, leaving workers with the yoke of ever increasing supervision and productivity standards over which they have no control.

Conclusions

Few companies allow workers the opportunities Blue Shield did for gaining control of operational knowledge. But the Blue Shield experience suggests that the arbitrary division of labor in corporations can be to workers' advantage any time it removes management from essential details of how to do the work. This was the point made in Processed World #1: whatever power workers have today derives from the control they have over production while on the job. Within the bureaucracies of the service sector, this means the knowledge workers have of the often complex clerical and data handling work they do. When managers lack this knowledge they are dependent on clerical workers. Workers should be exploring ways of maximizing this power, treating information itself as a source of leverage within the corporations.

The real nature of corporate "communications" — the jargon, policies, procedures, manuals and training programs — needs to be understood as a means of subverting worker power by instituting a form of language control — which is to say, thought control. When this occurs in the context of culturally diverse office workers, this has to be understood as inherently racist. Management preoccupation with the "language barrier" translates into the "race barrier" and "communication problems" mean "race problems." If racism were not involved, corporations might deal with cultural diversity by hiring *more* minority managers and supervisors and increasing language capabilities throughout their organizations, "covering all the bases" as it were. But racism is, in fact, a clear

motivation behind the enforcement of language and communications standards in the corporate world. Fighting these forms of social control on the job is not just a matter of liberal civil rights ideals. Language control not only discriminates against minority workers, it directly undermines worker power. Unions could fight racism and build worker leverage at the same time by putting the "language barrier" issue on their agendas.

The possibility of alliances betwene consumers and service sector workers deserves consideration. People consider things like health insurance, checking accounts, insurance, drivers' licenses, and telephones to be necessities. But there's little "freedom of choice" in obtaining these services. They're typically provided by massive, unresponsive bureaucracies. And these same bureaucratic organizations create alienating and exploitive job conditions for clerical workers.

Above all, the case of Blue Shield reveals the need for a new approach to organizing office workers. The strike tool is no longer effective when modern communications make it possible for companies to locate clerical operations anywhere. *Processed World's* critique of the Blue Shield strike stands — a new kind of worker leverage within the corporate world must be found — and used.

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A brief postscript from Lucius Cabins, author of past Blue Shield coverage:

There are a few important differences between the analysis Debra Wittley makes and the one I made in PW #'s 1 and 2. First of all, I think that offering strategic advice to the unions is hopeless (especially to OPEIU which has been unusually myopic with respect to this case). DW is right when she says "a new kind of worker leverage within the corporate world must be found — and used,"
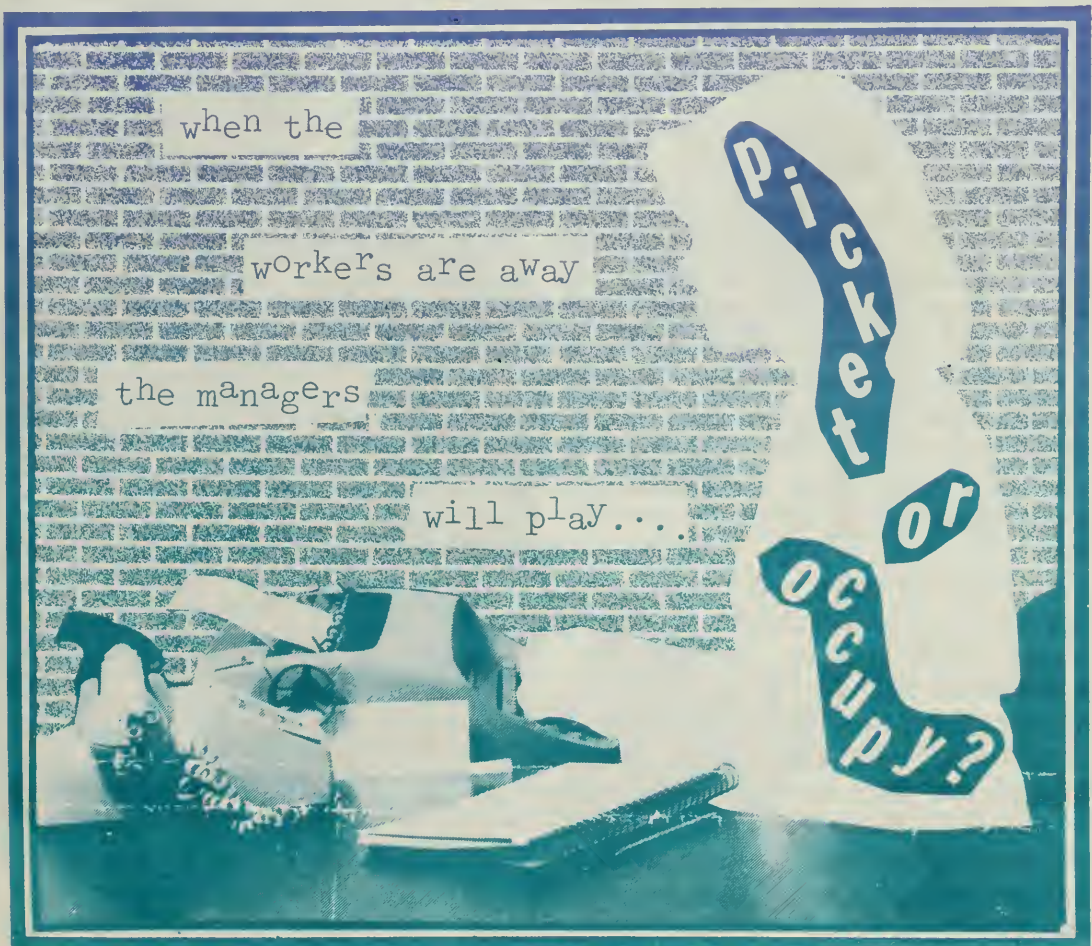
but PW has featured a number of articles in different issues which attempted to describe the role of unions in bolstering the status quo and preventing new forms of leverage from being developed. I don't expect unions to be of much help to any office workers interested in seriously undermining the domination we experience daily. What's more, as the Blue Shield case amply demonstrates, most unions cannot even guarantee "the basics" like protecting jobs and improving work conditions.

Wittley also suggests that self-management through employee representation on the Board of Directors and the establishment of Quality Circles might have improved working life for Blue Shield workers. Although putting an end to the authoritarianism of managers is a real need, the fact remains that the actual work they do is inherently useless (the processing of health insurance data) and no kind of self-management can change the purpose of Blue Shield in society. For a somewhat longer discussion of the problems of the self-management strategy, see "Workers' Representation: New Carrot/Old Stick" in this issue.

Finally, Wittley dismisses the strike weapon categorically, but there's more than one kind of strike. There is an important distinction between legal strikes, which disempower workers by taking them outside on picket lines and separating them from the production they otherwise control, and the extra-legal possibilities of wildcat and occupational strikes, under the control of the workers themselves.

Nevertheless, Wittley's article is an excellent expose of the all too typical, racist practices of corporate management. Thanks for sending it in.

when the workers are away the managers will play.... picket or occupy?

FIRST STEPS

Paul wanted to do right. No matter how radically he talked with his own friends, and this was quite radical indeed, he no sooner got in an office than he felt he was in First Grade again.

"Good morning Angela," he'd say cheerfully.

"Good morning Paul," his supervisor would reply in a breathy voice.

Then Paul would march briskly to his desk which was lined up next to all the other desks just like in First Grade, only now the desks were bigger and had typewriters or word processors on them instead of inkstands. Without another word, Paul would remove his suitcoat, fold it carefully, place it in the lower left drawer and begin typing insurance forms.

Every week or so a birthday party was held in the lunchroom to break the tedium and on St. Patrick's Day, anyone who didn't wear green was in danger of being pinched by Suzi, a simple but jovial woman who came through the office several times a day to pick up mail deliver policies that had been requested. Paul liked Suzi and she seemed pleased that he joked with her.

PAUL: "I bet you just come by my desk to steal my paperclips."

SUZI: "That's right. I sell 'em on the Black Market."

At first it was fun. Owing to a rich aunt's will, Paul hadn't needed to work much since college. He still didn't but was doing so to raise money to publish a gay literary magazine. This was what pulled him from the pleasant isolation of his bookish apartment and from the Cafe Flore where he like to argue politics every afternoon.

Could Paul Buell, poet and member of the Radical Faeries Collective, successfully face the challenge of San Francisco's Financial District? Could he prove to himself, if not his Dad, that it was simply by choice, not inability, that he wasn't a full-time wage earner? Worker! How Romantic

22 and tied up for life

the word sounded to this dreamy-eyed man of 25. Not only would he raise money for his mag, he would make alliances with other workers and radicalize the workplace. That's what he thought at first anyway.

The first job Paul got was at a Market Research Company. The pay was only $4 an hour for interviewers bu the 3 to 9 shift left him time to hit the bars at night to unwind yet wake up in time to read and write for several hours before heading to work. His co-workers were students, hippies, aspiring comedians or writers like himself, a bright and interesting lot. The tiny cubicles they phoned from gave the illusion of privacy, though Mrs. Smith could tap into their lines at any time to make sure they were conducting the interviews properly.

The ethics of nosing into people's private lives bothered Paul at first but as Jim, the friend who'd found him the job, argued: ''People can always hang up. Besides, you often get old folks grateful for anyone to talk to.'' This was fine for surveys on tennis shoes or beer but a survey on Three Mile Island troubled Paul deeply.

Think back to when you first heard of the nuclear accident at TMI. What did you feel? Were you angry... scared? How did you feel when you learned the officials had lied about the accident?

''We know this is a sensitive topic,'' Mrs. Smith droned during the briefing, enunciating slowly as if speaking to a class of retarded children. ''So make sure you ask all questions *exactly* as written on your sheets. Don't try to influence the respondents in any way whatsoever. ''Who paid for this survey?'' Paul asked.

''Just say you work for Bond

CAUGHT IN THE JOB SQUEEZE

Research and that this is a bona fide public opinion research project. Say you don't know who the client is. If the respondent persists, tell them to call the number at the top of your sheet.''

''But who *is* the client?'' Paul insisted. At this, Mr. Hoffsteader, the office manager, interrupted angrily.

''The door swings both ways Buell. If ya can't follow instructions, get out!''

Paul had seen Hoffsteader can up to five interviewers in one night. One woman was fired for laughing, another for being 15 minutes late. An interviewer who'd been with Bond for three years was fired for asking for a raise. So Paul bided his time and shut up.

The first interview went smoothly enough but during the second, the elderly widow Paul was questioning broke down in tears. ''I didn't worry so much about myself,'' she sobbed. ''But I kept thinking about my two little grandchildren. Even if they lived, what kind of life would they have? Then, when they had us set to evacuate and I didn't know if I could ever return hom or not — then they told me I couldn't take my little dog with me. I was just sick.''

Even more disturbing was the response of an undertaker. ''The govt. folks took us aside and told what we could expect if there was a meltdown. It was godawful, a million times worse than anything they told the public. Fifty thousand might die immediately, they said, and we'd have to scoop 'em up in plastic bags. I tell ya, soon as I get enough money saved I'm movin' my whole family to Florida.''

But most astonishing were people's answers to the second part of the questionnaire. Despite how scared and angry most Harrisburg residents felt, over half said nuclear plants shouldn't be shut down. ''We need the power and just hafta accept the risks of living in the modern age.'' Many added, ''I'm a Christian. When my time comes I'm ready.''

Paul couldn't understand how people could be so fatalistic, so schizophrenic. He decided he couldn't work

for these "unknown clients" anymore. They were using such surveys to manipulate people to act against their own survival. He wanted to scream at Hoffsteader and Mrs. Smith "You're no better than Nazi bureaucrats!" but he couldn't muster a sound. If he did, terrible things would happen. *He* would be seen as the bad one, the one who caused trouble, the one who couldn't play by the rules. What he most deeply feared though was being fag-baited, having Hoffsteader sneer at him that he was just a "hysterical sissy."

Paul remembered what his grade school gym coach did when he once put a flower in his hair. Coach Fox glared down scornfully, his belly a heaving mountain of contempt in a white tee shirt.

"Well aren't *you* a little cutsie pie!"

Everyone laughed.

"Any you guys wanna give our little cutsie pie a kiss?"

Paul bit his lip. No use. Tears flooded down his cheeks like lava. His ears burned with everyone's laughter and the nastiness of Coach Fox's mincing voice.

"Aw look, our poor little cutsie pie's startin' to cry. Guess he's a crybaby too."

Ever since that day Paul remained shy and aloof. He could write about injustice but he couldn't speak up about it in group situations. So Paul left Bond Research quietly, furious at himself because he was afraid to risk Hoffsteader's sarcasm and a bad job recommendation.

Now he typed for various insurance companies. The woman at the temp agency said he could take time off whenever he wanted but, just as before, he was constantly pressured to work overtime, to be loyal to the agency, to be polite and obedient whatever the provocation. Anxious to please, Paul did as he was told. For three months now he'd been typing for the Chancy Insurance Under-

writing Department. The underwriters and supervisors were all white; the secretaries, save for him, all Filipino immigrants.

At first the office seemed as bright and sunny as its orange and yellow decor. Beneath a large mountain lake mural which covered one wall of the lunchroom, secretaries leaned forward and gossiped in Tagalog. To Paul, they sounded as carefree as birds. What did American voices sound like to them? A chorus of frogs? After a couple of months, Paul asked Ginny, the secretary who sat next to him, what she'd like to do if she could do anything in the world.

"Leave this place forever!"

Ginny smiled but there was an unexpected bitterness in her voice that roused Paul from his dreaminess. He began to see office relationships in a different light. Even Suzi's jokes had an edge he hadn't noticed before, the way she spoke of "Blue Monday," for instance, and laughed. Where'd he heard that laugh before? The old Harrisburg widow he'd interviewed about TMI — she'd laughed with the same quiet desperation after saying "Well, guess we gotta have the electricity." The lunchroom mural took a sinister, mocking quality as if it were painted on Coach Fox's chest. Paul wanted to quit but Angela talked him into staying.

"You're the best typist we've got," she gushed, playing on Paul's need for approval. She leaned over until he could smell her perfume. "I'm a writer too and I wanna buy a copy of your magazine when it's out. I knew you were remarkable when you first started here. You were always reading."

Paul blushed. Merely to have shown up at Bond Research with a book would have been grounds for dismissal. Business people hate to see workers read, even on breaks, because anyone who reads is liable to think and thinking can only lead to trouble.

Flattered by Angela's praise, Paul was also bothered by it. By accepting her description of him as "the best worker," wasn't he in some sense betraying the others? But what could he do? He wanted to agitate for a union, to bring the novels of Carlos Bulosan or other radical Filipino writers into the office but he was afraid to act, afraid to speak, afraid to do anything to lower Angela's opinion of him. Feeling hypocritical, Paul worked all the harder, becoming even more quiet and withdrawn.

Angela's effusive profession of friendship, however, was soon belied by her action. Paul was moved to another desk in the middle of the office where the typewriter sat too high.

"I'm sorry," Angela said mournfully, "but it's the only desk we have. We need your old one for a new secretary who's starting tomorrow." Then she gave him a huge stack of pencilled forms to type which left him with bloodshot eyes, a headache and a sore back every night. Yet this very discomfort gave Paul strength.

One morning, Bill Paganini, a potbellied underwriter given to frequent tantrums, began screaming at Ginny. "Goddammit! You're always getting my phone messages screwed up." Ginny lowered her eyes as the sole woman underwriter came weakly to her defense.

"Calm down Bill. Ginny can't help it if she can't speak English as good as us."

"WELL, IF THEY CAN'T SPEAK ENGLISH THEY SHOULDN'T BE HERE! WHADA THEY THINK THIS PLACE IS, A REFUGE CENTER?" Then a new voice entered the fray.

"Did your ancestors come here speaking English Bill?"

The office was stunned. Was quiet Paul suddenly confronting the head underwriter? Paul's forehead perspired as Paganini stood slackjawed momentarily unable to speak.

"WHAT DID YOU SAY?"

Paul had gone too far to stop now. It wasn't just Ginny he was standing up for, it was also himself. Paganini, Hoffsteader, Coach Fox and all the other authorities who'd terrorized, bullied and silenced him all his life fused together into one monstrous face. Words poured from him now in a torrent.

"For three months I've sat here watching you treat the Filipinos in this office like shit. For you, a good worker's the one most willing to be silently exploited. That's sick! And while I'm at it, I might as well say I'm pretty sick of the fag jokes you tell too. Maybe you never realized I'm gay. Well here's one faggot who's had enough of your racist, sexist bullshit!"

By now workers had come in from other departments to see what the commotion was about. Though trembling inside, Paul stood up calmly, took his suitcoat from his desk, and walked through the office and lunchroom toward the elevator. Paganini never found his voice.

"Guess you can have all my paperclips now Suzi," Paul said as he passed her. Maybe he was out of a job again, had cancelled it flat, but it was worth it for the looks on the faces of the secretaries, especially Suzi.

"Good for you!" Suzi said. "We'll get 'em yet."

"Maybe I didn't do the best thing," Paul thought as he pushed the first floor button. "Maybe I should have stayed to help Ginny and Suzi organize a union." But for the moment he felt good, better even than he'd felt marching on Gay Pride Day. Maybe he wasn't a real revolutionary yet but he'd taken a first step. He was no longer silent. Or so afraid. Or so alone.

by Steve Abbott

WORLD PROCESSING:

Technology and Instability

Sometime in the 1970s, the public image of the computer was detached from past phobias. No longer the symbol of technocratic dehumanization, it was glorified as the harbinger of a new way of life. The popular futurism of Alvin Toffler (*The Third Wave*), the never-ending self-congratulations of the industry press, the advent of the "personal computer" and the high-tech fantasies of worried managers combined into a crescendo of hype usually heard only at Christmas or during a good war.

With computers, as with the rest of modern life, the marketing fantasy has more appeal than the real thing. The hope for a better future shrivels in the harsh glare of the present. Here we find computers pressed into the routine service of those who rule — making war, keeping tabs on dissidents, strengthening the hand of management against workers, helping the megacorporations to coordinate their global franchises.

The development and application of any new technology is itself a lesson in the exercise of power. The use of computers in the current worldwide restructuring is a better example than most. It reveals the elements in the social order that are able to produce and direct the new technology, and to what ends. In so doing it exposes the real structures and priorities of the dominant social system.

MICROCHIPS ON THE MONEY-GO-ROUND

"Everyone always talks about undocumented labor, but nobody ever talks about undocumented capital."
— unattributed wisecrack

First off, information technology is being used to strengthen the international "integrated circuit" of power. Like transportation technology, another crucial underpinning of the global marketplace, it provides the possibility of *large scale* systems of production and control.

Computers have become vital in holding together an ever-more internationalized economic system perhaps best characterized by the emergence of what *Business Week* called "stateless money:" *"... a vast integrated global money and capital system, almost totally outside all governmental regulation, that can send*

Eurodollars, Euromarks and other stateless currencies hurtling around the world 24 hours a day.'' This is capital more ''liquid'' than anything seen before. It is capital that can, and does, flow wherever profits are highest; capital that prefers speculation to productive investment, and is more than willing to abandon the U.S. for the Third World (or vice versa) if new conditions render such a move profitable.

Such a degree of internationalization would not be possible without the development of sophisticated information retrieval and communications systems. As Herb Schiller puts it in *Who Knows: Information In The Age Of The Fortune 500:*

''The capability of the Trans-National Corporation to utilize productive facilities where the costs are lowest..., to penetrate markets with massive advertising campaigns, to avoid or minimize taxes by shifting production, and to take advantage of fluctuating currencies by transferring funds from one center to another, is almost totally dependent on secure *and instantaneous global communication.''*

The driving force behind all these rapid changes is, as usual, various sorts of competition. What's different today is that this competition takes place in a world where corporations have become co-actors with the largest and most powerful nations. Japanese/American competition drives the development of computer technology and American/Soviet competition the technology of war.

With this integration of markets, the political dramas of the modern world become supra-national in character. Moreover, they take place within the context of a long-term decline in the power of the nation-state relative to business. As a Vice-President of Citibank (with over 3,000 local branches, Citibank has the largest private communications system in the world) recently put it: ''what this all adds up to is another profound challenge to the unlimited sovereign power of nation-states brought about by the technical realities of global communications.'' Or, in more concrete terms, 30-40% of world trade is accounted for by internal transfers

job seeker...

evolution $ habitat

Someday I'll have my own career crisis!

Helen Highwater

within multinationals.

This is not necessarily good news. As the power of the nation-state's economic and social clout weakens, it tends more and more to define its power in military terms. The Falklands fiasco is a good example. And certainly the Soviet/American nuclear standoff is driven in part by militaristic ways of maintaining national identity — ways which are running afoul of the economic and political realities of a tightly interconnected planetary society. Central among these realities is the disaster now overtaking the Third World.

AUTOMATION AND THE WORLD DIVISION OF LABOR

Before the advent of the great recession in the 70's, the official literature on Third World development was infused with optimism. The specter of ecological collapse was easily exorcised by a glorious vision — U.S. entry into the information age would go hand in hand with the transfer of most manufacturing to the low-labor-cost part of the world. In this bright delirium everyone was to win. While the developed world shifted to an information-based economy, the Third World would become the nexus of heavy industry, *and thus continue to have a major stake in the stability of the world system*. The industrial ''miracle'' countries like Brazil and South Korea were supposed to show the way for the rest of the ''underdeveloped'' nations.

Back then many liberal economists argued that the economic growth of the Third World was crucial to the health of the global system — that it should be regarded not only as a supplier of materials and labor and a consumer of finished goods, but as a producer of surpluses of its own (e.g. the Brandt Report of the late 70's). The managers had an opportunity to act as if they believed in a *really* international economy, since it was in their interests to do so. They shifted a lot of their ''runaway'' shops to lands of cheap labor, and so gained a powerful weapon against workers at home. They established high-technology enclaves in Southeast Asia, some few of which (Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.) seem to have made it permanently into the ranks of the developed nations. They fought against ''national liberation'' movements that resisted their tender mercies. For a short while, they were able to project the image of a world in which, eventually, there would be room at the top for at least the elites from the peripheral countries.
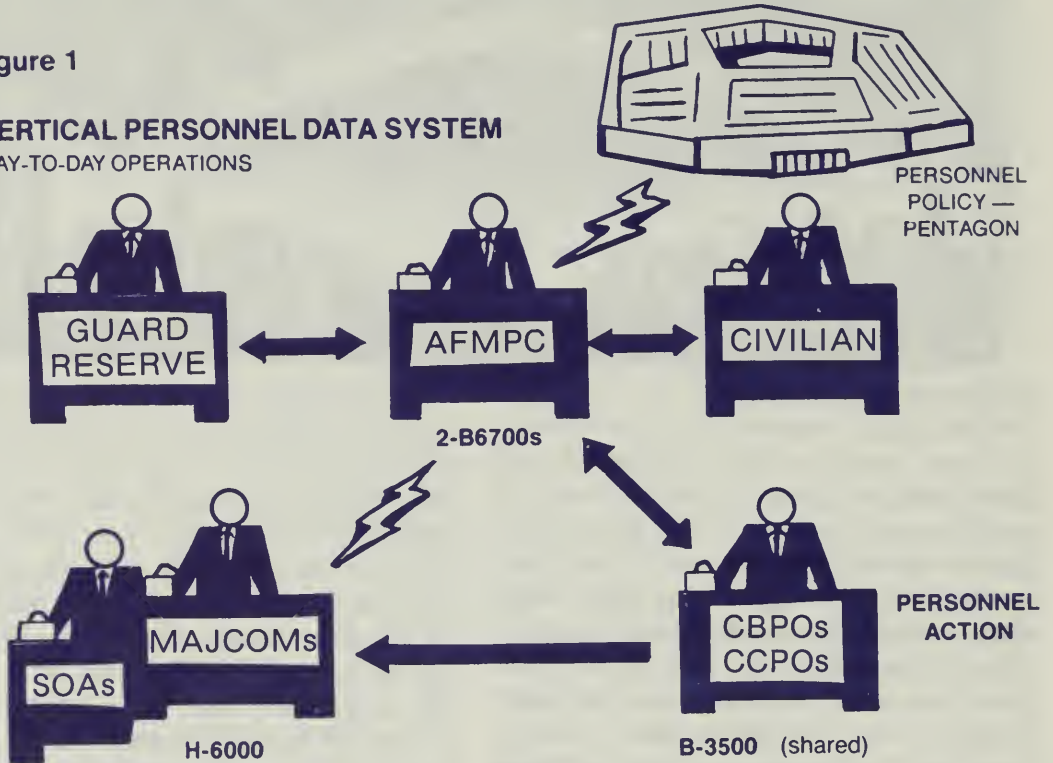
But the happy harmony between the logic of profit and the ideology of liberal internationalism was short-lived. Protectionism is already the order of the day, and the adjustments are just beginning.

The old international division of labor depended upon developed countries supplying technology while the Third World supplied unskilled labor and raw materials. Already there is a

Figure 1

VERTICAL PERSONNEL DATA SYSTEM
DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

PERSONNEL POLICY — PENTAGON

GUARD RESERVE ⟷ AFMPC ⟷ CIVILIAN

2-B6700s

PERSONNEL ACTION

MAJCOMs

SOAs

H-6000

CBPOs CCPOs

B-3500 (shared)

"**Modern military operations are not to do with weapons. They are to do with information, command, control. Information does things. It fires weapons. It tells them where to go. The signals network is the key thing. If you want to disarm the world, don't get rid of Trident, get rid of all the computers.**" — Professor John Erikson, a lecturer in Soviet military strategy and communications at Edinburgh University [England], and who has also trained [British] Government Communications HQ staff [counterpart to the U.S. National Security Agency]. (from the **Manchester Guardian**)

radically declining need for this labor within the international economy, just as there is within the U.S. When there is no longer any great need for it at all, what will happen?

A recent study by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Sussex, England indicates that we won't have to wait for the perfection of automated production systems, to see the answer to this one. Already micro-computers have undermined the competitive advantage of Third-World-based production. They have significantly increased the flexibility of assembly lines and reduced the amounts of both labor and materials needed in production — and they have improved product quality in the bargain.

Soon *real* automation — robotics — will enter the economic calculus in a far more pervasive way than it has to date. In the Asian sweatshops where the micro-chips themselves are assembled, robots are arriving by the hundreds. Over 250 companies in Singapore imported Japanese robots in the past year, and Signetics Korea will be halving its 2300-person production force in the next three or four years with robot-based automation. The Malaysian electrical workers

union expects a "blowout" caused by automation within five years "when a single production line requires only 50 workers instead of the 500 now" — this is the second largest Malaysian industry. (*ASIA 2000* — June/July 1982)

The overall tendency, according to IDS and others, is to reduce the incentive for the Transnationals to invest in Third-World-based production — especially now that high unemployment here at home has American unions clamoring for trade barriers against imports. With the introduction of robotics, the economics become even clearer. Labor costs must be *very* low to keep labor-intensive production systems competitive.

Over the last few years the Japanese have shifted many of their semiconductor assembly lines to the cheapest free-trade zones of all — those in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. But now it is just as cheap to automate and keep assembly in Japan. Likewise, Motorola and Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp. have both recently moved some production lines back to the U.S. from Southeast Asia. With automated assembly offshore production offers no cost advantage. And, with the Third World becoming ever more unstable, offshore production can seem politically unattractive even in sectors of the economy where some economic advantage remains. This is demonstrated by Control Data's recent decision to pull out of South Korea, a decision prompted not by shifting economies

but by the instability of the local work force. (Last year, 120 young Korean women employees of Control Data held two American executives hostage for 9 hours. The execs had come to resolve a labor dispute.)

Offshore production will certainly continue to some extent. But the bulk of manufacturing will not shift to the Third World. As the production process becomes more strongly rooted in the new high technologies, it is more likely to take place not in the Third World, but in the industrialized regions.

THESE AND OTHER CRISES: COMING SOON TO A COUNTRY NEAR YOU

Multinational business may find it inconvenient to continue on the "development" paths laid down during the post-war boom. But this doesn't mean that they can simply be forgotten. The export-led economies thrust upon the periphery during that brief flourish of neo-colonialism were largely financed by U.S. and Western European banks. According to a source quoted in the *N.Y. Times*, 3/15/83 ("What's the bottom line in Third World debt?"), by 1982 the Third World owed the nine largest U.S. banks a sum equal to more than double their real assets. This $600 billion debt links the fate of the international banking system inextricably to the tottering economies of the periphery. The financial collapse of Mexico, to give only one particularly dramatic example, would certainly take down the Bank of America with it. Well over half of the B of A's assets are tied up

"Don't bother me, I'm entering Data."

in Mexican loans.

The hustle run on the Third World continues, too, in the conditions suffered by the millions whose lives always fell outside the development plan; in the desertification of lands stripped of foliage by desperate peasants, in jampacked cities, where formerly agrarian people scramble for a toehold in the money economy; in the misery of wars eagerly fostered by the U.S. and Soviet military machines and the international arms merchants.

THE NEW OUTSIDERS

Not that life will be so wonderful here in fortress America. Employment in the once "guaranteed" sectors like auto will never recover from the shakeout of the last three years. Nor will the service sector expand far or fast enough to absorb the millions displaced by the new "mechanization of work." Secure employment will become the privilege of an elite of technicians and professionals who design, implement and oversee the new systems.

The latest waves of layoffs have already produced immense demoralizations expressed as rising rates of suicide, alcoholism and domestic violence. Despite recent and much-publicized erosion of the "work ethic," most U.S. workers still seem to experience joblessness as a catastrophe. And although the restructuring (disguised as "Reaganomics") has met with sporadic working-class protest, the main response is still passive despair.

The longer-term consequences are harder to foresee. The growing numbers of "marginal" people both here and in the Third World will present major difficulties for capitalism. Much as the pacification of the Third World is an ongoing concern for whole covens of bureaucrats and military men, the pacification of the U.S. will again become a standing line-item on corporate and governmental agendas.

When sociologists say "marginal," they mostly mean: on the margins of the *wage system*, of *work*. Work serves two basic purposes. It is, of course, the main means of access to that great "necessity" of life, money. But it's also vital to the systems of "secondary control" which supplement the primary systems of state force (the police, the army) and programmed leisure time. It provides the single most important opportunity for participation in "normal" life, and therefore for the construction of a "normal" identity. More concretely, it fills the empty hours that would otherwise breed unrest and imparts the discipline of hierarchical power — a discipline that can never be allowed to lapse.

With more and more people becoming permanently unemployed, or else employed only marginally in ways that do not provide them with "career opportunities," the system loses much of its ability to integrate restless groups. A result is the growth of what one British writer called "the impossible class" in places as culturally and geographically divergent as Brixton, England and Santo-Andrade, Brazil.

Brixton is a mostly Black London neighborhood whose collective counterattack against the police triggered nationwide youth riots in 1981. Santo-Andrade, a vast slum on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, was likewise the flashpoint for massive riots just this April. Both areas teem with the jobless, the penniless and the restless — people who have lost, or have never had, the usual ties to the economic system. Instead they survive by various combinations of part-time work, welfare, street-hustling, squatting, shoplifting, scavenging and robbery.

Here some important differences emerge. While the British rioters of 1981 were quite successfully isolated from the rest of the working-class population, this will be less easily

X - ILES

done in Brazil. Santo-Andrade, for instance, was also the detonator for the big auto workers' strike of 1980-81. In general, Third World "marginals" have much closer social and cultural ties to the regularly employed workers than do their European and U.S. counterparts. This, however, is mostly because Third World workers have never enjoyed even the relative security and comfort afforded the majority in the central countries during the last two decades.

One doesn't have to accept a scenario of simple mass unemploy- ment to foresee analogous problems developing here. Just as likely is what some analysts are calling "the feminization of work." In other words, most jobs reduced to the traditional status of "women's work," — underpaid, part-time, insecure. Also like "women's work," many of these jobs may be done at home, with "telecommuting" replacing the office for millions by the end of the century. Workers would be paid piece-work, have little contact with other company employees, and (the managers doubtless hope) be totally unorganized.

While this prospect is predictably touted by industry flacks as a "liberation," it is actually more like a return to the conditions preceeding the industrial revolution. But it is worth remembering that a major reason workers were originally brought together in factories two hundred years ago was *to discipline them*. Today, it is hoped, the computer will be able to monitor the worker so closely that other forms of oversight can be dispensed with.

The essence of marginalization is not the lack of wage-work per se, but the lack of the identification with it that comes with sharing its rewards. Along with this lack of identification comes an inner abandonment of the "work ethic" and attendant success fantasies — executive suite, house in the suburbs, whatever.

Not that there will be any shortage of candidates for the Technical/Professional elite. Millions are willing to be good if it will keep them in Porsches and chocolate. For millions more religion and alcohol will fulfill their traditional roles. For others though, different means are called for, and the managers hope that microchip-based technologies will help provide these means.

DANGEROUS CURVES

"Dealing with contradictions and conflicts is a tricky business."

— David Rockefeller

With the world ever more brutal and unstable, and with the system unable to offer everyone a place, the marginals are becoming the "surplus population" of a Malthusian capitalism. War seems ever more attractive as a means of social control. Let's call this the 1984 scenario. In Orwell's Oceania the basic problem was that society had become too productive — and military waste production had to be maintained to keep the population amenable to government manipulation. There are, incidentally, 45 countries at war at this moment, and at least one of those wars — the Iran/Iraq conflict — is just the sort of slow-burning labor-intensive operation that invites interpretation as a deliberate population control measure.

But even in 1984, warfare wasn't enough. It was supplemented by the telescreen, a device that also has its parallels in the modern world. TV and home video are obvious examples, since they provide a surrogate image-based participation in the life of society. And the development of corporate TV, the computerized information utility, the fifty-seven variety cable pacification box, computer-targeted advertisement, teleshopping, 3-D video games and other trinkets too wonderful even to imagine will certainly help.

Grisly Search for More Bodies

Frank Discussion

And, since it is so easy to "talk back to your TV," other, less subtle applications will also be deployed. Developments in computerized surveillance technology are truly mind-boggling. Already, devices that can take the place of the prison are being tested. A recent article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (4/26/83) tells of a microchip anklet that notifies the central computer if the prisoner strays more than 200 feet from the phone. Like many developments, this one was anticipated in science fiction — usually used by an evil society against the hero.

CONCLUSIONS?

Nobody, including the top managers, really knows how much of all this will come true, or how fast. Computerization in general is proceeding at a breakneck pace. But the rate of microelectronic investment in the workplace itself, the primary source of all these contradictions, is currently much slower than anyone expected. The market for factory automation products and services in the U.S. this year is about $4 billion, and while some industry analysts envision an explosion of the market to as much as $30 billion by 1990, this is uncertain. There simply isn't much incentive to buy new plants and equipment these days. *The Wall Street Journal* (10/11/82) commented that while the the automated "factory of the future" may eventually become standard, right now "there are practically no new factories being built."

Even if a *real* economic recovery arrives, the incentives to automate production in the industrialized regions of the world may not turn out to be so compelling after all. Some Third World countries (Singapore, South Korea, etc.) have "developed" far enough to support automated production, and perhaps to support it more cheaply than the American economy can. Besides, the Trans-National corporations (TNC's) are

A U.S. Border Patrol officer models the agency's new night patrol headgear. The helmet is equipped with infrared goggles that allow agents to spot illegal immigrants entering from Mexico.

already heavily committed to these areas. And, in many cases, the TNC's only access to foreign markets otherwise protected by import curbs will be by building the factories where the markets are. Finally, there will be products and processes which resist automation enough to remain competitive even when done labor-intensively — providing that labor is cheap enough.

Automation is the fruit of capital's drive to cut costs and reduce its dependence on workers. This is the result of no unified plan, but rather a byproduct of the competitive need to survive. During the last wave of automation, in the 50's, the economy, and especially the service sector, were rapidly expanding. This time around automation is based on far more flexible devices, and is taking place in the context of increased international competition, choked world markets and decrepit infra-

structure.

All these variables make predictions difficult. A few things are clear nonetheless. First, unless the new technologies turn out not to work at all, further mechanization of work is inevitable sooner or later. Second, this means that unemployment and "underemployment" (low-paid, part-time, insecure work) will continue to grow. Third, wage-work linked to programmed consumption has been the primary means of social control in the developed countries since 1945. As this means breaks down, cash-strapped elites are likely to resort to some brutal alternatives.

In this context, even the most sophisticated strategies for "full-employment," like the idea of converting war-related industries to peaceful use, fall very short indeed. Reasonable though they may seem, they are unachievable without major social upheaval, upheaval that their proponents refuse to welcome.

A better approach is to honestly confront the complexity and depth of the current restructuring and to try to find a politics that can match it. A successful fight for the development and use of technology must focus on the issue of control, and it is not only technology but work itself that is used to control the population. It will have to grapple with the profoundly contradictory implications of the new automation, implications which this article has only gestured at. We can take a lesson here from Alvin Toffler and his ilk, who have shown just how many millions of people, suspecting the scale of the coming changes, are straining to understand the "big picture."

One point of leverage in dealing with the reality of economic immiseration may be in taking the hype at its word — turning the promise of liberation from work into a political demand. Workers and marginals in Italy and elsewhere have already pioneered the fight for *the separation of work and income* — for the "right to live" rather than the "right to work." (It should go without saying that welfare as it currently exists does not qualify as "living".) Others, most recently Northern European youth, have bypassed "income" altogether by simply taking what they need, squatting houses and jumping public transit gates.

These sorts of tactics are, of course, limited. They are cited only in the hope that they might evoke a sense of politics as an assertion of the right to live. With work becoming the focus of life for only a privileged elite, and a meaningless agony for the rest, such an assertion, long overdue, may be a real possibility. The only other choice is a more or less uncritical defense of the society of wage-work and its "ethic."

— *by Tom Athanasiou, con Amigos*

WORK
Is there an end in sight?

Get a lift from
PROCESSED WORLD
the magazine with the *bad* attitude

DENIZENS OF THE ICE CUBE TRAY

by Ana Kellia Ramares

Look our way! Shout ''Hooray!''
Space for more of you, day by day,
Denizens of the ice cube tray!

They're building another ice cube tray.
(Lining it up with the one they built last year.)
Its mirrored glass turns back the sun
And seals off city sounds from inside ears.

Air, you say? Dare you say!
Breathe the copy fumes, day by day,
Denizens of the ice cube tray!

Behind the glass the paper pushers
Push their pulp five days a week.
Policy. Procedure. Word processors
Interface but never speak.

File away! Type away!
Count your paperclips, day by day,
Denizens of the ice cube tray!

They'll toss their calendars off the roof
At lunch on New Year's Eve,
Consigning a year to the gutter;
When paid, one shouldn't grieve.

Steady pay! Come to stay!
Build seniority, day by day,
Denizens of the ice cube tray!

Finally comes retirement day,
(Gossip and grub in a groggy haze,
Then out of the tray
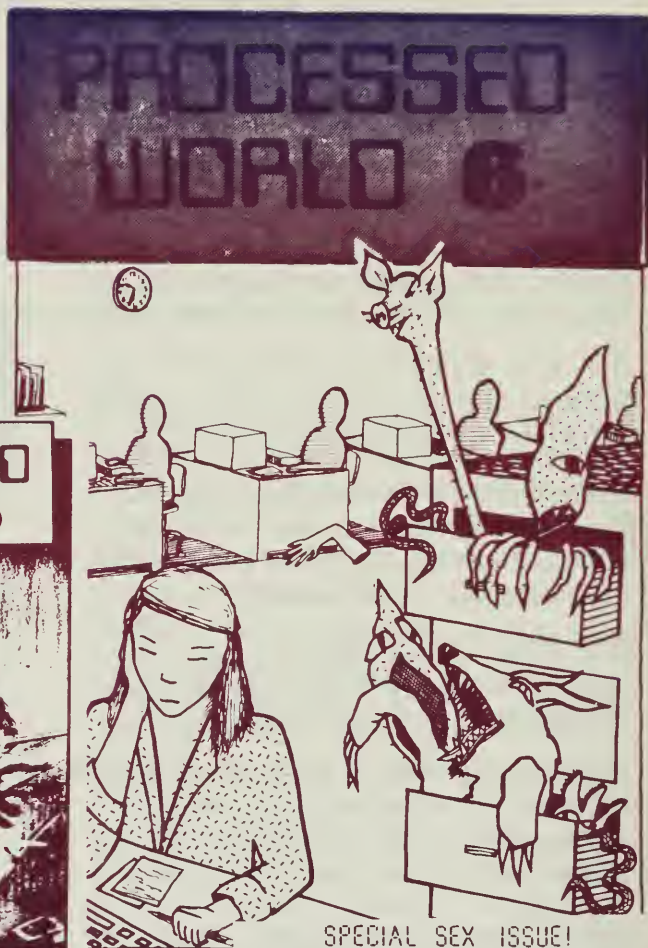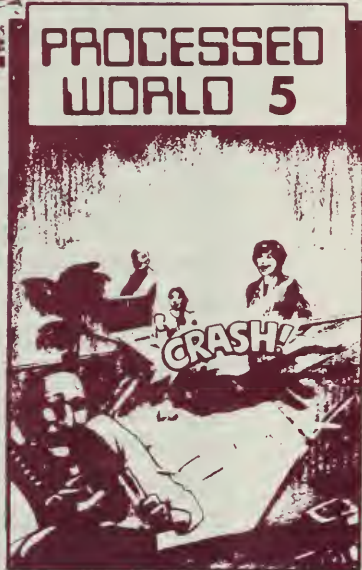To melt in the sun's last rays.)

While away! Pile away!
Count your memories, day by day,
Denizens of the ice cube tray!

(To the tune of ''God Save the Queen.'')
Glory to him and her
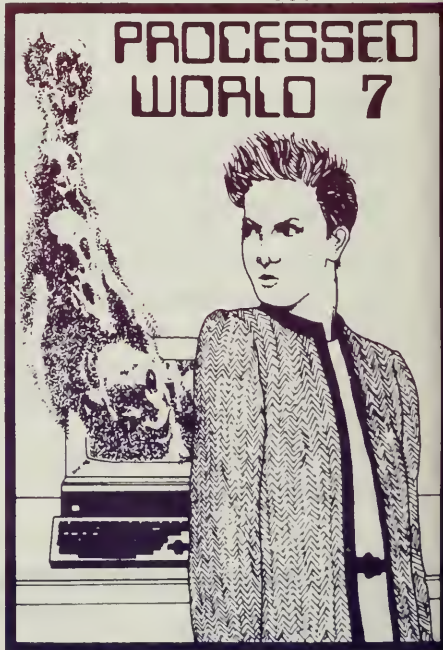Who unjams the copier.
God save their genes!

Celebrating Armed Forces
Day is like Dancing at your
own funeral!!

Hurled to the SF Financial District
streets from an upper floor on Friday
May 20, Armed Forces Day.

Oscar Bernal

MY LEAD AT WORK

She's not a real boss
Not really.
She does the same work we do.
She can neither hire nor fire.
She shares her food
Sometimes brings something
(licorice malted milk balls
            a homegrown tomato}
especially for you.
She's nice. She gardens.
Will not tolerate a racist joke.
Has had a hard life:
Her husband left her on Valentine's Day
Her neighbors throw garbage in her yard
Alone at night she hears strange noises.
She will give you a ride home
Rather than see you wait alone
on a dark corner of a bad street   —
For a bus.

But, when she's there
No one talks about the price of gas
Or how the light from the machines hurts our eyes
Or how we don't get paid enough
How food and apartments cost too much
There are no complaints
In fact we don't talk about anything
When she's there.

$1.50 CHEAP

by Dorthy Shellorne