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WORK PLACE COLLECTIVES:

A STRATEGY TOWARD DECENTRALIZED DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM*

by

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I explore in this essay a possible strategy for the transformation of democratic, capitalist states into decentralized, democratic, socialist societies. The strategy suggested here can be pursued now within the United States and similar nation-states whose formal legal frameworks provide for certain civil and political rights including freedom of speech, press, assembly, association and life-style, due process, etc. More specifically, I will examine the notion of voluntary, social, economic, and political collectives, and networks of such collectives, organized in and around existing urban and non-urban places of work -- fresh cells of participatory democracy and socialism within the aging, crises-ridden bodies of liberal, capitalist states, a notion akin to the Kibbutz model and federation among Kibbutz settlements. (1) I will also touch on a related issue, namely, who is to benefit from a revolution toward democratic socialism, and hence, who should be encouraged to join transformation movements and the proposed work place collectives.

Decentralized, Democratic Socialism

Socialism and democracy mean different things to different people. It is therefore necessary to clarify my understanding of decentralized democratic socialism before discussing a feasible strategy toward that goal. Human societies, past, present, and future, can be described in terms of several, interrelated, essential, existential processes, and a cluster of values which evolve along with the institutionalization of these processes, and which come to permeate the consciousness of members of societies, thus assuring the relative stability of established institutional orders. (2) The interrelated existential processes are: (a) management of life-sustaining and life-enhancing, productive resources, including natural and human-created resources; (b) organization of work and production; (c) distribution of goods and services, of social recognition, and of civil and political rights; and (d) modes of decision-making, coordination, integration, and governance. The value cluster involves positions on several related dimensions, relevant to the workings of the foregoing institutional processes: (a) Equality -- Inequality; (b) liberty -- domination; (c) Affirmation of life, self, and others -- selfishness, disregard of others and viewing them as means to one's ends, disregard of life; (d) cooperation -- competition.

Values: The value positions underlying the institutional processes of decentralized, democratic socialism are equality, liberty, affirmation of life, self and others, and cooperation. It is a social order in which every human is

*Chapter #5 from BEYOND THE JUNGLE, Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., and Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall & Co., 1979. Presented at the Socialist Party, USA Convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (May 1977).

considered equal in intrinsic worth in spite of manifold differences among individuals and groups, and in which everyone enjoys the same social, economic, civil, and political rights, liberties, constraints, and responsibilities. Everyone is considered an autonomous subject rather than an object or means to someone else's ends. No one is dominated and exploited by others and institutional arrangements are conducive to free and full development of everyone's inherent potential. Equality within the context of liberty and affirmation of life, self and others does not, however, mean uniformity and monotony as is often assumed erroneously, but an equal right for everyone to be different and actualize one's individuality within the reality of available aggregate resources.

Existential Processes: In a decentralized, democratic socialist society, natural and human-created, life-sustaining and life-enhancing, productive resources are freely available for use by all, on equal terms, subject to a collectively and democratically evolved rational system of priorities concerning the allocation and distribution of scarce resources. The use of all resources is geared to the satisfaction of collectively acknowledged individual and public needs, and resources are managed in a manner minimizing waste and destruction, and assuring conservation and high quality of goods and services. Individual and corporate ownership and control of productive resources and their exploitation for profits and for concentration of economic and social power are replaced by a system of horizontal integration involving direct, democratic control by local communities, and trans-local democratic coordination assuring exchanges of resources on egalitarian terms of trade among local communities. Major objectives of the trans-local coordination are management of resources and needs over wider areas and equalization of access for all communities to needed resources not available locally, assuring thus that intrinsic human needs are met everywhere in spite of differences in the geographic distribution of natural resources and differences in the development of scientific knowledge and technological skills.

In democratic socialist communities, everyone is expected and entitled to participate in design, direction, and implementation of production of needed goods and services. Work processes are redesigned into nonhierarchical and nonfragmentized patterns to facilitate integration of the physical, intellectual, creative, and emotional capacities of people at work. People understand their work and they are masters, rather than "factors" of production. They work cooperatively rather than competitively, thus providing opportunities for the emergence of mutually supportive, meaningful, caring, and loving human relations. People choose the kind of work they like to do and they can change their chosen fields from time to time. Rotation assures coverage of intrinsically unsatisfying tasks and access to intrinsically satisfying tasks chosen by too many people. There is no unemployment, no forced retirement, no forced exclusion of young people from participation in work, no selective exclusions on the basis of sex or other personal characteristics. Tasks are however matched to individual capacities. Decentralization also facilitates a "human scale" for places of work instead of the prevailing, huge, dehumanizing and highly bureaucratized settings of production. Technology and automation are used selectively not on the basis of profit criteria, but when and where such use enhances the quality of work processes and of products and does not result in inappropriate loss of non-renewable materials and energy.

Rights to goods and services and to social recognition do not depend in democratic socialist communities on the type of work one performs but on one's individual needs. This means that there are no individual material incentives and no differential wages and prestige linked to different work tasks. Rather, all work needed by communities to sustain the existence of their members and to enhance the quality of life is respected equally, and everyone has access to the goods and services needed for one's full development within the limits of available resources, and subject to the requirements of equal rights for all.

Methods of decision-making and governance in democratic socialist communities reflect the principle that everyone is equally entitled to participate in decisions affecting one's existence and well-being, and to access to all relevant information concerning such issues. This requires elimination of secrecy in governance processes. These principles can be achieved through decentralization of governance to communities small enough to permit personal communication among members, yet large enough to be conducive to social cohesion and continuity, and to economic viability and self-reliance, which does not imply social isolation and autarky. A political system fitting these requirements is organized and integrated horizontally and anarchically rather than vertically and hierarchically. This means that self-governing, local communities, united internally through common economic and social interests, and conducting their affairs through participatory democracy, develop joint coordinating mechanisms for regional and trans-regional cooperation and exchanges. These latter mechanisms function through representative, democratic assemblies whose members represent not anonymous individuals, but their respective local communities in whose lives they continue to participate while serving in an assembly. Community members serve in coordinating assemblies on a rotating basis and are not entitled to special privileges, for such service is considered equal in importance to all other tasks required for a community's way of life and well-being.

The brevity of this sketch is not meant to suggest that the evolution and implementation of decentralized, democratic socialism is simple and that we already know all there is to know about it. Implications of the notions presented here will emerge only as people work together toward the creation of such communities and societies in accordance with their own ideas, preferences and life-styles. There is no single, correct model for decentralized, democratic socialism, only one general set of values and principles which lend themselves to many variations in real life. All I intended to do here was to sketch this set of values and principles.

Assumptions Underlying a Work Place Collective Strategy

Political strategies for transformation of established social orders are essentially hypotheses or predictions concerning anticipated effects of specified courses of action upon given social realities. Like all hypotheses, political strategies involve, inevitably, uncertainties. These uncertainties can be reduced when assumptions underlying a strategy are made explicit so that its logic and validity may be examined. I will, therefore, note here several related assumptions underlying the work place collectives strategy.

Political strategies in inegalitarian, competitive societies concern usually intense conflicts among groups who differ markedly in perceptions and definitions of their interests. I assume, however, that a strategy toward democratic socialism ought to define its goals in terms of genuine human interests, rather than in terms of segmented interests of given sub-groups of societies such as the "working class." Goal definitions derived from inclusive human interests are conducive to transcending conventional conflict models or "zero-sum" models of revolution and strategy. They avoid a-priori definitions of certain population segments as enemies, definitions which invariably turn into self-fulfilling prophecies, and they open up possibilities for everyone, irrespective of social background, to join liberation movements rather than resist them.

Next, I assume that strategies toward decentralized, democratic socialism are unlikely to attain their goals, when their means are incompatible, in a qualitative sense, with the societal reality they are meant to bring into being. Hence, decentralized, democratic socialist societies may not be attainable through coercion and violence, nor through centralized authority, since coercion, violence, nor through centralized authority, since coercion, violence, and concentration of economic and political power are the very negation of equality, liberty, affirmation of life, and cooperation -- the essence of decentralized, democratic socialism. Such societies are more likely to result from voluntary, decentralized, non-hierarchical, direct actions by groups of individuals who are committed to, and begin to practice on their own, democratic socialism in their everyday lives, within the social space available to them, and who link up with others engaged in similar practices elsewhere, thus creating gradually new social realities within established social orders.

A further assumption leading to the same strategic conclusion is that reasoned arguments alone, aimed at affecting people's consciousness, their perceptions of interest, and their consequent choices in conventional electoral processes, are unlikely to bring about decentralized democratic socialist societies. Verbal and other symbolic communications aimed at changing prevailing consciousness and perceptions are, of course, essential elements of any political strategy; and honest, non-manipulative participation in electoral processes may at times be an appropriate element of a comprehensive strategy for radical social change. However, verbal and other abstract communications are likely to be less convincing than the actual practice of existential alternatives. Large numbers of people in the United States and in similar countries are not likely to opt for democratic socialism unless the feasibility of such a way of life is first demonstrated in practice through concrete, voluntary experiments, and unless participants in such practice find their experiences more fulfilling and meaningful than life under prevailing conditions of inequality, competition, and hierarchical controls, and share their actual experiences and findings with people around them.

This assumption is related to the fact that most people in societies like the United States are linked through life-long experiences and through consciousness based on these experiences to the existing social order which offers them a measure of security when they conform to established modes of existence and when they engage in competitive pursuit of selfish interests. They are largely ignorant of possible alternatives to the social status-quo and tend to be afraid of what they do not know. Since people tend to gain now marginal material rewards

and differential social recognition for success in competition, they are divided individual against individual, and group against group, and they are easily controlled from above by centralized authority. One possible way of reversing these self-perpetuating, alienating processes seems to be to create, voluntarily, alternative patterns which negate in all respects the values, structures, and dynamics of the prevailing order.

My final assumption is that any strategy toward decentralized, democratic socialism must confront the central feature of capitalism, the established rights of property and control over society's means of existence and production, and must suggest appropriate means for making these resources available for use by all people on equal terms, in a cooperative, self-directing and self-reliant manner geared to the acknowledged needs of all.

Work Place Collectives

Work place collectives as conceived here are groups of individuals working in the same place, and their families, who have chosen to shape their personal and social relations, and their economic and political affairs, as far as possible, in accordance with democratic and socialist values and structures. They are to become the basic units of an expanding democratic socialist reality and consciousness. People can now create such units for themselves, voluntarily, without the need for outside help and investment-capital, instead of talking about the need for a socialist revolution sometime in the future and waiting for someone else to carry out that longed-for revolution. As such work place collectives would establish themselves over time in different locations, it may become possible to create a federation of collectives. The purpose of such a federation would be to facilitate mutual aid and coordination among decentralized, self-governing collectives for social, economic, and political ends concerned with expanding the space for egalitarian, cooperative, and democratic existential patterns. Such a federation may eventually, through coordinated, non-violent, direct action, effect fundamental changes in the direction and control of work places and in the quality of work and products. Ultimately, this could lead to a restructuring of all production in accordance with such rational criteria as meeting the needs of people, enhancing the quality of products, eliminating build-in obsolescence, avoiding waste of resources and energy, eliminating exploitation, and exchanging products on egalitarian terms of trade. The long-range goal of work place collectives is to set in motion a revolutionary process of fundamental social, economic, and political transformation. The realization of this goal depends mainly on the extent to which the collectives will succeed in becoming a viable force permeating every kind of work setting throughout society, and on their ability to create settings where humans will lead more meaningful lives and attain a greater measure of self-actualization.

Let me now sketch in greater detail what I mean by voluntary, democratic socialist units in and around places of work, units which - as suggested above - are meant eventually to federate themselves into powerful economic and political networks capable of gaining control of our productive resources, and thus capable of transforming our social order and human relations. And let me also note some of the many problems which will have to be confronted by a movement pursuing this strategy.

Most people are now working regularly at some place of work alongside others -- in a factory, a mine, an office, a farm, a school, a hospital, a government agency or other institution, etc. We are organized in these work places in the "normal" capitalist fashion which results in certain well-known dynamics and human relations. This means we tend to compete with one another; we want to be promoted in status and recognition ahead of others; we want to shift to more desirable work; and we try to gain higher compensation and rewards of all kinds for ourselves at the expense of others. In short, we are locked into the selfish, competitive, inequalitarian patterns of the capitalist social, economic, and political system. The competitive struggles for the meager rewards of that system divide us: individual against individual, group against group, men against women, black against white, etc. These struggles also shape our consciousness and concepts of reality. They affect all our human relations and color our entire existence, not only at our places of work, but also in our communities and neighborhoods and throughout the fabric of our society.

From a theoretical as well as practical perspective, it seems entirely possible that, even while the prevailing societal system continues to operate in its customary manner and to hand out its meager rewards in the divisive fashion it has always done, we who work in its many large and small enterprises and institutions say to one another: "Let us constitute ourselves and our families as collectives in and around our places of work; let us take our individual wages, salaries and other rewards and put them all together; and let us treat these aggregated resources as belonging to us together, rather than as belonging to me and to you in separate, different shares; and let us think and decide together how we will use these resources so that they are allocated in a manner assuring reasonable satisfaction of everyone's needs rather than in accordance with who happened to have received which share for one's individual work; let us stop the insane and mutually destructive competition among ourselves and let us, instead, cooperate with and support one another; in short, let us move BEYOND THE JUNGLE and let us create meaningful, existential alternatives for ourselves and our families."

All this may sound simple, but it is actually very difficult to translate into reality. For it involves a real test of whether we really believe in, and are ready to establish democracy and equality for ourselves, by our own actions; or whether we want democratic and egalitarian values and institutions given to us some time in an uncertain future through some miraculous, political process in which we are merely passive bystanders rather than active agents. Frankly, I doubt that democracy and equality will ever be given to any people by anyone else; but I think that we, and only we ourselves, can create institutions based on egalitarian and democratic values for ourselves if we really have convictions about such values and institutions.

Surely, there are many questions and problems concerning this strategy. Work place collectives will not be created easily because we all are now insecure and afraid of the unknown. We have achieved an illusion of relative security in the prevailing system through our individual positions, rewards and expectations and through the many material goods and services we may be able to acquire individually. So we must begin by talking openly with one another about these ideas, and we need to examine their potential implications and consequences for our way of life before we commit ourselves to act. What are we really afraid of? What are the roots of our insecurities? Can we really become a "mutual insurance"

against individual unemployment, ill health, old age, and many other risks which are normal events under prevailing capitalist dynamics? Can we overcome our competitive and selfish habits which are serving us fairly well within the prevailing system in which they have emerged as appropriate defense mechanisms? Is human nature really capable of genuine cooperation as Kropotkin and many others have claimed? (3) Are we really able to deal with the many large and small issues of everyday life in collectives, by talking things over patiently and by making decisions in a truly democratic fashion? And how will we design the many details of our unique way of collective life, for surely there is no single correct model? What will we do together and what will we do separately? Will we all live under the same roof, in the same neighborhood, or will we live in separate homes or apartments and in different neighborhoods? How will we care for our children? etc.

Fortunately, what I am talking about has actually been and continues to be a living reality in one form or another in Kibbutz settlements in Israel, in Ujamaa villages in Tanzania, in collectives in China, and in many other countries, including also the United States, where many of these issues have been worked through rather satisfactorily. Many of these collectives have by now developed into well-functioning alternative forms of human existence. People there live and work collectively. They work at different tasks, but their individual needs are being met irrespective of differences in their tasks and of the specific contribution they make to the aggregate product of their collective. The strategy proposed here builds on these experiences and suggests the possibility and desirability of creating urban and also rural workers' collectives similar in philosophy and design to the Kibbutz model, but organized in and around functioning industrial and other enterprises rather than as fully independent, autonomous units which already control their means of production and existence. Important advantages of this model in terms of the current stage of political evolution in the United States are that it is not a "withdrawal" model, but an intentionally, politically activist one, and that it can be created without outside capital and other forms of outside support. Workers can start it on their own with what they have and receive in the course of employment.

The proposed work place collectives would introduce alternative existential models right into the productive centers of our society, where they could initiate a political and existential dialogue with many others working there and with the prevailing systems of control, and where they may eventually confront, challenge, and transform the organizations in which they work by non-violent, direct actions made possible through social and economic solidarity and shared political commitment within and among many collectives. Past experiments to create collectives in the United States were usually carried out on the margins of society, in rural settings or in separate residential neighborhoods. They required also considerable amounts of investment capital. Isolation from the mainstream of urban, industrial society tended to reduce their effectiveness as agents of fundamental, macro-social changes. They served, however, as important settings and models for learning about collective life. The strategy proposed here is meant to correct the shortcomings of earlier experiments with collectives in our society, while also learning from their experiences.

Let us think through what could actually happen over time, if we were to create large numbers of work place collectives in many enterprises, capable of confronting the managements of their individual institutions and eventually the

entire corporate structure and the state institutions which the corporate structure now dominates to a large extent. Were we to do this systematically without prematurely attempting to take control of the enterprises and organizations in which we work, but concentrating our efforts on developing our own, internal, democratic and collective processes and institutions, and were we to link our work place collectives gradually into a growing network for mutual aid and support and for common political actions with work place collectives in other enterprises and institutions, then these collectives and their federation could evolve over time into powerful political and economic instruments in every industrial enterprise throughout every sector, throughout the entire economy, and hence throughout society. And then we could at some appropriate, collectively selected point in time -- provided we coordinate our planning and actions patiently -- assume control and direction of our society's entire productive resources, services, and governing agencies, its factories, mines, farms, offices, schools, financial institutions, communications media, transportation systems, hospitals, etc.

Two points need to be stressed here especially. Coordinated action among the many, separate work place collectives is crucial in this process as any premature takeover of individual enterprises by individual collectives could be easily resisted by the State. And, even should an individual takeover succeed before other collectives are ready to act, the successful collective is likely to be forced by the prevailing economic dynamics to behave simply as another capitalist unit in competition with other enterprises in the existing market. The second point is that during the preparatory phase of organizing individual work place collectives, attempts should be made to develop collectives also among government workers on local and central levels, and also among police and military forces and among employees of the various intelligence services. Such organizing efforts are going to be especially difficult, but we should remember that individuals working for such organizations are human beings like the rest of us, and that they have the same needs and capacities we all share. The working conditions of public employees and their experiences are not any better than the conditions and experiences of many workers in other sectors and they are often worse. Hence, we must not assume that they are less ready to participate in liberation movements than workers in the "private" sector. It is only when we confuse the hired agents of the State with the State itself and its oppressive functions, that we overlook the human potential and the need for liberation among the many individuals who are now forced by circumstances not of their making to support themselves and their families as police officers, soldiers, intelligence agents, etc. Once we approach these individuals as potential brothers and sisters and stop referring to them as "pigs," we will find ways to include them in our efforts to organize work place collectives.

I should like to note now several additional advantages of the strategy suggested here. One such advantage is, that instead of merely talking forever about the supposed blessings of democratic socialism, we would be creating living samples of it which people could observe right in front of them, and which they could compare with their current way of life. When we now talk to people about the desirability of an alternative social order, they ask invariably whether we want to live like the Russians do. When we point out that what we have in mind when we talk about democratic socialism may be different they want to know where this other socialism exists. We are then forced to refer to vague images in our minds, but cannot point to a real live example. People, however, want to examine concrete instances before they make up their minds.

Now suppose, as a member of a well-functioning collective at my place of work I could say to a co-worker or neighbor: "Why don't you visit with us and observe how we live?" If we could demonstrate that our collectives made possible a better way of life than workers can now achieve for themselves as individuals through competitive and selfish life styles -- and by better I do not refer only to material aspects, but also to the quality of the total human experience -- then our arguments for alternatives may become more persuasive, as people could understand easily what we were talking about. Concrete, living models are simply more powerful than abstract presentations.

Living models of workplace collectives could also demonstrate to workers that they can become more effective power factors in workplaces than conventional trade unions, long before the transformation of the capitalist system, because the members of such collectives would be more committed to one another. Their solidarity would be stronger than that attainable in unions since their mutual bonds would be social, psychological, and political, in addition to the economic interests which members of trade unions share. Consequently, it will be more difficult for the management of enterprises and institutions to control and divide workers organized in collectives and to lay off individuals. And even, were some individuals laid off, they would continue as fully entitled members of their collectives, and their personal and economic security would not be threatened as much as under prevailing circumstances.

The resources of workplace collectives would also make it easier for them to take part in direct political actions and in political education away from their workplaces and homes. For they could free members on a rotating basis for political functions and guarantee their and their families economic security for the duration of these activities.

A further advantage of the proposed workplace collectives is that they would enable us to examine experientially and intellectually what we actually mean by such notions as participatory democracy, cooperation, social equality, liberty, etc. So far, these are merely words, and we have little direct experience with their meanings in practice. Our experiences are only with the opposites of these notions, namely with hierarchy, authority, domination, exploitation, mutual manipulation, competition, and above all, with social inequality. Once we come together in voluntary, democratic collectives, we could explore the deep meanings of these notions, and the multiple linkages among them. There are going to be many concrete and philosophical difficulties when one risks leaving behind the pseudo-security of our current individualistic life styles and becomes involved in a collective. Yet such a step should also be emotionally rewarding as it should bring one closer to a way of life which is not marred by the social and psychological isolation and alienation in which we are now trapped. And, as we would learn by experience the real meanings of alternative modes of human existence and the possibilities they offer for individual development, we would enhance our abilities to convey these new insights to others and involve them in the revolutionary process.

In our present way of life, few individuals, if any, have close friends whom they can trust unconditionally. Such friendships are so rare now, since, as long as we each pursue separate economic interests, we tend to calculate the costs of friendship in economic terms. It is only when we create social

structures which encourage and reward mutual aid among people, that economic interests will unite rather than divide us, and that we will gradually be able to overcome our social and psychological isolation and experience the meaning of genuine friendship. Living in social and economic collectives will teach us the meanings of human relations shaped by the dynamics of social equality which are qualitatively radically different from the dynamics and relations which permeate the prevailing societal context. As our human relations would gradually change in their quality under the impact of egalitarian, collective institutions, our consciousness about ourselves and reality will also be transformed. We will come to trust ourselves and others around us.

All this may sound very distant, unreal, and impractical. Such arguments are always raised whenever one advocates radical changes of the status-quo. We can, however, not counter these arguments effectively, while we continue to live the very negations of democracy and socialism in our everyday lives, and while we merely talk about alternatives. People will be able to accept the possibilities and practicality of what we advocate only when we ourselves risk living the proposed alternatives, and when we thus bring about consistency between what we advocate as possible solutions to the constant problems and crises of capitalism and our everyday lives.

To conclude this brief discussion of workplace collectives, I should like to reemphasize that I am not suggesting one single style or model of such collectives, but only a certain set of principles and values which can give rise to many different actual models, to be worked out in practice by members of given collectives in accordance with personal tastes and preferences. There are likely to be as many different styles and models as there will be collectives. And this is how it should be.

Revolution -- For Whom?

I need to touch now on a related issue of strategy, namely, who is expected to benefit from a revolution toward decentralized, democratic socialism, and whom should we therefore try to involve in the proposed workplace collectives.

There seems to be a tendency among the political left to act as if a socialist revolution would benefit only currently disadvantaged segments of society -- the "working class," whatever that may be, or groups who are now severely deprived and exploited in an economic sense. Intellectually, we know this to be a superficial and misleading notion, but our emotional, political arguments and communications tend to avoid dialectic complexities and we present the revolution usually as a win-lose proposition, where the "evil capitalists" and the "ruling class" are losers, and the exploited workers winners, and where the former ruling class is simply replaced by a workers' government. One inevitable consequence of such an unsophisticated image of the revolutionary process and goal is that powerful segments of the prevailing social order are literally pushed to do everything they can to prevent the revolution in which they are to be losers. They respond quite rationally to the revolutionary message which defines them as enemies.

A more penetrating analysis of the current existential reality, and hence of the revolutionary goal and process suggests that the real "enemy" is the intrinsic dynamics of an inegalitarian social order rather than individuals and groups who participate uncritically in these dynamics. Such an analysis also reveals that in the prevailing hierarchical and competitive context, everyone is trapped, whatever one's position, and that no one is free to develop fully. Admittedly, some are trapped more comfortably than others, yet they are trapped nevertheless by the same societal dynamics, and they tend to be alienated wherever they work and whatever they do within our hierarchical structures.

Based on such an analysis of the existing social reality, movements for democratic socialism should reach out beyond groups whose exploitation is experienced mainly in a material sense, to all those whose exploitation is experienced psychologically. We should stress the fact that we all need to struggle together for full personal liberation, and that the revolution is therefore for everyone. Furthermore, we should not represent the revolution simplistically as a redistribution of an existing "economic pie" and of prevailing power relations, because the existing pie is rotten and undigestible, and because we need not merely to change existing power relations but to develop an entirely different concept of power according to which no one individual, group, or class should have power over any other individual, group or class, but all should be equal in power. In short, we should talk about a revolution which would result in a qualitatively different social product and context, a pie with very different ingredients, where all would be considered as equals, and all would share equally, and where all would be better off than they are now in material and psychological terms: a revolution in which all are winners and none are losers.

The foregoing conception of the revolution may be somewhat unconventional in emphasis, because in our materialistic mentality we tend to think erroneously that those who are wealthy in a material sense are also well off in every other sense. We do know, however, that many economically well-off people of all ages and both sexes are essentially driven, lonely, and alienated individuals who spend their waking hours mostly in competitive and frustrating situations. Political discourse should bring these issues into people's consciousness and should address the needs of those who are psychologically oppressed along with the needs of those whose oppression is primarily economic; and we should unravel also the multiple interactions between economic and psychological exploitation and oppression. The obvious implications of this analysis for the workplace collectives strategy is that everyone working in a given setting, irrespective of tasks and roles in the existing hierarchical structure, ought to be encouraged to join, and that no one should be excluded a-priori, provided a person can identify with the goals of democratic socialism, and accepts the principles and responsibilities a given collective has developed for itself.

Summary

To move toward an egalitarian, cooperative, and free society we have to begin implementing these values in our everyday lives, and especially at our

places of work. One feasible strategy derived from this assumption is the organization of collectives in and around work places, where, in the long run, we have an opportunity to reclaim and regain control over the resources which are essential to our existence. We may regain that control by patiently building a network of collectives which practice socialism within and among themselves. In due course, these collectives would refuse to acknowledge the established authority in their respective workplaces and they would assume control and direction of their enterprises. Together with collectives throughout the country, they would develop from below a new system for coordination of production and distribution, and for self-governance of communities. This approach requires a gradual permeation of the entire economy and society before actually replacing the established order with an alternative one. However, it seems that if this permeation strategy is carried out systematically there would be no way of stopping this revolutionary process.

This transformation is not a simple process. On the contrary, I expect it to be slow, difficult, and filled with conflict, internally and externally. There will certainly be resistance from many quarters. I should like to note in closing, however, that those who choose to move in the proposed direction could not be stopped easily as long as the prevailing constitutional guarantees of civil liberties are observed in the United States. For, in accordance with legally established civil rights, people in this society are free to choose their ways and styles of life and their manner of relating to one another. They are also free to conduct their economic affairs collectively if they decide voluntarily to do so. In this sense, the revolutionary strategy suggested here, builds on the gains of human rights revolutions of earlier centuries.

Notes

1. Martin Buber, "An Experiment that did not Fail," in Paths in Utopia, Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1958; originally published in 1949.
2. David G. Gil, Unravelling Social Policy, Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1973, 1976.
3. Petr Kropotkin, Mutual Aid, Boston, Mass.: Porter Sargent, 1956.