A Way Forward Pt 2 [WIP Proposal]

Hello again,

So it seems since my last post gained some a bit of traction and resonated with at least some people, I figured I would write another post detailing some specific first steps we can take as a community in an effort to make a real attempt at an organized platform for effective change. This is a rough draft filled with my own biases, opinions and judgement on the best way to proceed. By no means is it a foolproof plan - that is why I ask for your heavy scrutiny and critique. After all, I'm just a random guy on the internet. If you had something completely different in mind than what I propose here I strongly urge you to create your own proposal and share it with the community.

Also a note before I start: everything in this document is proposed as a transitory model, designed to bootstrap enough capital by interfacing with existing capitalist economies, while operating in a somewhat socialist & fair way internally. This is probably NOT the end goal ideal for a socialist/communist society, simply a transitory model to help us 1) find out what the end goal ideas might look like in practice and 2) how can we achieve or those end goal ideals in a capitalist society.

The Founding of the Socialist Programmers Worker Cooperation (Name up for discussion)

As I see it the best way to proceed would be to create a worker cooperative that operates and runs the subreddit, the discord, and any platforms/infrastructure we create. The Socialist Programmers Worker Cooperation (will be referred to as SPWC from here on out) will have several initial goals:

1. Create platforms/tools to support & unify a global, broad left coalition, working primarily towards common goals, while also supporting each other in our separate goals. The second part is extremely important in order to actually unify the different divisions of the left. There are many differing visions of what the ideal society looks like, and some of them will work better in practice than others, but we should support our comrades in their effort to test their ideas, just as they will support ours.
2. Create a robust education system to educate people who wish to become members of the SPWC, as well as general education of participants in the broader community. This will at first include a core computer science curriculum, as well as some classes on leftist theory. The system should attempt to use free materials provided by established colleges and universities. As the SPWC grows, we will expand this to other tech related disciplines such as computer engineering, or network administration as well as create some more niche courses. We should have a system in place robust enough to take someone with no skills and only motivation and give them the skills needed to be able to pay them as a full member of the SPWC.

3. Use our collective skills to participate in the broader economy in order to gain funding for our other two goals, as well as be able to pay our members an hourly wage. Examples of this would be launching products that can bring in revenue, providing services such as technical consultation, IT support, or completing bounties/contract work.

I imagine early on in the startup phase where we have no capital, we'll have wildly varying time commitments, so we should have a system to respect the time commitments people have made. I propose several different types of involvement with the SPWC outlined below:

Volunteer - No weekly participation expectations, can submit proposals, no voting rights, no pay, but being a volunteer will significantly help in the application process for a paid position.
Consultant - 0-5 paid hours per week, no voting rights, helps with applications for part time/full time.
Part Time Member - 5-20 hours per week, 1 vote in decisions
Full Time Member - 20+ hours per week, 2 votes in decisions

Later on when SPWC is more established and actually pays wages, we should change consultant to 0-20, part time to 20-40 and full time to 40+. Unless of course we decide on a different working standard that might be more sustainable or just.

Initially onboarding of a contributor to SPWC will follow the process laid out below:
1. An application will be sent to SPWC from a candidate.
2. Some number of members will have the designated duty to review applications.
3. All members of SPWC have the right to review any application(s) and nominate a candidate for membership.
4. A nomination from a member initiates a vote of all members to determine whether the candidate becomes a probationary consultant.
5. If the candidate reaches 50% + 1 majority, then a probationary period starts where the candidate works and learns as normal and gets paid the standard probationary wage.
6. After the probationary period ends, a vote is initiated where the candidate must earn a 75% majority of the team they are working on. If the candidate reaches the majority, then they become a full member with voting and ownership rights. Maybe if they reach 50%, then they have the opportunity to extend their probationary period and try again. This probably would be limited to 2 attempts total, because we don't want to make it possible to create a situation where a candidate is just being strung along without ever knowing if they become a full member.

Ideally, eventually everyone who works through the education system to a satisfactory degree and applies for membership will be able to become a member of SPWC, but we will have to make sure we grow sustainably in order to make sure the rights we want to provide everybody aren't at risk by onboarding people too quickly.

Because at the beginning the SPWC will have no funding or revenue, the SPWC will pay its members and consultants an hourly wage in the form of debts. When the SPWC actually has income, the members can vote to allocate funds to paying off debts. The funds allocated to paying off debts must be divided and paid in proportion to the total of SPWC's debts. For example if SPWC has $1000 in debts with worker #1 being owed $300, worker #2 being owed $300 and worker #3 being owed $400 and the SPWC votes to allocate $100 to paying off debts, then worker 1 and 2 would be paid $30 and worker 4 would be paid $40. During the very early phases of the SPWC, members will have a $0 hourly wage until we pass a proposal that outlines how hourly wages should be standardized and decided.

The Founding of a Leftist Federation Federation

Ultimately we will be building a coalition larger than just the socialist programmers community itself. With the founding of SPWC, we would also be founding a federation of worker cooperatives in which SPWC will initially be the only member. The federation will be run democratically by all of its members, which consist of all of the members of the federation's coops. This federation will also have several main goals (Subject to change)

1. Democratically create a set of rules that allow organizations that are part of the federation to thrive. One of these rules might be requiring members to interact using an at cost model, while using a for profit model when interacting with non-federation consumers. (By for-profit I mean extracting profit from the capitalist model into our socialist model, and trying to keep it there as much as possible). For example, say the federation contains two coops: the SPWC, and a cooperatively owned restaurant. The SPWC would be able to order a lunch for its employees paying only for the costs of production (materials, labour, equipment maintenance, cost to increase capacity to meet demand). Since every member of the SPWC is also by definition a member of the federation, they would also be able to eat at the restaurant individually using the at-cost model. Likewise the restaurant and its members would be able to use SPWC's education system or IT services at-cost. The benefit of this is that it encourages money to change hands within the federation itself rather than sending it back to the general capitalist economies.
2. Conflict mediation (between its member cooperatives)
3. Be the front organization to represent its members in political activities & lobbying for legislation favorable to its members.
4. Strives to guarantee each of its worker-members rights that aren't provided to them by their government which can include: Healthcare (including mental health), housing, healthy food, etc. These rights should be provided via member coops using the at-cost model if possible. (I think it would be a while before the federation grows large enough to run its own cooperative hospital, so the federation would negotiate contracts with outside insurance providers)

The federation would sustain income from its members possibly through a membership fee, tax on coop profits, or by selling access to the at-cost model to individuals. The federation will aim to eventually create a society where everyone can be a member, and jobs (therefore also

membership) are guaranteed to anyone willing to work/learn. Expulsion of members should only happen in egregious scenarios and taken seriously with due process, as stripping them of membership means stripping them of the rights granted by the federation. Losing membership (aka being fired) at one of the coops, will not mean losing membership of the federation.

Another point to consider is that it isn't a requirement for every organization in the federation to be a cooperative. Other organizations might be structured in their own visions for what they think would look best for them. An organization might be full on anarchist, while others might adopt a more strong handed communist model. The point being that the different leftist organizations will be trying out their own ideals in practice, and also participate in the federation. In my view, at least initially, most organizations in the federation will be a cooperative, just because it seems like the easiest model to adopt from within a capitalist economy. At least until the federation grows large enough that is.

This was a very broad overview of the main ideas of the federation. The actual implementation details will require much more work, writing proposals, debating and testing to find out what works and what doesn't as the federation grows and adapts. The federation will be founded after the SPWC is up and running, ready to collaborate and take on the challenge of creating it.