

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WORKER SELF-MANAGEMENT

Syndicalism in Italy - The federation of the Italian Bottle-Blowers was organised in 1901. It opened its first co-operative glass factory at the end of 1902 in Milan, using money raised by the workers themselves, to provide work for 150 striking workers. The co-operative bought or built factories in Livorno, Imola, Sesto-Calendo and Asti, and leased another near Naples. By 1906 it employed 2000 workers, its factories were worth 750 000 Lira and it earned 300 000 Lira more than it spent. Syndicalism in Italy was weak-ened when workers were sent to fight WW1 and was later destroyed by the Fascist dictatorship.

Anarchist Communes in the Ukraine - When the Bolsheviks withdrew Russia from WW1, they agreed to give the Ukraine to the Germans and Austrians. By 1921, Anarchist partisans organised by Nestor Makhno expelled the occupying armies, defeated a Polish and Ukrainian nationalist counterrevolution and freed a region north of the Crimea. Large estates in this region that were taken over and operated by former peasants under Anarchist influence prospered, while areas where estates were looted because there was no Anarchist presence fell on hard times and looked to the Anarchist communal farming villages as a model of prosperity. Anarchist partisans fought a guerrilla war against the Red Army after the Bolsheviks began to force all Unions and collectives under the control of the Bolshevik dictatorship. The Bolsheviks later returned many large estates to their former owners.

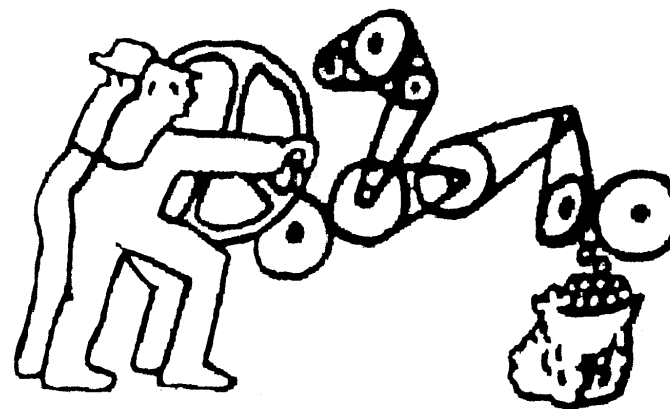
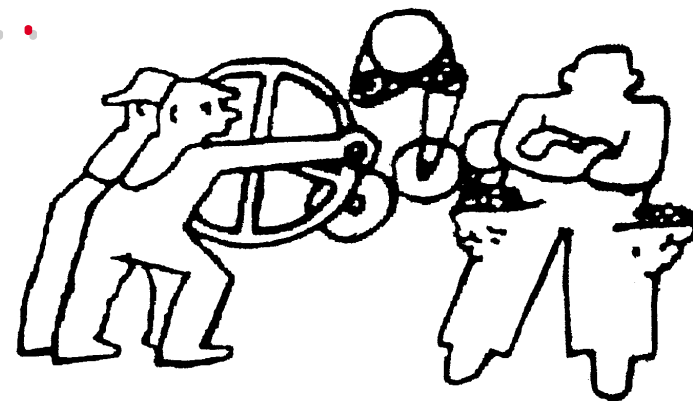
Anarcho-Syndicalism in Spain - In 1936, a right wing coup attempt in Spain was foiled when Union members mobilised popular militias to resist them. When war broke out, factory and land owners fled the country leaving workers to run them for themselves. In areas controlled by the Anarchist CNT (National Confederation of Labour), 5 692 202 Hectares of large estates were communalised by the former peasant tenants into 1750 agrarian collectives in Aragon, Levant and Castille. 1850 factories and businesses were collectivised by 800 000 workers. Nearly all industry in Catalonia and 70% in Levant was collectivised. The CNT collectives ran the economy co-operatively and co-operated with businesses and industries collectivised by other Unions until Stalinist military forces began to imprison or kill all those in Spain who would not join a Russian-style dictatorship. Stalinists later returned the collectivised agriculture, businesses and industry to their former Capitalist owners.

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The Bosses need
us...



...we
don't need them

**Common Sense Reasons for
Worker Self-Management**

The Bosses Need Us... ...We Don't Need Them

HOW BOSSES GET RICH AND POWERFUL AT OUR EXPENSE

What do bosses do?

Scheduling - Deciding when work needs to be done. Setting deadlines. This could just as easily be done by the workers ourselves.

Co-ordinating - Making sure that activities which depend on each other don't hold each other up. Making sure resources are distributed to those who need them. Often, the centralised control of resources is more of a bottle-neck that keeps people from getting what they need to do their jobs. Much of this is actually done informally by the workers ourselves.

Accounting - This is a clerical job, counting the money we make for them.

Budgeting - The actual work is done by those who do the work and only compiled by the manager. The manager then sets priorities.

Staffing - Hiring, firing and assigning people to tasks.

The less work a boss does the more they are paid! This is because they are not paid for doing actual work. They are paid for how well they get others to do the most work for the least compensation. It also happens because bosses tend to use their power to make themselves richer.

What do Stockholders (Capitalists) do?

Nothing!

Capitalists buy part of a company ("stock" is a measure of ownership) and receive a part of the value of what its workers produce (profit taken from workers is called "stock dividend") or they rent their money to a company by buying bonds and are paid "interest." They do not work for this money outside of the kind of brainwork a thief would use in choosing an easy victim.

Where do profits come from?

You!

The cost of running a business is the money spent for labour, machinery and tools, materials, rent, utilities, interest on loans, maintenance, and other services. The value of labour is the difference between the income of the business and its non-labour expenses. Profit is the difference between the labour value and the money the boss actually pays the workers in salary and

...WE DON'T NEED THEM

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take an equal share or to pay everyone based on how many hours they work.

Without stockholders and overpaid bosses, more money goes to those who actually do the work.

What about benefits?

Without bosses, we are no longer considered "expendable."

Medical Care, Dental Care, Child Care, Disability, Vacation Time, Sick Time and Retirement are considered part of the cost of maintaining the workplace and are paid for out of the earnings of the workplace.

The workplace also covers the cost of your tools, safety equipment and training.

What about promotions?

Tasks are assigned based on our skills and abilities: what we know and can do. There is no "kissing ass" because no one tells anyone else what to do and people are paid based on their work and not their position.

We learn on-the-job how to do more and more complex tasks. Self-managed workplaces have apprenticeship/internship procedures for new workers.

The only "promotion" is in the area to responsibility. Since no one is in-charge, the working group gives the most responsibility to those they trust. The reward is personal satisfaction and respect.

What about shirkers?

By doing away with the real parasites in the workplace (bosses), we have a lot more people to do the work and we can reduce the amount of work everyone has to do to be productive. This means that the workday can be shorter and more flexible and that work won't be as strenuous. People can also choose to work part time.

Without a boss, the stress at work will be lower.

Shirking is usually a subconscious response to being exploited. Without exploitation, there will be less incentive to shirk off work.

Those who still want to stand by and let their co-workers do the work while they do nothing will be stealing from us. It is up to us to decide if and when someone's laziness is unfair to the rest of us. Workers who try to live off the work of others while doing nothing will be kicked out of the job at the discretion of their co-workers.

a lot compared to the rest of us. Now, common sense tells us that if you subtract the majority of rich people who only inherited their money, there are only a handful left and they all got their money from owning stock or property and not from honest work. At best, hard work can make you comfortable. At worst, it will make you sick and your boss rich! The best way to insure that you are working for yourself is to have no boss at all!

HOW WOULD WE WORK WITHOUT BOSSES?

How are decisions made?

We are organised into working groups based on what we do (our tasks). Decisions are made democratically by those who do the work. Each group sends a representative (called a delegate) to co-ordinating meetings for their section of the workplace. Each section co-ordinating committee sends a delegate to the coordinating committee for the workplace.

Delegates can be changed at any time by the group who chooses them. The delegates have no authority over the groups.

Conflicts are resolved through mediation and arbitration by someone neutral and impartial.

How is work organised?

Working groups plan the work and divide up the tasks. Without a boss you don't have to wait for the them to OK everything, you just agree with your co-workers what needs to be done. We decide for ourselves which jobs we wish to learn. Co-ordinating Committees co-ordinate scheduling and the allocation of group resources to projects. It is also how working groups share information and find out what's going on at the workplace.

The workplace co-ordinating committee co-ordinates budgeting and major functions like accounting, purchasing and sales so that production is based on demand for the products or services of the workplace.

New workers are brought into a workplace when the current workers agree that more people are needed.

How are workers paid?

The workers decide how much of the income earned by their work goes to keep the business going and how much goes to them as compensation for their labour. Without "make work" from bosses, every job becomes equally necessary: both physical and brain work. The workers may choose to each

benefits.

A boss's performance is usually measured by how much profit they can squeeze out of us. Many are paid in stock capital or profit-sharing to make them more greedy.

Having a boss is a dictatorship.

Modern bureaucracy was invented in Nazi Germany by a guy named Max Weber who patterned it after a military chain-of-command. Failure to follow orders results in discipline or being fired!

Modern production was invented by Henry Ford who wanted to reduce the actions of the workers to the repetitive motions of machines and Frederick Taylor who wanted to minimise the number of motions to maximise the "productivity" of each worker. Bosses design work tasks to dehumanise workers.

Many workplaces make you work overtime. Many workers are paid a fixed salary (instead of by the hour) so they can be worked as much as the boss likes without paying them for overtime.

Most workplaces discourage dissent, worker organising or even asking questions of management outside of how to follow their orders.

Many workplaces pretend to involve workers in decision making to get them to spy on each other.

Many workplaces spy on their workers using time clocks, computer programs, hidden cameras, informers, and even private detectives. Some workplaces even limit the number of times and amount of time we can spend going to the toilet!

Many workplaces now make us wear uniforms.

Bosses are inefficient!

Many managers create unnecessary work or make you redo work "their way" just to satisfy their job or to make you think you have to go through them to get your work done.

Many managers create "empires" of things under their centralised control so you can't get resources or information you need to do your day-to-day work. Without a boss, access to these crucial resources would be decentralised and made available based on need.

Bosses can get you killed!

Work is one of the leading causes of death from accidents and health problems.

Accidents occur when your boss tries to speed-up the work to increase

their profit. Bosses try to cut costs by cutting safety measures and practices on the job. Jobs can be stressful due to overwork, harassment, competition, scheming, manipulation, etc. by bosses and coworkers who think they can kiss ass to get ahead. Stress will hurt your health, weaken your body and ultimately shorten your life. "Accidents at work kill people, but bad working conditions are no accident.

But workers need to be told what to do?

Why?

Workers get together on the job informally all the time to talk about how to do a job or solve a problem on the job. We don't ask the boss because s/he doesn't know how to do the work.

Workers regularly get together with friends or family members to make decisions without the need for a boss. We go out to have a good time together. We plan holidays and road trips. We make "management" decisions all the time about our home and personal life.

But bosses go to school to learn how to be managers...

Actually, most of them don't have degrees in business administration or public administration (MBA, MPA). Master's Degree programs in these fields teach accounting and Capitalist economics, but you won't learn anything about people or problem-solving which you don't already know from experience. What you learn is management and motivational theory: how to exploit people through psychology. Most managers (bosses) just have business degrees, at best, which is a degree in Capitalism: Banking, Accounting, Profiteering, etc.

But bosses create jobs...

No!

The boss only hires and fires us. Jobs are created because the boss sees a chance to get richer, but the amount of work involved is greater than what those who currently work for the boss can do alone. Bosses will do anything possible to avoid hiring new workers including assigning more tasks to each worker ("work speed-ups"), buying machines to take workers jobs and paying overtime. Overtime costs a boss less than hiring a new worker, but the workers who work overtime actually get paid less than that additional work after they pay tax (it may even increase their tax rate).

But my boss is "nice"...

Don't trust them!

A boss is a boss is a boss is a boss... ...!

The boss knows that their job depends on being able to exploit us. We can depend on them only to tell us what we want to hear. The boss you think you know and "trust" is a façade.

If you work hard, they will work you harder.

If we do a good job at work, they will criticise the quality of our work then take credit for it from their boss. They will use our work to get themselves a promotion.

If there is a problem at work, they will tell their boss it's your fault. If you know more than your boss, they will try to get you fired or harass you so that you will quit or make mistakes they can use against you to get you fired. They will tell you things like "I want to help you" or "you are overqualified". When you hear this, you will know the end is near.

But what if the boss is the owner?

First of all, most small businesses are usually owned by the bank (through a mortgage or small business loan) and a landlord (most are in rented commercial property) who collect money from you through your boss for doing nothing.

It is arguable that many small business "owners"/operators work harder than if they were working for someone else, but the chances are, even if they do, they still don't pay their workers for the full value of the work their workers do. The best evidence of this is that while you have to catch a taxi to work, the boss owns a car. While you have to rent or share a room, the boss has a house. Obviously, you can't afford to live like your boss and even the hardest working boss doesn't do that much more than you do, to be equal to the difference in the money each of you get out of the business.

But, if I work hard and do what I'm told, I can be rich and successful...

People who work hard and are smart at what they do are usually viewed as a threat by their boss because they probably know as much or more about the work than those in charge.

Working for a boss isn't competitive. Chances are, if your boss wants to hire or promote someone, they will choose someone they think is like them or a friend, regardless of their qualifications.

Take a look around you. How many rich people do you see? There aren't