**THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE 1970’S**

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

**Struggle Against Work Collective**

The materials presented here reflect the development of a political perspective which we understand to be fundamentally the perspective of the working class struggle internationally today. It is the working class perspective in the precise sense that it is the product of the whole history of working class struggle, and in particular of the theoretical and practical advances made by the mass movements of the working class in the 1960's and 1970's. These mass movements, and therefore the political perspective which is their product, mark a definite *rupture* with the previous history of working class struggle and with the political and organizational perspectives associated with it. Such ruptures, which both build upon and break with the past, are not new to the history of working claw struggle; one example was the rupture of unskilled workers from the content and forms of struggle of skilled workers, reflected in the struggles and conflicts between the craft unions and the IWW in the first 20 years of this century. The rupture of the 1960's, precisely because the working class struggle was much more developed, was also sharper and more far-reaching than any previous ruptures.

The rupture of the 1960's was most clearly expressed by the struggles of sectors of the working class whose experiences lay outside the traditional organizations of working class struggle. We refer to the mass movements of the wageless in North America – the black, women's and youth movements – and to the mass movement of unskilled, men immigrant workers on the assembly lines of Europe's factories. What these mass movements expressed, each in terms of their specific experiences as a sector of the working class, was a *struggle against their work in the capitalist division of labour*. For the first time, the working class struggle up to the 1960s had developed the power against capital to enable these sectors to begin to make struggles which increasingly broke the connection between work and access to the goods and services needed to live – the goods and services or *social wealth* produced by the working class, waged and unwaged, and stolen by capital. The growing capacity of the working class to disconnect access to the social wealth with which to live from the amount of work furnished to capital in waged work (reflected, for example, in the widening gap between wage gains and productivity gains) and, for increasing numbers, from the necessity of doing any steady waged work, was an accurate index of the level working class power reached during the 1960's and early 1970's. Now, in the mid-70's, the power which these mass movements' struggle against work has developed is spreading to either sectors of the working class and to new terrains, for example when young black and white workers bring their insubordination to work off the streets and into the waged workplace, or when nurses in. England strike for time off to do housework.

The mass movements of the 1960's made a rupture with previous working class struggle in a second crucial way. These movements, which had to develop autonomously of, and in conflict with, other sectors of the working class (blacks vs. whites; women vs. men; unskilled vs. skilled) uncovered what had remained hidden and suppressed: that divisions of power exist *within* the working class. These divisions are based fundamentally on the hierarchy of wages, in which the different wage levels reflect a level of social power not only *against* capital's command of unpaid labour, but also *over* the unpaid labour of less powerful, overwhelmingly unwaged, sectors of the class. These movements have shown that the struggles of the less powerful sectors are directed in part against this power other sectors of the working class exercise over them, and that this struggle *within* the working class is essential to destroying these divisions of power, which are capital's fundamental source of power over the whole working class.

The mass movements of working class struggle of the 1960's have thus demonstrated both the direction and the unresolved problems of the working class struggle internationally in the 1970's. Until recently, there has been no political perspective which has clearly articulated this direction and these problems. In Italy, important elements of a perspective of the working class struggle were developed on the basis of the struggles of unskilled, men immigrant workers, but the problem of divisions of power within the working class has not been developed on that social basis. It is no coincidence that it has been people active in the struggles of the unwaged sectors of the class – initially women (in Italy, England and North America) and more recently blacks, both women and men – who have been able to articulate in a political perspective the direction and problems which the struggles of the unwaged have demonstrated most clearly in practice.

It was Marx who said: "Humankind sets itself only such problems as it can solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are in the process of formation." This is what the working class internationally has been doing since the 1960's, and the political perspective of the working class struggle today is the perspective which can give expression to that struggle and serve as a weapon to further develop working class power.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all the materials listed below are available, with a prepaid order, from:

Struggle Against Work Collective

P.O. Box 38, Station E,

Toronto, Canada

Phone 537-5148

1.1 Struggle Against Work Collective, *Statement on the Dissolution of the New Tendency*, 1975, 15¢

The particular political and organizational experience through which, and against which, the perspective developed in Canada was the New Tendency, a network of collectives and individuals which came out of the student and women’s movement of the 1960’s, and saw itself developing working class politics in the workplace and community, outside the framework of traditional left organizations. This statement, by a collective of men, is a self-criticism of New Tendency politics (and in many respects, of the politics of the independent left in North America); it also outlines the political perspective with which we are active within the struggles of the male waged sector of the class.

1.2 Toronto Wages for Housework Collective, *Wages for Housework*, 1975,15¢

Some former members of the New Tendency briefly explain why power relations between men and women within the working class made necessary a political split from the New Tendency as .a "general" organization of the whole working class and their option for the autonomous organization of women. They outline why the wages for housework perspective is the basis on which the power of women can be developed and the divisions within the working class seriously addressed. This article originally was published as an interview in *The Other Woman*, a Toronto feminist newspaper.

2.1 Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class*, Falling Wall Press, 1975, $1.20.

This pamphlet analyzes how the mass movements of the wageless – the black movement and the women's movement – have redefined the working class struggle to include the wageless. The analysis demonstrates how these movements have made clearer than ever before that sex and race divisions within the working class reflect real divisions of power based on the hierarchy of wages. These divisions, fundamental to capital's power over the whole working class, inevitably bring the less powerful sectors into conflict with the more powerful sectors; it is only through this conflict, based on the autonomous struggle of the less powerful sectors, that these divisions can be destroyed. The pamphlet has important contributions by members of the Black Women's Group in England and by the editor of *Race Today*.

2.2 Race Today Collective, *Editorials from the First Year*, 1974-75, 504.

A selection of editorials from *Race Today*, a monthly publication from Britain which seeks to give expression to the struggles of theblack working class, both in emigration and in the home countries. *Race Today* places the fact of divisions of power within the workingclass at the centre of its analysis of the development of working class power, both locally and internationally.

2.3 Modern Times, *The Social Factory*, 1974, 15¢.

This statement was written by some former members of Modern Times, an independent left organization in Cleveland, Ohio which was active in working class struggles and published a local paper from 1972-74**.** It criticizes independent and traditional left politics, and advances a perspective of working class struggle which emphasizes the problem of divisions of power within the working class.

3.1 Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press, 1972, $1.40.

This pamphlet, drawing on the mass movements of the 1960's, elaborates for the first time the main elements of the working class perspective for the 1970's, and remains one of the basic statements of the perspective. It shows how the production and reproduction of labour power is *work*, and overwhelmingly *women's* work, but because it is *unwaged* work, it has never been acknowledged by capital or the left that it is the socially necessary work on which all other capitalist production depends. This centrality of women's work means that the struggle to refuse their unpaid work to capital gives women an enormous power; the struggle for wages for housework is advanced as the means to develop that power. The perspective articulated in this pamphlet opens the way to uncovering all the unpaid labour the working class does for capital – in the waged workplace, at school, in the community, at home – and clarifies that the struggle for wages for all this work is fundamentally the struggle for the power to refuse capital's command of the unpaid labour of the working class, which is the source of capital accumulation and of capital's power.

3.2 Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework*, Falling Wall Press, 1975, 30¢.

This is an important statement of the wages for housework perspective, particularly in the way it relates the whole "socialization" of women to their productive role as housewives, both inside and outside the home. The struggle for wages for housework is posed as the fundamental lever of power for women to struggle *against* housework. For many men, this pamphlet has served as a stimulus to begin looking at men's "socialization" as the process by which male wage labourers are produced, and to see the struggle for wages for all the work we do for capital, both inside and outside the waged workplace, as the struggle for the power to refuse that work.

3.3 *Wages for Housework. Notebooks* #2, 1975, 60¢.

A collection of the more theoretical documents about wages for housework. Included: two articles by Selma James which have not yet had widespread distribution, in which the connections between struggles in different parts of the world are examined – e.g. the relation between the condition of women working without a wage in the kitchens of the metropolis and the condition of the wageless in the Third World.

3.4 *Women in Struggle* #1, 1975, 50ct.

A collection of documents about wages for housework struggles that are taking place on an international scale, affecting every aspect of women's lives.

3.5 *Wages for Housework in a Waged Workplace*, 1975.

This account of an ongoing struggle at a community mental health centre in Brooklyn, NY, USA indicates how the wages for housework perspective enabled women to uncover their unpaid labour in a waged job, challenge the wage/professional hierarchy, see their work as "repairing" the labour power of other workers (the patients) – and forced a group of men workers to start looking at their own position in the capitalist division of labour.

4.0 A number of members of the Struggle Against Work Collective have been active in postal workers' struggles over the past three years, and we have developed much of our understanding of the struggle against work in a waged workplace in reference to these struggles.

4.1 *Working – and Not Working – at the Post Office*, 1974, 50¢.

This pamphlet, originally written for postal workers, analyzes through the experiences of a young, male postal worker how our whole lives, both on and off the job, are organized and distorted by capital in order to get more work for less money from us. The author then describes how his own daily activity and that of his workmates is fundamentally a struggle against work – against capital's power to force us to work in order to live, and live in order to work. The perspective which emerges from the pamphlet is that the various forms of workers' daily activity (the daily on the job struggle to work less; taking time off work; turnover; rank-and-file-initiated struggles, etc.) express the same struggle against work that the wor­king class internationally is engaged in. This pamphlet serves as an excellent introduction to the *explicitly* analytical articles listed below.

4.2 Peter Taylor, "The Sons of Bitches Just Won't Work": Postal Workers Against the State, 1975, 40¢

This article analyzes the struggle between postal workers and capital in Canada from 1965 to 1975, focusing on the struggle against work as the cause of the breakdown of the postal system and of capital's decision to introduce automation as a weapon against that struggle. The article is important both methodologically (e.g. by emphasizing class composition (skilled/unskilled) in the analysis of the content and forms of struggle; by making visible that technology under capitalism is a weapon to attack the struggle against work) and also because it makes an in-depth analysis of the development of a struggle in Canada which in many respects has served as a vanguard for the struggle against work of other waged workers.

4.3 *The April '74 Postal Strike: Workers, Union and the State*, 1974, 35\*.

A detailed analysis of the 17-day wildcat strike, highlighted by a 6-day occupation of the main postal terminal in Montreal. The analysis seeks to clearly identify the workers' interest and basis of power in the strike, as distinct and antagonistic to, capital's and the union's. We make a criticism of the failure of the left (including ourselves) to grasp the workers' autonomous interests in the strike from the perspective of their ongoing struggle against work.

5.1 Jim B. and John L., 'Notes on Developing a Political Perspective: The Refusal of Work’, 1975, 15¢

This is a discussion paper written for a rank and file auto workers group which has been active in Windsor, Ontario for the last two years. It reflects an extremely significant experience within a section of the male waged working class where the struggle between workers and capital has been at its sharpest – as indicated from the workers' viewpoint in the high level of wages won, the strength of the daily struggle against work; from capital's viewpoint in the centralization of wage bargaining between the companies and the union, and the extremely rigid policing of the struggle against work by the companies and the union. The severity of the crisis in the auto industry internationally is an index of the power achieved by auto workers' struggles. In this context, the paper outlines how the group's interaction with the shop floor struggle, with each other in the group and with their lives at home has led them to identify their interests and their power in the struggle for more money and less work.



5.2 *Wildcat at Dodge Truck*, 1974, l0¢ for postage.

This pamphlet, written by two young white workers from Dodge Truck with some friends and distributed at the plant, is an extraordinary account of the struggle against work in Detroit's auto plants and its explosion into a four-day wildcat strike in June/74. In the last two years, there have been a number of rank and file-led wildcats in Chrysler's plants in Detroit. In 1973, it was Jefferson Ave., and then Mack Avenue; in 1974, it was Dodge Truck. These explosions shared many characteristics: they brought out into the open the extremely sharp struggle against work which has made Chrysler the weakest link in the U.S. auto industry, itself the weak link of the industry internationally; the leading role of young black and white workers; the completely visible alliance of the company, state and union to smash the struggle; finally, the involvement of many white left organizations. The pamphlet describes and analyzes each of these characteristics as they unfolded before and during the strike. The role of the union and the left is also analyzed in terms of their historical development. Regarding the left, the authors correctly reject the Leninist conception of leadership as external to the working class struggle, but go on to draw the libertarian conclusion that any leadership and organization is external, and therefore imposed, on the working class struggle. This conclusion actually contradicts the description of the organization of the strike, in which the workers who actively participated in mass meetings and on the picket line are accurately characterized as the real leadership of the struggle, over against the various white left organizations which "intervened".

6.1 Bruno Ramirez, *The Working Class Struggle Against the Crisis: Self-Reduction of Prices in Italy,* 1975, 15¢.

This article analyzes the massive development in Italy of a new terrain of struggle in the context of the present crisis—the terrain of productive consumption (i.e. consumption essential to the production and reproduction of labour power-, housing, home elec­tricity, public transit, etc.). Faced with powerful workers' movements in the waged workplace, reflected most clearly in wage gains outstripping productivity gains, capital internationally is trying to extract more unpaid labour from the wageless-- particularly house­wives. The working class response in Italy, and elsewhere to a lesser extent, has been self-reduction-- the refusal to pay price increases. The wave of self-reduction struggles since August, 1974 has shown, on the one hand, that women, as the main protagonists on this terrain of struggle, have made more far-reaching demands than male waged workers, whose struggles were often controlled by the unions; on the other hand, the strategy of the unions and left parties,by stifling self-reduction struggles among the wageless and trying to keep them in the framework of collective bargaining for waged workers, has re-enforced capital's plan to use the wageless to absorb the crisis. On this terrain, as well as in the waged workplace, the union's role appears clearly as the co-manager, along with capital, of the working class struggle against the crisis.

6.2 Paolo Carpignano, *Capital and the Working Class in the USA during the 1960's*, 1974, 25.

This article presents an entirely new perspective on the working class struggle in the U.S. during the 1960's. It places the struggle against work at the centre of its analysis of both working class struggle and capital's plans. It singles out the struggles of blacks (welfare mothers, street youth) for money without work as the central protagonist of working class struggle, whose objectives and forms of struggle spread to other sectors – other women, students, young white workers. In this context, the article analyzes capital's attempts to respond to the struggle against work: workfare (tying welfare to low-wage jobs, with state guaranteed annual income bringing income up to subsistence level); wage/productivity controls; "job enrichment". These plans are aimed at re-establishing the strict relation between wages and work which had been seriously undermined by working class struggle in the 60's. The major limitation of this article is the absence of analysis of divisions of power within the working class. This seems to reflect the assumption that the unification of the class, both at the level of mass struggles and of political organization, can occur without the struggle to destroy the divisions of power within the class.

7.0 There are three regular publications in English we strongly recommend:

7.1 *Power of Women* – Journal of the Power of Women Collective, Britain.

Reports and analyzes women's situations and struggles internationally from the perspective of wages for housework.

Subs: (5 issues a year) - $3.60- Power of Women, 5 Henley Terrace, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, England.

Current issues available from our collective @ 50$ each.

7.2 *RaceToday*- A monthly magazine published from within the black community in Britain. Covers the autonomous struggles of the black working class in Britain and internationally. Independent theoretical formulations on the mass movement of blacks throughout the world.

Subs: (12 issues) - $10 - Race Today, 74 Shakespeare Rd., London S.E. 24, England

Current issues available from our collective @ 85¢ each.

7.3 *Falling Wall Book Review* – Reviews significant books and pamphlets "from the point of view of the Marxist tendency which seeks to uncover the entire 24-hour working day of the working class internationally, to challenge all forms of work for capital, both waged and unwaged." Each issue contains a substantial article or review which stands on its own as an analysis, e.g. the current issue has an article on teachers as producers of labour power, and how teachers' struggles relate to students' struggle against schoolwork.

Subs: $3.50 (3 issue of 32 pp.)- Falling Wall Press, 79 Richmond Rd., Montpelier, Bristol 6, England.

Current issues available from our collective @ $1.25

New Hogtown Press, 12 Hart House Circle, Toronto 5, Canada (Tel: 961-8210) carries many of the items reviewed

8.1 Katherine Stone, "The Origins of Job Structures in the Steel Industry", *Radical America*,v.7, no. 6, 1973, pp. 19-66.

This article analyzes a crucial moment in the development of working class in the USA-- the deskilling and "Taylorizing" of steel pro­duction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The new organization of work is analyzed as a concerted attack by capital on skilled workers' relative control of wage levels (through their control of entry into the trades) and relative control of the rate and quantity of work (through their control of the immediate work process). Many features of the present capitalist organization of work, particularly the existence of job classifications to Create divisions where no real skill difference remains, are the direct result of this moment of class struggle. (Not available from our collective).

8.2 Sergio Bologna, "Class Composition and Theory of the Party at the Origins of the Workers' Councils Movement", *Telos*, no. 13, 1972, 4-27.

The interest of this article lies in its clearly connecting the workers' control perspective to its material basis in the skilled class composition of pre-W.W.I Germany, Italy and Britain. The skilled class composition of the U.S. working class had already been largely destroyed by capital by this time (cf. Stone article above), and Bologna indicates how the struggles of unskilled, largely immigrant workers in the U.S. in this period already clearly pointed the way beyond the struggle for control of work to the struggle against work. (Photocopies available for 85¢.)

8.3 F. Gambino, *Workers' Struggles and the Development of Ford in Britain*, 22 pp., 1972. Photocopy $1.50.

This article is one of the best analyses of the struggle in auto. It analyzes the introduction of the Fordist organization of work into the British auto industry after W.W.II, as a weapon against the power of skilled workers who dominated the industry until then. It shows how Ford and the state resorted to immigrant labour to man the assembly lines, and the forms which these workers' struggles have taken. The article is important both methodologically, and in how it has been used by militants to develop the struggle in Ford plants in England (Cf. Review of Gambino in *Falling Wall Review*, No. 3-4, 1975; also "Shop Floor Power at Ford Dagenham", *Big Flame Journal*, listed below.

9.0 The following articles reflect the struggle against work perspective as it has developed on the basis of the struggles of unskilled, men workers in Europe. On the one hand, these articles clearly indicate the power these struggles have developed against capital, throwing some of the basic mechanisms of capital accumulation into crisis; on the other hand, because none of them acknowledge divisions of power within the working class, they fail to come to terms strategically with the limitations which these divisions of power impose on the .development of working class power.

9.1 *Big Flame Journal*, #1, 1975. 75¢.

Two articles of particular interest: "Shop Floor Power at Ford Dagenham", details the struggle against work in the last 2 years in Britain's largest auto complex; and "Autonomy and the Social Struggle", which advances *an analysis of capitalist planning* and working class struggle on the terrain of the production and **re**production of labour power – in the family, school, community. Big Flame has clearly felt the impact of the autonomous women's movement and black movement, but the latter article and others in the Journal persist in posing the struggles of different sectors of the classas complementing each other, thereby failing to account for contradictory relations of power within the class. This failure undoubtedly reflects Big Flame's aspiration to be a general organization of the whole working class.

9.2 G. Baldi, "Mass Worker and Social Capital", 1972, 20¢.

This is a summary of a collection of articles published in Italy. It analyzes how the working class struggle in the first 30 years of this century has resulted in a fundamentally different contextfor the class struggle than prevailed in the "classical" period of socialism and Bolshevism in the pre-1919 period. This new context is characterized by the "mass" composition of the working class (unskilled, mobile, and unattached to work) and the planning of capitalist production (commodity production and production of labour power) by "social capital" in capitalist society as a whole – the "social factory". The working class struggle in this new context is thus characterized by the struggle against work and for wages, understood not from capital's viewpoint of an exchange for work but from the working class viewpoint of re-appropriation of the social wealth produced by the working class and appropriated by capital.

9.3 Potere Operaio, *The Communism of the Working Class*, 1972, 15¢.

A statement by a political organization in Italy .summarizing the new characteristics of working class struggle today. In the context of the wave of working class struggle from 1969-71 in Italy, in which the struggle for more money and fewer wage differences among workers had disconnected wages from productivity, the article proposes a programme of struggle for the "political wage" – equal wages for all workers, employed or unemployed, based only on the power of working class struggle.

9.4 Potere Operaio, “Italy 1973: Workers' Struggles and the Capitalist Crisis", *Radical America*, v.7 no.2, 1973. Copy of the article alone, 15¢

An analysis of how working class struggle against work from 1969 on caused the capitalist crisis in Italy, how capital began to counterattack by using the crisis to try to re-impose the connection of wages and productivity, and how the male industrial working class began to respond in early 1973, when the article was written.

9.5 Lotta Continua, *Autonomous Struggles and the Capitalist Crisis*, 1974, 50¢.

The main interest of this pamphlet of articles, interviews and discussions with members of an Italian revolutionary organization isthe serious analysis it makes of the immigrant working class in Italy and Europe – the unskilled, predominantly male sector which has expressed the struggle against work most sharply in the industrial working class in Europe.