One of the most important developments currently taking place in capitalist societies is a restructuring of work, whereby changing processes of production, changing locations of production, changing job definitions and requirements, and changing relations between workers and managers at the point of production are all issuing a profound challenge to long-established patterns of working class organization and representation. In this presentation I shall to try to place this development in a general context and to contribute to a discussion of appropriate labour strategies in the face of it.
It is impossible to talk about the way in which the restructuring of work challenges the working classes without simultaneously talking about the restructuring of the labour market, the restructuring of capital and the restructuring of the state. It is moreover extremely misleading to see restructuring in all these domains as abnormal. It is in the nature of capitalism as a system that, as part of its ongoing accumulation dynamic and the contradictions it fosters, there is a constant process—sometimes incremental, at other times more dramatic—of decomposition and recomposition of capital, and hence of industry, of locale and occupation, of the labour market, of state forms and even of the working class itself. What are today adduced as the new features of capitalism—with so much discussion of the apparent novelty of international competition and a changing international division of labour, the global reach of financial capital, new technology—are not really new; they are but the patterns and dynamics of capitalism carried to a new stage.

One of the most misleading aspects of the post-war era, especially in terms of its impact on the strategic thinking of trade unions and working class political parties, was that it fostered a notion that the patterns of production and production relations in the core industries, as well as the form of the welfare state were here to stay. It seemed, thanks to planning by monopoly corporations and the Keynesian state, that capitalist crises were a thing of the past, full employment was a given, and trade union recognition and productivity-g geared wage bargaining would guarantee job security and regular improvements in standards of living along with steady economic growth. It was recognized in the labour movement that power relations in the system remained unequal, that decisions regarding what to produce, where to produce and how to produce remained in the hands of those few who controlled massive pools of investment capital. But, as with the trade union rights won through industrial relations legislation, it was thought the other reforms that had been won were irreversible and cumulative. If a full and equal partnership between labour and capital in capitalist democracies had not yet been won, with the passage of time they would be won, and won moreover without a fundamental transformation of the ownership
of industry, the relations of production and the structure of the state.

These illusions could only last as long as the specific conditions underlying the post-war boom continued. The appearance that monopoly corporations and the Keynesian state were the supreme managers of a new contradiction-less capitalism arose out of a particular conjuncture: the cleansing of stagnant and inefficient segments of capitals during the depression and the war; post-war pools of cheap raw materials and skilled labour; clusters of technological innovations attuned to mass consumer demand as well as productivity growth; the availability of new markets and relatively open trade under American international hegemony; and, by no means least important, the weakening of trade union militancy during the Cold War. Each of these conditions had come to an end by the early 1970s, and this set the stage for the restructuring of capital, the labour market, the state and work itself that has followed.

But the demise of the post-war political and economic regime was also a product of the maturing of more fundamental contradictions. The American empire's fostering of viable capitalisms in the defeated axis countries, as well as elsewhere, laid the basis for much-strengthened national bourgeoisies, who were able to combine new infrastructure (yielding higher productivity growth than in North America) with lower wages. This spawned a new era of inter-capitalist rivalry for markets and finance, undermining the global dominance of American monopolies and their state's ability to control the international economic environment. Moreover, American imperialism could not quell socialist movements or even certain socialist victories in the third world. It also had to face emergent third world bourgeoisies, some of whom had—and took—the opportunity to increase their stake in the new imperial system. This affected established capitalists not only in the USA, but in all the industrial capitalist countries.

Within most of these latter countries, moreover, the freedom from fear which full employment, trade union rights and the welfare state had generated eventually spawned a massive industrial militancy. New generations of workers, responding to the incessant propaganda of consumerism, sought to buy into the affluent society. At the same time, the freedom from fear of unemployment made them rather intransigent towards
the exercise of authoritarian discipline by managers and supervisors in the workplace, let alone from union leaders. This militancy could only express itself in terms of economistic demands for more money wages or as shopfloor insubordination, since fundamental political change of a socialist nature was not proposed by the trade unions and the parties which organized and represented them. But wage militancy was accompanied by growing popular demands for an enhanced welfare state, with the specific needs and demands of racial minorities, students, public sector workers and (slowly, but with greatest staying power) women increasingly coming to the fore.

Renewed wage militancy and broader popular stirrings did indeed produce some results, but they further exacerbated the contradictions for both the state and capital. Capital found itself in a profit squeeze between higher wages and heightened international competition, and the state found that Keynesianism did not in fact allow it to overcome these contradictions and plan the economy. Such planning as the Keynesian welfare state did was always ad hoc, never extending to control over investment and only very partially to control over price, wage and trade levels. It had developed certain criteria of welfare, but had no criteria for efficiency or production other than that given to it by an economy which still remained governed by exchange value and private profit. As it tried to manipulate its Keynesian demand management techniques in the face of inflationary pressures brought on by rising welfare state expenditures, rising money wages and rising commodity prices, it now found that a balance between unemployment and price stability could not be secured. Attempts to ease the pressure via wage controls only had the effect, in most countries, of leading trade unions to up the ante and, most notably, to begin once more to demand a share of control over investment and a redistribution of power.

The restructuring that followed this impasse in the post-war regime of economics and politics has been dramatic, and has demonstrated how fragile that regime really was. It was not very long ago that dual labour market theories portrayed labour in the monopoly sector as immune from job insecurity thanks to the monopolies’ control over their environment, and to the symbiotic relationship between unions and managers in
the monopoly sector. How absurd these theories have come to look amidst the rationalization, plant closures and loss of market shares we have seen. The restructuring of the labour market in terms of a return to cyclical unemployment, structural unemployment and part-time work, and the presence of a vast reserve army of unemployed in most of the core capitalist countries, has not resolved the divisions that exist within the working class, but no group of workers is immune from the fear of long-term unemployment any longer. The restructuring of capital, with the anarchic global financial speculation and the mergers and closures we have seen, reveals how competition continues to function even among monopoly capitals, and shows the extent to which it limits each corporation's ability to control its environment. As for the state, limits on welfare expenditures, deregulation, requirements that state agencies follow rather than compensate for "free market" logic, and restrictions on trade union rights, all of these have definitively put paid to the notion that the democratic capitalist state tends cumulatively and irreversibly towards collectivism.

To a larger extent than perhaps even Marxists like to think, all these developments do reflect the working out of global market forces in a new era of capitalist crisis, a crisis that—for all the talk of recovery a few years ago—shows no signs of having been overcome, and which threatens to last as long as the first great capitalist crisis of 1873 to 1896. But market forces never stand alone. They are enveloped in class struggles and class strategies. And class struggle has, in fact, increased rather than abated in this crisis. When we speak of class struggle, this is all too often taken to mean that the working class struggles for reforms and the capitalist class defends the status quo. But the ascription of such an essentially passive political role to the capitalist class was always mistaken and is easily seen to be so in face of the advance of "neo-conservatism". To be sure, there is no such thing as a singular, unitary "strategy" advanced by a monolithic bourgeoisie, just as there is not such a strategy among the working classes. Yet even on this basis, no one can deny that in the era of the "post-war settlement" the bourgeoisie and their spokespeople played a large role not just in limiting and containing popular pressures for reforms, but in determining the agendas and the forms of class collaboration in the state and in industry. And since the
1970s, the new conservatism has represented an active struggle undertaken by the capitalist classes against those policies and practices (whether institutionalized in the state, or in collective bargaining, or even more broadly in civil society) which provided the basis for collective working class defence against increased exploitation, and which, therefore, limited the emergence of new global patterns of capital accumulation.

It is important to understand that this mobilization by capital represented above all a strategic attack on labour. To pass off the new conservatism as entailing a conflict between the “state” and the “private sector” may sometimes suit the ideologues of both social democracy and the new conservatism, who are apt to both identify the state with socialism while disagreeing on whether this is good or bad. But a “smaller” or “weaker” state was never the issue; the issue was a restructured state and civil society, which would tilt the balance of class forces even more decisively to capital’s advantage, both inside given countries and in the global arena.

The central ideological premises of the new conservatism—above all, its stress on individualism and competition as the prime components of “freedom”—do not necessarily run against “the state” per se. But they do directly run against, as well as take as their explicit objects, the collectivist premises and the solidaristic practices of socialist movements, of trade unionism, and to the extent that they also focus on collective rights and winning collective benefits—of those organizations of women, blacks, tenants and welfare claimants. The new capitalist strategy thus challenged collectivist rights which state forms of class accommodation still underwrote whether through legal forms or through certain welfare programmes. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that capital wants to weaken the state.

Not only, therefore, has there been a restructuring of state expenditure but, far more ominously, a restructuring of political rights. The new conservatism has attacked that dimension of democracy which is composed by freedom of association. This has taken the form of abridging collective rights like the right to strike or picket, and even more generally, of limiting, labelling as subversive, and openly attacking or subverting through covert means what might be termed “activists rights” to protect, organize and demonstrate. This means that, as ever, the struggle for socialism is also a struggle for democracy.
within and against capitalism, a struggle to allow the potential collective power of ordinary people to make an impact against the power of capital, the bureaucracy and the police.

But even with the inclusion of all the above dimensions, this is still an overly general conception of the capitalist offensive. For it also relates to important changes that capital is introducing at the level of individual firms. The major corporations have themselves responded to the crisis by trying to organize production so that they can respond flexibly and quickly to an environment they don’t and can’t control monolithically. It is in this search for flexible responses that the new trends to “outsourcing” and “just-in-time” production processes find their rationale. This also extends to a flexible labour force and labour process, and here is where a restructuring of work specific to this crisis and the new capitalist offensive comes in.

The much noted growth in part-time jobs and the employment of casual labour is not just a matter of workers taking what they can get in the context of current labour market conditions. It is at the same time a matter of capital’s own search for flexibility, and hence reflects the way demand for labour is being restructured. Similarly there is a very marked push by capital for decentralized collective bargaining in every advanced capitalist economy, breaking up the system of centralized, industry-wide bargaining that capital helped put in place, but which now gets in the way of the search for flexibility on a firm by firm, plant by plant, office by office basis. At the same time there is a strong and clear trend, at the core of a new restructuring of work today, towards the reformation of worker identity around “work teams” in plants and offices. What is involved here is not just the attempt by management to secure flexibility in the labour process through the broadening and interchange of work tasks, but the actual integration of the workforce (often in conjunction with the introduction of new computer-based technology) into the overseeing of the production process. Management’s new design involves socializing workers into the ethos of profitability through flexibility, in the hope that they will internalize it, police themselves accordingly, and acquire the motivation and the ability to pass on to management the data and the workers’ judgements
pertaining to labour process efficiency, in such a way as to facilitate management control in each branch of production.

This can be attractive to workers. As the 1987 Canadian Auto Workers study, *Technological Change in the Auto Industry*, puts it: “Management's new philosophy is a potent blend of fear and promise.” The promise of new technology and work teams is offered in terms of more “open” and “trusting” labour-management relations on the shop floor, in terms of more varied jobs and jobs that employ the workers' intellects and abilities to oversee production, and in terms of worker involvement and commitment being recognized—indeed celebrated—as key elements in the production process. But worker involvement is defined on management's terms, and cooperation is extended to workers insofar as they think about solving the corporation's production problems in management's terms. And here is where the threat that accompanies the promise immediately comes in. It is an especially salient threat in a context where, as I have argued, there is no “dual labour market”—one sector with job security and one without—but rather a labour market where no worker is free of the fear of long-term unemployment:

Fear and promise. The threat is clear. The message to workers is this: If you don't change your ways; if you don't cut down on the 'controllable absenteeism'; if you don't work smarter and harder; if you don't get behind management on this, you won't have your job. The message to the union is also clear: without changes in contracts, without flexibility in rules, without more cooperation and better relations, there won't be a membership in this or that particular plant to worry about.  

Marx [in his *Grundrisse*] foretold a stage when “all the sciences [will] have been pressed into the service of capital” impelled by the drive to limit labour time and costs in the production process. The point would be reached whereby labour “no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself.” This would mean, he optimistically thought, that “the development of the general powers of the human head” would replace “the surplus labour of the masses” and “labour in the direct form” as the condition and measure for “the development of general
wealth". Production for exchange would break down and give way to production for social use and the "free development of individualities". This would entail "the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them." A brilliant vision, based on a real understanding of society's productive tendencies and potentials, of human beings' creative capacities to master these, and of capital's simultaneous restraining and enhancement of both. But such a future as Marx envisaged could not come about without capitalism, as he liked to put it, "breaking down"—and this cannot happen of itself but, as he also understood, only with a fundamental change in the class and power relations that encompass capitalism's development.

Today's new technology, while giving us another glimpse of the future that could be, hardly entails such a change in these relations. On the contrary, it is enveloped in a restructuring of work in the image of Japanese-style production relations, with the underlying design being to instill a company identity into the workforce (and indeed an even narrower plant, office or even departmental identity) that displaces or acts as a surrogate for class identity and community identity. However limited the class identity and solidarity that unions and working class parties have actually forged, an extension of this has always been the condition for developing strategies that are distinctive from capital's, and which have the potential to alter power relations so that new technology might be used to liberate, rather than better control, human labour.

What, then, is to be done? It is important first of all to remember that we are hardly starting from scratch. Indeed, at the very onset of the crisis in the early 1970s, as the limits and contradictions of the post-war economic and political regime were reaching their climax, a new strategic direction came to the fore in a good many labour movements in western capitalist countries, which provided a cogent critique of the Keynesian welfare state and pointed to a socialist way forward. Much of it was articulated in the European labour movement, but it was also visible in Canada, above all among the union centrals in Quebec. At its core was the explicit recognition that
the driving force of the economy remained private capital accumulation, while the Keynesian welfare state had proven unable to subject private investment to democratic planning. What was now taken up was what had been left aside by labour movements during the post-war regime: the demand for popular control over capital, and even the necessity of taking capital away from its owners, became increasingly the focus. Democratic control over the sphere of production and investment began to occupy more and more of the agenda of trade union centrals, and even of some social democratic political parties.

This was evident in the turn by the West German labour movement towards strukturpolitiuk and investment planning; in the proposals for statutory Planning Agreements and the nationalization of financial institutions in Britain; in the widespread nationalization elements of the Common Front in France; and in the Swedish LO's famous wage earners' funds proposals, with the original objective of using these funds to acquire majority ownership of the leading corporations over a 20 year period, vesting this control not in the state but in trade union or community-controlled bodies. At the same time, there was in each of these movements a marked push towards legislative reforms which would allow unions to challenge managerial prerogatives in the work place, as well as various new schemes for "autogestion" and industrial democracy—in both the private and state sector—were evolved. Relatedly, and not least important, there were signs in at least some labour movements of an emerging understanding of just how cramped and limited the parliamentarism and electoralism of capitalist democracy was; of how bureaucratic and social control-oriented the services of the welfare state were; and of how, through limitations imposed on popular power, capital would extend its dominance over the state in the crisis (the CEQ's famous pamphlet on the ruling class and the schools may be called to mind here).

What this all amounted to was a working class political offensive, from which we may well draw some inspiration and guidance today. Equally important is to understand why it was checked and followed by the far more successful capitalist political offensive. The first reason was the fierce opposition from capital. While capital earlier might have been prepared
to live with state intervention of the redistributive and counter-
cyclical Keynesian variety, it certainly was not going to coop-
erate in moves aimed at taking the sphere of production out
of its control. Indeed in a number of countries, this appears
to have been a factor in winning over industrial capital to
monetarism, decentralized bargaining, and an abandonment
of corporatism. If the Keynesian welfare state had to be
transcended, capital would set its own agenda for doing so.

At the same time, there were powerful elements within the
labour movements and the social democratic parties who them-
selves balked at the new strategic direction. Their whole world
view had been cast in terms of securing a consensus with
capital and avoiding political confrontation and polarization,
and they were ill-disposed towards upsetting this. Many of
them still sincerely believed—however naively and wrongly—
that Keynesianism could yet work its way through the crisis
with trade union cooperation in incomes policies to stem the
inflationary tide. And they failed to foresee that if the labour
movements and their parties could not go beyond the old
reforms, these reforms would themselves come under severe
attack.

Finally, it must be admitted that the new strategic orienta-
tion was not the product of a mass movement coming from
the base. Industrial militancy there was aplenty, but the kind
of politicization that would have made a confrontation with
capital winnable had not been prepared. Neither the trade
unions nor the social democratic parties had been schools for
socialist education during the Keynesian era. The new strategic
direction was the birth of a process that might make them
such, but this entailed real risks vis-à-vis a membership that
joined unions for better wages and conditions, and perhaps
for some sense of dignity in an alienated society, but many of
whom might well balk at a too politicized unionism in the face
of the denunciations that inevitably would ensue from capital,
the state and the media. Among much of the leadership,
immediate electoral calculations related to the importance of
having at least social democratically-oriented politicians in of-

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Yet some of those parties associated with the working class, incorporated elements of the new strategic direction of the 1970s and proved electable. The victories of the Left in France and Greece at the turn of the decade on the basis of very radical-sounding programmes, and the re-election of the Swedish Social Democrats at a moment when capital was strongly mobilized against the wage earners' funds proposals, proved that the inclusion of strong socialist elements in a party platform did not necessarily guarantee electoral defeat. How positive a commitment electors had to these elements is debatable, but it can hardly be said that the electors were voting with the actual expectation that social democratic governments in France and Greece would abandon their programmes in favour of a politics of austerity, nor that the Swedish wage earners' funds would be turned into a pool of forced savings for capital, which offers no significant potential for taking capital into workers' hands. At best, social democratically-oriented governments in the 1980s have served as managers of the crisis—some more successfully, as in Sweden; others not at all successfully, as in France, or in Quebec in the first half of the decade. And in the face of such governments, no less than in the face of conservative governments, the labour movements have adopted a defensive mood, trying to hold on to what they have industrially, with an overriding political orientation that can be described mainly as a return to Keynesianism, calling for a reflation of the economy in the hope that this will bring back something approaching full employment.

This defensiveness can be justified. It is important to struggle to retain whatever collective rights we can in the face of the capitalist offensive, and to mobilize all possible resources and support to do so. In the case of the assault on trade union freedoms, which is particularly visible in this country, it may be increasingly necessary to break the law in order to defend long-established legal rights that are now severely threatened. And it should not be thought that defeat is inevitable when this occurs. In this country, neo-conservatism is nothing like a hegemonic ideology. Mulroney's policy of cosying up to the Americans—above all, the free trade initiative—is certainly part of the capitalist offensive as it expresses itself in Canada. But Mulroney is at bottom a typical patronage politician who
did not win his election on a Reaganite or Thatcherite programme, but rather by promising all things to all people, and consequently he must try to get neo-conservatism in via the back door. His programme involves integrating us more fully into a continental economy that now operates according to the neo-conservative rules of the game, but without proclaiming in Canada the ideological principles thereof. Where a direct confrontation with such principles takes place, considerable support can be mobilized against them—as the pensioners showed regarding the welfare state, and as the Newfoundland public employees showed regarding trade union rights.

But defensiveness is not enough, as everyone recognizes. And here is where the return to Keynesianism comes in. There is a visible, perhaps dominant current in the Canadian and Quebec labour movements, as elsewhere, aided and abetted by certain academic researchers who consistently argue that because one can find four or five OECD countries that maintained relatively low levels of unemployment throughout the 1980s, the same can be done elsewhere with a reflatory fiscal policy adopted by the state. When the countries involved are Japan and Switzerland, one has to rub one's eyes in wonderment. Today, it is increasingly open to question whether the job security traditionally afforded in Japan can now continue to persist. But, in any case, the Japanese "miracle" (which really only encompassed half of the labour force) was based on the historic defeat of the Japanese labour movement in the years immediately after the war; and the industrial relations practised there stand as a model for capital elsewhere, in terms of replacing working class solidarity with company solidarity through the work teams programmes I discussed above. As for Switzerland, this is a country with the most restrictive of welfare provisions, whose immigrant workers enjoyed no citizen status during the boom, and many of whom were sent off packing during the crisis. Is this what we should be emulating? Obviously not.

When Sweden or Austria are pointed to, there is much more to look at closely. But it must be recognized that the conditions that made for a hegemonic social democracy in those countries are enormously different from the conditions in Canada, as well as in most other capitalist societies, and can hardly be created just by virtue of borrowing this or that state
policy. To take the best example, that of Sweden, its economic structure is very different from ours, not least in terms of the relationship between industrial and financial capital. The labour movement there cannot understand our opposition to free trade, which they see as the basis of their prosperity: they have no understanding, in other words, of the nature of Canada's status as a dependency in the American empire, of our branch-plant economy and its consequences, and so on. Not least important, the strength of the Swedish labour movement, which is the fount of the hegemonic attachment to full employment and welfarism (and which capital has been unable to shake free of in this crisis even as it defeated the radical version of the wage earners' funds) is something that found its original roots in a vastly militant labour movement in the pre-world war two era. It was this, not the ideology of Keynesianism, that provided the basis for a hegemonic social democracy in Sweden in the post-war era and through to today. Even if we were to want to emulate that social democracy rather than socialism, we could hardly have it without first having the process of building the solidaristic working class identity through the decades of struggle that made it possible.

Finally, those researchers who look to Sweden to show that a full employment policy is there for the taking are rather dishonest when they overlook the strains and contradictions that Sweden too has faced in recent years—from the thrust by the employers towards more decentralized bargaining, to the devaluations that have benefited Swedish capital so greatly in the 1980s, to the fact that the Social Democratic finance minister treats a rather modest fiscal deficit as the country's leading problem. Near-full employment and the welfare state have been maintained, to the Swedes' enormous benefit, but this should not blind us to the fact that there has been a redistribution of income and influence towards capital—even in Sweden—in this decade.

There are no ready-made external recipes for us to follow, and we should be suspicious of those who tell us that there are. We will be better off in terms of general strategic direction if we face reality and recognize that those who came to understand the limits and contradictions of the Keynesian welfare state in the early 1970s were correct to do so. We should try to draw on that understanding and seek to figure out how a
strategy for taking capital away from capital, for real democratic planning, can now be constructed and be put on the agenda in the conditions we face today.

This cannot be done in a manner that is separate from the defensive struggles of the unions. The tenacity and courage shown by workers in recent Canadian strikes—the evidence they show of being prepared to put their bodies on the line day after day, and to risk a great deal more in the long run—testify to the potential for social change possessed by the labour movement. We must not fall into the invidious practice of ignoring or denigrating such struggles to the end of extolling those of the "new social movements". There is no need to create a competition among them in terms of their relative potential, as some are wont to do today. But there is a need to continue to try to ensure that these are complementary and interpenetrating struggles, and to inform such struggles with a broader anti-capitalist and socialist vision.

There are perhaps firmer grounds for doing this today than there were in the early 1970s. The impact of the crisis, and to some extent of the new social movements, has led the union movement to take up such issues as health and safety and a shorter work week, as well as sexual and racial discrimination, peace, and third world struggles. Similarly, nothing concentrates the minds of union leaders more than the loss of membership and their dues, as has recently happened to many unions. The unions cannot ignore the unorganized worker in the tertiary sector, the part-time worker, the worker in the informal sector; and unions will have to hone their organizing skills anew in the industrial sector as capital attempts to create non-union environments for itself.

What all this means is that, first, unions will have to engage themselves much further in struggles over the restructuring of work and the labour market. They have to directly contest with capital over the sphere of production more than they did in the early 1970s when the call for the control over capital was more general and political.

Secondly, unions must take up many related struggles. They are already more open regarding the issues of sexual and racial discrimination and job ghettos, which offers the potential for building the kind of integration between the labour movement and other movements without which alliances at the
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top—for example against free trade or for day-care—can never be anything other than sporadic marriages of convenience, with the most slender of social bases. The full integration of women and new Canadians into union life, and a sensitivity to the problems and barriers they face not only as workers but in the labour market, in the unions themselves, and in the broader society will be necessary. I think there are more encouraging signs of this now than at any point in the past.

At the same time there is a certain danger that even as the unions broaden out in this direction, capital's restructuring of work to the end of producing a company rather than a union consciousness will rob the union movement of the solidarity and autonomy among many of its core members. There is a strong basis for countering this by virtue of the fact that the harmony, the job satisfaction, the participative potential actually offered by management is bound to fall far short of the promise contained in its new ideology. But the unions, in order to be able to respond to this, will have to give a lead in establishing the basis for workers' autonomy from management even if they participate in these schemes.

There are three central conditions for this, all of which bear on the question of developing anew a broader political strategy. The first of these conditions is that the unions must try to become, as far as possible, centres of working class life and culture. There are no easy recipes for this, but it will mean that union activists and leaders must engage directly—not just in a surrogate way via issuing statements which favour issues taken up by the social movements—in many spheres that touch on working people's lives. This entails not only struggling for new and broader benefits and services in collective agreements and legislation, but also active involvement in communities and in the issues that affect them, from housing to transport to education to "leisure". Calling for reduced work time will not be enough: there will have to be a concern with what working people do when they are not at work, and that includes part-timers and those who are unemployed. The unions will have to address the question of finding non-market means of satisfying the need of human beings to be productive in and out of work, their need to be offered more than the compensation of being indebted consumers in return for their lack of control over their working lives.
Secondly, this in turn means that the unions will have to become much more open, democratic and flexible than most of them currently are. Showing the employer that he should engage in serious bargaining with you because you control your members is no longer enough in the face of the capitalist offensive. The goals must be encouraging debate, sponsoring the kind of education that will foster debate regarding all aspects of union industrial and political behaviour, creating the most openly democratic procedures, and affording the opportunity and resources to make effective decisions at all levels of the union. It must be said that unions, in Canada as elsewhere, have by no means always come close to this.

Thirdly, the union movement needs to become much more political. Now more than ever, this means more than identifying with a political party and supporting it electorally. It also means, in relation to that party and far more broadly still, going back to the strategic orientations of the early 1970s—and going beyond them. It means taking risks among members who don't see the connection between the immediate reasons they join unions and the struggle against capitalism as a system. But the risk cannot be avoided. Unless the unions provide their members with a socialist vision that is an alternative to the new management philosophy, and at the same time become centres for broader public education in this regard, they are in great danger.

Neither of the other two conditions are likely to sustain themselves in a capitalist sea without this third condition being met. To be sure, it will mean education upwards and downwards in the labour movement: education of those leaders who still falsely entertain hopes of a technical Keynesian solution to their problems; education of a membership who rarely have been given the opportunity to learn how capitalism works as a system, and who have only been exposed to the most caricatured or impoverished notions of socialism and its possibilities.

There is real opportunity for this at a time when job insecurity touches the whole of the working class. There is also a great opportunity at a time when the new technology that is being used to restructure work in the interests of capital gives people a glimpse of the way in which it might be used in the interests of the people. The labour movement needs to
take up this question of an alternate mode of production, with all it means in terms of changing relations of production. The new technology might be used not to “free people from work”, but rather to restructure work so that it becomes a form of social labour whereby the power of science and industry is democratically managed and controlled. At the same time, this technology might be employed to make productive facilities as freely available to people in their communities as, say, public libraries are today, so that people can also directly express their creativity independently, or as collectives of friends and neighbours.

There is an immense gap between the vision and its fulfillment, as any worker, employed or unemployed, will be the first to point out. But through fostering discussions and plans for alternative forms of production in their workplaces and companies, unions can encourage workers to share the immense knowledge regarding production that they already collectively have, and to acquire and develop the knowledge that is presently denied them. This should be connected to popularizing notions of community involvement in economic planning. Local boards of labour and production, directly elected like our current boards of education, with the mandate and resources to ensure full employment in their communities, could develop plans for production and exchange. An advocacy of such boards is but one example of the way unions and parties could offer a credible vision of democratic socialist planning.

In contemplating such a vision, it will become clearer to people that it could not be possible without taking capital away from capitalists. It will also be clearer that this must mean bringing capital not under bureaucratic state control, but into a public domain that is itself far more open and democratic than the one we presently know. We must not harken back to a past that was itself pregnant with the very crisis tendencies and contradictions which produced today’s capitalist restructuring. We must struggle to reveal a future which will belong to the people in a way that no past, even the Keynesian past, ever remotely did.
Notes

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4. For an elaboration of this notion, see Michael Rustin, *For a Pluralist Socialism* (London, 1985); and Leo Panitch, "A Socialist Alternative to Unemployment," *Canadian Dimension* 20:1 (March 1986).