On a problem for workplace democracy and its solution via a workers' dictatorship

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The plan

1. Democratizing workplaces: the debate

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2. Democratizing workplaces: a problem

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1. Democratizing workplaces: the debate
2. Democratizing workplaces: a problem
3. A scheme tackling similar problems
4. Transposing that scheme to the corporation

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1. Democratizing workplaces: the debate
2. Democratizing workplaces: a problem
3. A scheme tackling similar problems
4. Transposing that scheme to the corporation
5. Normative justification

Democratizing workplaces I

An accepted position in the philosophical debate:

Workplaces are unjustifiably undemocratic and should be democratized

Democratizing workplaces II

Broadly two paths to democratization:

1. Relatively minor changes: rule-of-law type protections (Anderson); transforming a liberal market economy towards a social-democratic kind of system

Put aside here: Economic democracy á la Schweickart/Malleson

Democratizing workplaces II

Broadly two paths to democratization:

1. Relatively minor changes: rule-of-law type protections (Anderson); transforming a liberal market economy towards a social-democratic kind of system

2. More radical proposals: Novel institutions that give more power to workers. Property-owning democracy, Ferrerras's two-chamber system etc.

Put aside here: Economic democracy á la Schweickart/Malleson

A blind spot

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- perhaps a position like top-down legalistic liberalism? (Cf. B. Williams's critique)

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- but capitalists will have no interest in democratization
- it is, per definition, a scheme to limit their control
- but we might need their cooperation in democratization: skills, assets, knowledge etc.
- or at least their non-sabotage!

Standing on the shoulder of giants

Figure 1: The giants

A prototype for a solution?

The dictatorship of the proletariat was conceptualized to tackle (a version of) this problem!

- a transitional institution to secure the revolution

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- a transitional institution to secure the revolution

- using the instruments of the bourgeois state

- temporarily retaining an unjust state to enable transition to justice

A rough sketch for a solution

A workers' dictatorship in the business corporation!

- a transitional institution to secure democratization

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- a transitional institution to secure democratization
- using the instruments of the undemocratic corporation

A rough sketch for a solution

A workers' dictatorship in the business corporation!

- a transitional institution to secure democratization
- using the instruments of the undemocratic corporation
- temporarily retaining a somewhat undemocratic state to enable democratization

Detailing the solution

- dictatorial competencies for a worker-elected council

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- using the existing powers of the corporate board(s) and the hierarchy below it

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- the task of securing cooperation, establishing independence for the workers and protecting against sabotage

- a strong mandate to work towards its own superfluousness

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- a practical problem of state support

Justifying a solution

Three dimensions of justice in transition:

1. Self-liberation

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2. Just rule
3. Public willing

Final remarks

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- the accessibility question

The end

Thank you for your attention!