

# Manifesto Against Labour

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## 1. The Rule of Dead Labour

A corpse rules society – the corpse of labour. All powers around the globe formed an alliance to defend its rule. They know but one slogan: jobs, jobs, jobs!

The society ruled by labour does not experience a temporary crisis; it encounters its absolute limit. In the wake of the micro-electronic revolution, wealth production increasingly became independent from the actual expenditure of human labour power to an extent quite recently only imaginable in science fiction. No one can seriously any longer maintain that this process can be halted or reversed. Selling commodity labour power in the twenty-first century is as promising as the sale of stagecoaches in the twentieth century. However, whoever is not able to sell his or her labour power in this society is considered to be 'superfluous', and to be disposed of on the social waste dump.

Those who do not work (labour) shall not eat! This cynical principle is still in effect; all the more so nowadays when it has become hopelessly obsolete. It really is an absurdity: Never before was society as much a labour society as it is now, even as labour itself is made superfluous. On its deathbed, labour turns out to be a totalitarian power that does not tolerate any gods beside itself. Seeping through the pores of everyday life into the psyche, labour controls both thought and action. No expense or pain is spared to artificially prolong the lifespan of the 'labour idol'. The paranoid cry for jobs justifies the devastation of natural resources on an intensified scale, even though the destructive effect on humanity was realized a long time ago. The very last obstacles to the full commercialization of any social relationship will be cleared away uncritically, if only there is a chance for a few miserable jobs to be created. 'Any job is better than no job' became a confession of faith, which is exacted from everybody.

To some people, unemployment is the result of exaggerated demands, low-performance or missing flexibility; to others unemployment is due to the incompetence, corruption, or greed of 'their' politicians or business executives, besides, of course, the inclination of such 'leaders' to pursue policies of 'treachery'. Everybody shall keep his or her nose to the grindstone even if the grindstone gets pulverized. The gloomy meta-message of such incentives cannot be misunderstood: Those who fail in finding favour in the eyes of the 'labour idol' have to take the blame, they can be written off and pushed away.

"Everyone must be able to live from his work is the propounded principle. Hence that one can live is subject to a condition and there is no right where the qualification cannot be fulfilled".

- Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Law according to the Principles of Scientific Theory*, 1797

## 2. The Neo-Liberal Apartheid Society

Should the successful sale of commodity 'labour power' become the exception instead of the rule? A society devoted to the irrational abstraction of labour is inevitably doomed to develop a tendency for social apartheid. All factions of the all-parties consensus on labour, so to say the labour-camp, quietly accepted this logic long ago and even took over a supporting role. There is no controversy on whether ever-increasing sections of the population should be pushed to the margin and should be excluded from social participation; there is only controversy on how this social selection is to be pushed through.

The police, salvation sects, the Mafia, and charity organizations take on responsibility for that annoying human litter. In the USA and most central European countries, more people are imprisoned than an average military dictatorship. In Latin America, day after day, more street urchins and other poor are hunted down by free enterprise death-squads than dissidents were killed during the worst periods of political repression. There is only one social function left for the ostracized: to be the warning example. Their fate is meant to goad on those who still participate in the rat-race of fighting for the leftovers. And even the losers have to be kept moving so that they don't hit on the idea of rebelling against the outrageous impositions they face.

"The crook has destroyed working and taken away the worker's wage even so. Now he [the worker] shall labour without a wage while picturing to himself the blessing of success and profit in his prison cell ... By means of forced labour he shall be trained to perform moral labour as a free personal act".

- Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Die Deutsche Arbeit (The German Labour)*, 1861

## 3. The Neo-Welfare-Apartheid-State

The ideological transformation of 'scarce labour' (tight labour market) into a prime civil right necessarily excludes all foreigners. The social logic of selection then is not questioned, but redefined: The individual struggle for survival shall be defused by means of ethnic-nationalistic criteria. 'Domestic treadmills only for native citizens' is the outcry deep from the bottom of the people's soul, who are suddenly able to come together, motivated by their perverse lust for labour. Right-wing populism makes no secret of such sentiment. Its criticism of 'rival society' only amounts to ethnic cleansing within the shrinking zones of capitalist wealth.

Thereby, the intensified exclusion of refugees from the Eastern and African world can be legitimized in a populist manner and without getting into a fuss. Of course, the whole operation is well obscured by talking nineteen to the dozen about humanity and civilization. Manhunts for 'illegal immigrants' allegedly sneaking in for domestic jobs shall not leave behind nasty bloodstains or burn marks on German soil. Rather it is the business of

the border police, police forces in general, and the buffer states of “Schengenland”, which dispose of the problem lawfully, and best of all, far away from media coverage.

“Any job is better than no job”.  
Bill Clinton, 1998

“No job is as hard as no job”.  
A poster at the December 1998 rally, organized by initiatives for unemployed people.

“Citizen work should be rewarded, not paid ... Whoever does honorary citizen work clears himself of the stigma of being unemployed and being a recipient of welfare benefits”.  
- Ulrich Beck, *The Soul of Democracy*, 1997

#### **4. Exaggeration and the denial of the labour religion**

Since the days of the Reformation, all the powers of Western modernization have preached the sacredness of work. Over the last 150 years, all social theories and political schools were possessed by the idea of labour. Socialists and conservatives, democrats and fascists fought each other to the death; but despite all deadly hatred, they always paid homage to the labour idol together. “Push the idler aside”, is a line from the German lyrics of the international working (labouring) class anthem; “Labour Makes Free” resounds eerily from the inscription above the gate in Auschwitz. The pluralist post-war democracies swore all the more by the everlasting dictatorship of labour.

At the end of the twentieth century, all ideological differences have vanished into thin air. What remains is the common ground of a merciless dogma: Labour is the natural destiny of human beings. Today, the reality of the labour society itself denies that dogma. The disciples of the labour religion have always preached that a human being, according to its supposed nature, is an *animal laborans* (working creature/animal). Such an ‘animal’ actually only assumes the quality of being human by subjecting matter to his will and in realising himself in his products, as once did Prometheus.

The modern production process has always made a mockery of this myth of a world conqueror and a demigod. Whoever asks about the content, meaning, and goal of his or her job will go crazy or become a disruptive element in the social machinery designed to function as an end-in-itself. *Homo faber*, once full of conceit as to his craft and trade, a type of human who took seriously what he did in a parochial way, has become as old-fashioned as a mechanical typewriter. The treadmill has to run at all cost, and ‘that’s all there is to it’. Advertising departments and armies of entertainers, company psychologists, image advisors and drug dealers are responsible for creating meaning. Where there is continual babble about motivation and creativity, there is not a trace left of either of them – save self-deception. This is why talents such as autosuggestion, self-projection and competence simulation rank among the most important virtues of managers and skilled workers, media stars and accountants, teachers and parking lot guards.

The crisis of the labour society has completely ridiculed the claim that labour is an eternal necessity imposed on humanity by nature. For centuries it was preached that

homage has to be paid to the labour idol just for the simple reason that needs can not be satisfied without humans sweating blood: to satisfy needs, that is the whole point of the human labour camp existence. If that were true, a critique of labour would be as rational as a critique of gravity. So how can a true 'law of nature' enter into a state of crisis or even disappear? The floor leaders of society's labour camp factions, from neo-liberal gluttons for caviar to labour unionist beer bellies, find themselves running out of arguments to prove the pseudo-nature of labour. Or how can they explain that three-quarters of humanity are sinking in misery and poverty only because the labour system no longer needs their labour?

"Work, however base and mammonist, is always connected with nature. The desire to do work leads more and more to the truth and to the laws and prescriptions of nature, which are truths".

- Thomas Carlyle, *Working and not Despairing*, 1843

### **5. Labour is a Coercive Social Principle**

Labour is in no way identical with humans transforming nature (matter) and interacting with each other. As long as mankind exist, they will build houses, produce clothing, food and many other things. They will raise children, write books, discuss, cultivate gardens, and make music and much more. This is banal and self-evident. However, the raising of human activity as such, the pure expenditure of 'labour power' to an abstract principle governing social relations without regard to its content and independent of the needs and will of the participants, is not self-evident.

It fell to the modern commodity producing system as an end-in-itself, with its ceaseless transformation of human energy into money, to bring about a separated sphere of so-called labour 'alienated' from all other social relations and abstracted from all content. It is a sphere demanding of its inmates unconditional surrender, life-to-rule, dependent robotic activity severed from any other social context, and obedience to an abstract 'economic' instrumental rationality beyond human needs. In this sphere detached from life, time ceases to be lived and experienced time. Rather, time becomes mere raw material to be exploited optimally: 'Time is Money'. Every second of life is charged to a time account, every trip to the loo is an offence, and every moment of gossip is a crime against the production goal that has made itself independent. Where labour is going on, only abstract energy may be spent. Life takes place elsewhere, or nowhere, because labour beats time round the clock. Even children are drilled to obey Newtonian time to become 'effective' members of the workforce in their future life. Leave of absence is granted merely to restore an individual's 'labour power'. When having a meal, celebrating or making love, the second hand is ticking at the back of one's mind.

"The worker (lit. labourer) feels to be himself outside work and feels outside himself when working. He is at home when he does not work. When he works, he is not at home. As a result, his work is forced labour, not voluntary labour. Forced labour is not the satisfaction of a need but only a means for satisfying needs outside labour. Its foreignness appears in

that labour is avoided as a plague as soon as no physical or other force exists".  
- Karl Marx, *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, 1844

## **6. Labour and Capital are Two Sides of the Same Coin**

From the standpoint of labour, the qualitative content of production counts as little as it does from the standpoint of capital. The only point of interest is selling labour power at best price. The idea of determining the aim and object of human activity by joint decision is beyond the imagination of the treadmill inmates. If the hope ever existed that such self-determination of social reproduction could be realized in the forms of the commodity producing system, the 'workforce' has long forgotten about this illusion. Only 'employment' or 'occupation' is a matter of concern; the connotations of these terms speak volumes about the end-in-itself character of the whole arrangement.

The ruling idol knows how to enforce its 'subjectless' (Marx) will by means of the 'silent (implied) compulsion' of competition to which even the powerful must bow, especially if they manage hundreds of factories and shift billions across the globe. If they don't 'do business', they will be scrapped as ruthlessly as the superfluous 'labour force'. Kept as they are in the leading strings of intransigent systemic constraints, this is what makes them a public menace, and not some conscious will to exploit others. Least of all are they allowed to ask about the meaning and consequences of their restless action. They cannot afford emotions or compassion. Therefore they call it realism when they devastate the world and disfigure urban features, and they only shrug their shoulders when their fellow beings are impoverished in the midst of affluence.

"More and more labour has the good conscience on its side: The inclination for leisure is called 'need of recovery' and begins to feel ashamed of itself. 'It is just for the sake of health', they defend themselves when caught at a country outing. It could happen to be in the near future that succumbing to a 'vita contemplativa' (i.e. to go for a stroll together with friends to contemplate life) will lead to self-contempt and a guilty conscience".  
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Leisure and Idleness*, 1882

## **7. Labour is Patriarchal Rule**

It is not possible to subject every sphere of social life or all essential human activities to the rule of abstract (Newtonian) time, even if the intrinsic logic of labour, inclusive of the transformation of the latter into 'money-substance', insists on it. Consequently, alongside the 'separated' sphere of labour, so to say at its rear, the sphere of home life, family life, and intimacy came into being.

It was no accident that the image of the somewhat primitive, instinct-driven, irrational, and emotional woman only solidified along with the image of the civilized, rational and self-restrained male workaholic, and became mass prejudice. It was also no accident that the self-drill of the white man, who went into some sort of mental boot camp training to cope with the exacting demands of labour and, pertinently, its human resource management, coincided with a brutal witch-hunt that raged for some centuries.

The modern understanding and appropriation of the world by means of (natural)

scientific thought, a way of thinking that was gaining ground then, was contaminated by the social end-in-itself and its gender attributes down to the roots. This way, the white man, in order to ensure his smooth functioning, subjected himself to a self-exorcism of all evil spirits, namely those frames of mind and emotional needs that are considered to be dysfunctional in the realms of labour.

In the twentieth century, especially in the post-war democracies of Fordism, women were increasingly recruited to the labour system, which only resulted in some specific female schizophrenic mind. On the one hand, the advance of women into the sphere of labour has not led to their liberation, but subjected them to very same drill procedures for the labour idol as already suffered by men. On the other hand, as the systemic structure of 'segregation' was left untouched, the separated sphere of 'female labour' continued to exist extrinsic to what is officially deemed to be 'labour'. This way, women were subjected to a double-burden and exposed to conflicting social imperatives. Within the sphere of labour – until now – they are predominantly confined to the low-wage sector and to subordinate jobs.

Due to the systemic constraints of the labour society and its total usurpation of the individual in particular – entailing his or her unconditional surrender to the systemic logic, and mobility and obedience to the capitalist time regime – in society as a whole, the sacred bourgeois sphere of so-called private life and 'holy family' is eroded and degraded more and more. Patriarchy is not abolished, but runs wild in the unacknowledged crisis of the labour society. As the commodity-producing system gradually collapses, women are made responsible for survival in any respect, while the 'masculine' world indulges in the prolonging of the categories of the labour society by means of simulation.

"Mankind had to horribly mutilate itself to create its identical, functional, male self, and some of it has to be redone in everybody's childhood".

- Max Horkheimer/ Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

### **8. Labour is the Service of Humans in Bondage**

The identity of labour and bondman existence can be shown factually and conceptually. Only a few centuries ago, people were quite aware of the connection between labour and social constraints. In most European languages, the term 'labour' originally referred only to the activities carried out by humans in bondage, i.e. bondmen, serfs, and slaves. In Germanic speaking areas, the word described the drudgery of an orphaned child fallen into serfdom. The Latin verb *laborare* meant 'staggering under a heavy burden', and conveyed the suffering and toil of slaves. The Romance words *travail*, *trabajo*, etc., derive from the Latin *tripalium*, a kind of yoke used for the torture and punishment of slaves and other humans in bondage. A hint of that suffering is still discernible in the German idiom "to bend under the yoke of labour".

Thus 'labour', according to its root, is not a synonym for self-determined human activity, but refers to an unfortunate social fate. It is the activity of those who have lost their freedom. The imposition of labour on all members of society is nothing but the generalization of a life in bondage; and the modern worship of labour is merely the quasi-religious transfiguration of actual social conditions.

For individuals, however, it became possible to repress the conjunction between labour and bondage successfully and to internalize social impositions because in the developing commodity producing system, the generalization of labour was accompanied by its reification: Most people were no longer under the thumb of a personal master. Human interdependence transformed into a social totality of abstract domination, discernible everywhere, but proving elusive. Where everyone has become a slave, everyone is simultaneously a master – that is to say a slaver of his own person and his very own slave driver and warder. All obey the opaque system idol, the ‘Big Brother’ of capital valorization, who harnessed them to the ‘tripalium’.

### **9. The Bloody History of Labour**

The history of the modern age is the history of the enforcement of labour, which brought devastation and horror to the planet in its trail. The imposition to waste most of one’s lifetime under abstract systemic orders was not always as internalized as today. Rather, it took several centuries of brute force and violence on a large scale to literally torture people into the unconditional service of the labour idol.

It did not start with some ‘innocent’ market expansion meant to increase ‘the wealth’ of his or her majesty’s subjects, but with the insatiable hunger for money of the absolutist apparatus of the state in order to finance early modern military machinery. The development of urban merchants and financial capital beyond traditional trade relations only accelerated through this apparatus, and this brought the whole of society in a bureaucratic stranglehold for the first time in history. Only in this way did money become a central social motive, and the abstraction of labour a central social constraint without regard to actual needs.

Most people didn’t voluntarily change over to production for anonymous markets, and thereby to a general cash economy. They were forced to do so because the absolutist hunger for money led to the levy of pecuniary and ever-increasing taxes, replacing traditional payment in kind. It was not that people had to ‘earn money’ for themselves, but for the militarized early modern firearm-state, its logistics, and its bureaucracy. This way the absurd end-in-itself of capital valorization, and thus of labour, came into the world.

Only after a short time, however, revenue became insufficient. The absolutist bureaucrats and finance capital administrators began to forcibly and directly organize people as the material of a ‘social machinery’ for the transformation of labour into money. The traditional way of life and existence was vandalized, and the population earmarked as the human material for the valorization machine put on steam. Peasants and yeomen were driven from their fields by force of arms to clear space for sheep farming, which produced the raw material for the wool manufactories. Traditional rights like free hunting, fishing, and wood gathering in the forests were abolished. When the impoverished then marched through the land begging and stealing, they were locked up in workhouses and manufactories and abused with labour torture machines to beat the slave consciousness of a submissive serf into them. The floating rumour that people gave up their traditional life of their own accord to join the armies of labour on account of the beguiling prospects of labour society is a downright lie.

The gradual transformation of their subjects into material for the money-generating

labour idol was not enough to satisfy the absolutist monster states. They extended their claim to other continents. Europe's inner colonization was accompanied by outer colonization; first in the Americas, then in parts of Africa. Here the whip masters of labour finally cast aside all scruples. In an unprecedented crusade of looting, destruction and genocide, they assaulted the newly 'discovered' worlds – the victims overseas were not even considered to be human. The cannibalistic European powers of the dawning labour society defined the subjugated foreign cultures as 'savages' and cannibals.

This provided the justification to exterminate or enslave millions of them. Slavery in the colonial plantations and raw materials 'industry' – to an extent exceeding ancient slaveholding by far – was one of the founding crimes of the commodity-producing system. Here 'extermination by means of labour' was realized on a large scale for the first time. This was the second foundational crime of the labour society. The white man, already branded by the ravages of self-discipline, could compensate for his repressed self-hatred and inferiority complex by taking it out on the 'savages'. Like 'the woman', indigenous people were deemed to be primitive halfings, ranking between animals and humans. It was Immanuel Kant's keen conjecture that baboons could talk if they only wanted and didn't speak because they feared being dragged off to labour.

Civilization in this sense means the voluntary submission to labour; and labour is male, white and 'Western'. The opposite, the non-human, amorphous, and uncivilized nature, is female, coloured and 'exotic', and thus to be kept in bondage. In a word, the 'universality' of the labour society is perfectly racist in its origin. The universal abstraction of labour can always only define itself by demarcating itself from everything that can't be squared within its own categories.

The modern bourgeoisie, who ultimately inherited absolutism, is not a descendant of the peaceful merchants who once travelled the old trading routes. Rather it was the bunch of Condottieri, early modern mercenary gangs, poorhouse overseers, penitentiary wards, the whole lot of farmers general, slave drivers and other cutthroats of this sort, who prepared the social hotbed for modern 'entrepreneurship'. The bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had nothing to do with social emancipation. They only restructured the balance of power within the arising coercive system, separated the institutions of the labour society from antiquated dynastic interests and pressed ahead with reification and depersonalization. It was the glorious French revolution that histrionically proclaimed compulsory labour, enacted a law on the 'elimination of begging' and arranged for new labour penitentiaries without delay.

This was the exact opposite of what was struggled for by rebellious social movements of a different character flaring up on the fringes of the bourgeois revolutions. Completely autonomous forms of resistance and disobedience existed long before, but the official historiography of the modern labour society cannot make sense of it. The producers of the old agrarian societies, who never put up with feudal rule completely, were simply not willing to come to terms with the prospect of forming the working class of a system extrinsic to their life. An uninterrupted chain of events, from the peasants' revolts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Luddite uprisings in Britain, later on denounced as the revolt of backwards fools, to the Silesian weavers' rebellion in 1844, gives evidence for the embittered

resistance against labour. Over the last centuries, the enforcement of the labour society and the sometimes open and sometimes latent civil war were one and the same.

“The barbarian is lazy and differs from the scholar by musing apathetically, since practical culture means to busy oneself out of habit and to feel a need for occupation”.

Georg W. F. Hegel, *General outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, 1821

“Actually one begins to feel ... that this kind of labour is the best police conceivable, because it keeps a tight rein on everybody hindering effectively the evolution of sensibility, aspiration, and the desire for independence. For labour consumes nerve power to an extraordinary extent, depleting the latter as to contemplation, musing, dreaming, concern, love, hatred”.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Eulogists of Labour*, 1881

## **10. The Working Class Movement was a Movement for Labour**

The historical working class movement, which did not rise until long after the fall of the old social revolts, did not any longer struggle against the impositions of labour but developed an over-identification with the seemingly inevitable. The movement's focus was on workers' 'rights', and the amelioration of living conditions within the reference system of the labour society whose social constraints were largely internalized. Instead of radically criticising the transformation of human energy into money as an irrational end-in-itself, the workers' movement took the 'standpoint of labour' and understood capital valorization as a neutral given fact.

Thus the workers' movement stepped into the shoes of absolutism, Protestantism and bourgeois Enlightenment. The misfortune of labour was converted into the false pride of labour, redefining the domestication the fully-fledged working class had gone through for the purposes of the modern idol, into a 'human right'. The domesticated helots, so to speak, ideologically turned the tables and developed a missionary fervour to demand both the 'right to work' and a general 'obligation to work'. They didn't fight the bourgeois in their capacity as the executives of the labour society but abused them, just the other way around, in the name of labour, by calling them parasites. Without exception, all members of society should be forcibly recruited to the 'armies of labour'.

The workers' movement itself became the pacemaker of the capitalist labour society, enforcing the last stages of reification within the labour system's development process and prevailing against the narrow-minded bourgeois officials of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was a process quite similar to what had happened only a hundred years before when the bourgeoisie stepped into the shoes of absolutism. This was only possible because the workers' parties and trade unions, due to their deification of labour, relied on the state machinery and its institutions of repressive labour management in an affirmative way. That's why it never occurred to them to abolish the state-run administration of human material and, simultaneously, the state itself. Instead of that, they were eager to seize the systemic power by means of what they called 'the march through the institutions' (in

Germany). Thereby, like the bourgeoisie had done earlier, the workers' movement adopted the bureaucratic tradition of labour management and storekeeping of human resources, once conjured up by absolutism.

"Labour has to wield the sceptre,  
Serfdom shall be the idlers fate,  
Labour has to rule the world as  
Labour is the essence of the world".

- Friedrich Stampfer, *Der Arbeit Ehre (In Honour of Labour)*, 1903

### 11. The Crisis of Labour

For a short historical moment after the Second World War, it seemed that the labour society, based on Fordistic industries, had consolidated into a system of 'eternal prosperity', pacifying the unbearable end-in-itself by means of mass consumption and welfare state amenities. Apart from the fact that this idea was always an idea of democratic helots – meant to become reality only for a small minority of world population – it has turned out to be foolish even in the capitalist centres. With the third industrial revolution of microelectronics, the labour society reached its absolute historical barrier.

That this barrier would be reached sooner or later was logically foreseeable. From birth, the commodity-producing system suffers from a fatal contradiction in terms. On the one hand, it lives on the massive intake of human energy generated by the expenditure of pure labour power – the more the better. On the other hand, the law of operational competition enforces a permanent increase in productivity bringing about the replacement of human labour power by scientific operational industrial capital.

This contradiction in terms was in fact the underlying cause for all of the earlier crises, among them the disastrous world economic crisis of 1929-33. Due to a mechanism of compensation, it was possible to get over those crises time and again. After a certain incubation period, then based on the higher level of productivity attained, the expansion of the market to fresh groups of buyers led to an intake of more labour power in absolute numbers than was previously rationalized away. Less labour power had to be spent per product, but more goods were produced absolutely to such an extent that this reduction was overcompensated. As long as product innovations exceeded process innovations, it was possible to transform the self-contradiction of the system into an expansion process.

The striking historical example is the automobile. Due to the assembly line and other techniques of 'Taylorism' ('work-study expertise'), first introduced in Henry Ford's auto factory in Detroit, the necessary labour time per auto was reduced to a fraction. Simultaneously, the working process was enormously condensed, so that the human material was drained many times over the previous level in ratio to the same labour time interval. Above all, the car, up to then a luxury article for the upper ten thousand, could be made available to mass consumption due to the lower price.

This way the insatiable appetite of the labour idol for human energy was satisfied at a higher level despite rationalized assembly line production in the times of the second industrial revolution of 'Fordism'. At the same time, the auto is a case in point for the destructive

character of the highly developed mode of production and consumption in the labour society. In the interest of the mass production of cars and private car use on a huge scale, the landscape is being buried under concrete and the environment is being polluted. And people have resigned to the undeclared third world war raging on the roads and routes of this world – a war claiming millions of casualties, wounded and maimed year in, year out – by just shrugging it off.

The mechanism of compensation becomes defunct in the course of the third industrial revolution of microelectronics. It is true that through microelectronics many products were reduced in price and new products were created (above all in the area of the media). However, for the first time, the speed of process innovation is greater than the speed of product innovation. More labour is rationalized away than can be reabsorbed by the expansion of markets. As a logical consequence of rationalization, electronic robotics replaces human energy, and new communication technology makes labour superfluous. Entire sectors and departments of construction, production, marketing, warehousing, distribution, and management vanish into thin air. For the first time, the labour idol unintentionally confines itself to permanent hunger rations, thereby bringing about its very own death.

As the democratic labour society is a mature end-in-itself system of self-referential labour power expenditure, working like a feedback circuit, it is impossible to switch over to a general reduction in working hours within its form. On the one hand, economic administrative rationality requires that an ever-increasing number of people become permanently 'jobless' and cut off from the reproduction of their life as inherent in the system. On the other hand, the constantly decreasing number of 'employees' is suffering from overwork, and is subject to an even more intense efficiency pressure. In the midst of wealth, poverty and hunger are coming home to the capitalist centres. Production plants are shut down, and large parts of arable land lie fallow. A great number of homes and public buildings are vacant, whereas the number of homeless persons is on the increase. Capitalism becomes a global minority event.

In its distress, the dying labour idol has become auto-cannibalistic. In search of remaining labour 'food', capital breaks up the boundaries of national economy and globalizes by means of nomadic cutthroat competition. Entire regions of the world are cut off from the global flows of capital and commodities. In an unprecedented wave of mergers and 'hostile takeovers', global players get ready for the final battle of private entrepreneurship. The disorganized states and nations implode, their populations, driven mad by the struggle for survival, attack each other in ethnic gang wars.

"The basic moral principle is the right of the person to his work ... For me there is nothing more detestable than an idle life. None of us has a right to that. Civilization has no room for idlers".

- Henry Ford

"Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. ... On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social

combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value”.

- Karl Marx, *Foundation of the Critique of Political Economy*, 1857/8

## 12. The End of Politics

Necessarily, the crisis of labour entails the crisis of state and politics. In principle, the modern state owes its career to the fact that the commodity producing system is in need of an overarching authority guaranteeing the general preconditions of competition, the general legal foundations, and the preconditions for the valorization process – inclusive of a repression apparatus in case human material defaults the systemic imperatives and becomes insubordinate. Organising the masses in the form of bourgeois democracy, the state had to increasingly take on socio-economic functions in the twentieth century. Its function is not limited to the provision of social services but comprises public health, transportation, communication and postal services, as well as infrastructures of all kind. The latter state-run or state-supervised services are essential for the working of the labour society, but cannot be organized as a private enterprise valorization process; ‘privatized’ public services are most often nothing but state consumption in disguise. The reason for this is that such infrastructure must be available for society as a whole on a permanent basis, and cannot follow the market cycles of supply and demand.

As the state is not a valorization unit on its own, and thus not able to transform labour into money, it has to skim off money from the actual valorization process to finance its state functions. If the valorization of value comes to a standstill, the coffers of state empty. The state, purported to be the social sovereign, proves to be completely dependent on the blindly raging, fetishized economy specific to the labour society. The state may pass as many bills as it wants; if the forces of production (the general powers of humanity) outgrow the system of labour, positive law – constituted and applicable only in relation to the subjects of labour – leads nowhere.

This essay is an edited version. The full text is available at  
<http://www.giga.or.at/others/krisis/manifesto-against-labour.html>