

ECOLOGY AND NEW WORK or
EXCESS CONSUMPTION AND THE JOB SYSTEM

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Imagine that you are on a plane and the person next to you, an older man, starts to write furiously, and without looking up, the very minute he flings himself into his seat. Clearly he is not run of the mill; everyone else is dozing or outright asleep. One could say that he is part demon, though a demon who laughs. There is no question that he is possessed. He writes incessantly for hours until the meal is served. As the tray in front of him interferes with his writing, he begins to talk.

It turns out that you are both returning from the same international congress on Excess Consumption. In fact, soon you both realize that you had seen each other in one or another of the sessions. Indeed, eventually you recall that among the many posters in the halls there had been one of this man, and underneath his face there had been the two words: New Work. He catches your attention just as he says:

"I attended only so as to get across a single thought. What is more, the delegates certainly knew this idea; in fact they had heard it many times. All the same, for the sake of this one thought I flew across the ocean and cut a segment out of my otherwise frantically busy life. And, would you believe it, that whole idea can be expressed in a single moment, in one flash!

"I am quite convinced, you see, that everyone, in some fit of exasperation (say, after hearing an announcer shout for twenty minutes about a super-sale on couches) has had the fantasy, that with one single clean sweep the totality of all advertising could be silenced; that the hawking, the hype, the cajoling, the whole tidal-wave of insipid, exaggerated muck could be stopped. Oh, the calm, the peace, the wonderful relief we would feel, if we were no longer inveigled, manipulated and harangued. What a return to innocence, to silent nature this would be?

"But - and here is already the sum and substance of my one thought - we of course cannot abolish advertising--and we know it. No, such an effort could not come to more than an explosive, irritable outcry. Even if everybody had their fit of rage at exactly the same time, and we managed to organized a gigantic demonstration - it would not matter how many of us there would be. In

the end the whole assembled crowd could only shrug, and then go home.

"Now, why is that? Because the elimination of all advertising would bring on a catastrophic economic collapse. The desires, the very appetites for the next wave of newly fashioned products, suddenly would no longer be created. No one would even know that these new goods existed. They would pile up in unopened boxes, and not just in the freightyards, but in the streets and alleys, in the market squares and intersections.

"Yet still! Who cares about the boxes? Certainly not we, who've come together at this congress. Let the dust settle on them till one could ski in it. No, the much more serious effect would be the massive awful swamp of unemployment. Soup and bread lines; children suffering from hunger. Indeed, the picture of the children tells us why, though we might complain and make mild proposals about advertising, the idea of trying to seriously expunge advertising does not even enter our heads.

"Now to me, with a single image this shows that the customary picture of our economy is askew. Surely we all want hats and shoes and houses and also to eat, but that clutter does not begin to account for the excess - the constant leaping up to higher rungs, the white-hot pace with which the wheels of the machine inside of which we are now living, have to turn.

"And to say that advertising cajoles, titillates, and wheedles, but also browbeats us into wanting extravagancies is of course true. But this ignores a far more telling truth, lying skintight beneath that surface fact: The real reason for this is our excruciating, never sated and forever gobbling appetite or rather our need, for what? For Jobs! Yes. Yes. The force that drives us to churn up the metals of the earth and grind them into heaps of slack and waste is not the appetite of our coddled senses, or even the chafing of our finally aroused desires. When it comes to pleasure, our culture is a dolt, a clod with ten unsubtle thumbs. No. We are more like convicts on a galley. We heave and pull our oars at a desperate battle-speed because otherwise the supply of jobs will slacken, and the whole of our circus tent will come crashing down around our ears.

"Does it not strike you as bizarre inversion, that work, which to begin with was the "Great Punishment" after we had been driven out of Eden--irksome, tedious, an outright condemnation--that work is no longer the means that we're prepared to suffer for some other end? No. We have devised a contraption, a new-fangled squirrel cage that has transformed work into the mysterious and ultimate desideratum--the treasure that heroes now go out to find, to bring home, to their city or their state.

"This has transformed the act of buying. It has been disconnected from the product and from the pleasure of its later use. What matters is merely the effect of the purchase--the making of space at the end of the assembly line, so the next unit can be produced, and the flow can continue. So there is the idea as blatantly expressed as you could wish. The purpose of our economy is not pleasure, or use, or satisfaction, it is not pate' or bubble-baths, or alligator leather shoes: the driving force is to keep us in work.

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"You can see this still more sharply if you concentrate on the very idea of stimulating an economy. Growth is the economists' equivalent of caffeine or speed. Without it we will have soup lines. What is extraordinary is only that we are so inured to this idea that we no longer notice it. But the conjunction is always there; not only with Clinton, but consistently, patently as, for example, in the case of F.D.R. Whether it is more government spending or a cut in taxes, or any of the seven other "interventions" (and all are crude, like medicine in the Middle Ages, like using leeches to suck out blood)-invariably they appear in the context of the need to "create" (note the pretentious, nineteenth-century word) more jobs.

"The deeper reason for pushing down on the accelerator, and thereby using resources and creating filth – is not that the average person in our culture is a self-indulgent, coddled lout, a princess on a pea, unable to sleep unless she is pillowed on 880 different consumer goods. Nothing like it. Why do we not sigh with relief when the economy slows down? Why do we spur and urge and stimulate instead? Because of our need for jobs.

"Let me add another twist: If our appetites really were as voracious and as mighty as we say, then the whole exercise of stimulating the economy, of wafting smelling salts, and thumping on its chest, would obviously not be needed. It is one more proof that what I have been calling the poverty of desire does actually exist: that at bottom people are not voracious, but on the contrary passive, depressed, timorous and subdued.

"The people at the congress probably assumed that my idea is much more simple-minded than it really is. I meant to explain that there is an ambiguity, a double-ness. Yes, there are those who buy too many shoes and too many snowmobiles. Seen from one side it is wasteful, a disgrace, they insolently flaunt their wealth in the presence of the poor. But it from another side one cannot look down upon it one's long, puritan, ascetic nose. For acts of spending are also necessary,

obedient, indeed downright dutiful.

"At the congress, I tried to make it graphic. In effect, I said: suppose you write two words "Profit Motive" on the wall. These words name the main driving force in the picture to which most of us subscribe. And how sweeping and encompassing and maybe facile it by now has become. For the long list of offenses and crimes that capitalism has committed, without a single lone exception, can all be explained through the Profit Motive. From the beginnings of colonialism, and the expansionary wars, to the sweatshops in which children died, to the ghastly murderous urban slums, to how we have turned rivers into sewage and rain into acid, to the vulgarities to which the media have addicted us, yes down to the faked wrestling shows, all of this is the mud churned up by this devil-take-the-hindmost race. And since the clawing for profit is the cause and is to blame, we, who are not in business but instead work, we are victims, passive, dragged along by this monster-force. It is our part to wring our hands in disapproval, and to lament or censor, and now and then in pitifully ineffectual ways to suggest that some especially ghoulisn outrages even profit does not justify.

"All I am suggesting is the addition of a companion motive: employment. Jobs. To suppose that the two are an isomorphic pair, like two oxen, would be a gigantic mistake. As soon as you allow the Job Motive to come in at all, the drama of history changes abruptly. History is no longer a sweetly edifying moral tale with all the guilt clotted together in one corner, and blue-eyed innocence across from it. The scene no longer shows two plainly marked opposing camps; in fact, it is no longer a battle or a fight. In the center now is a great mass of people, and a new category applies to them; that category is not nice, in a word they are collaborators.

"I know that is an awful, loaded name, but let me take that very context as one more example. Consider Hitler, and his ascent to victory by a mass-vote - or nearly so. Certainly he had his well-functioning and well-paying alliance with the Junkers and the traditional German heavy-metal industry and thus with Big Money. And there also were the millions, who after six hours of waiting in the sun shrieked at his rallies, with a sound that could never again be forgotten by those who heard it. However, these were not enough. No, the scales tipped only because there were the many other millions who were not ignorant, who had accurate apprehensions of what that man eventually could wreak upon the world, but who voted for him nonetheless! Why? What outweighed their fears?

"That too is known. Germany was drowning in a morass of unemployment, and our ignorance, our bafflement in the face of joblessness played a great role. For a large proportion of the meek

fellow-voters said that a "strong man" like the one with the mustache was really needed, that nothing short of him would be sufficient to cure this weird, ill-understood disease of unemployment. (And even now in 2000, in many countries that very same bafflement prevails, and maybe some other strong man, maybe this time he will have curls and wear a business suit, will seem like the only adequate response.)

"So you see how the two motives, like tongue and groove, fit easily together. Focus on the awful balance, the horror of an equation that these people made. Look at what is in the two scales: on one side a slaughter such that the frozen corpses bulldozed into heaps eventually grew into mountains and on the other: Jobs. That should be an indication of the value that very many put on having work. And that in turn should be a measure of the extraordinary power of the bond, which integrates these people into the social order that promises them jobs. When jobs are at stake the threat is absolute and total, and people will not just go berserk or panic – they may kill.

"You do understand, don't you? That the colossal corporations by now possess a monstrous power. You can say that it is a new form of dictatorship, or that it is the arrival of a world-government, that in one night's financial roulette-game they can destroy the economy of a whole country (of Thailand for example). But these are under-statements which miss the point: the power is not exerted from above. What were at some point called "The Masses," not Joe Doe but Joe Consumer, are inextricably tied into the system. And tying the people into that system are their jobs. Jobs are what buffaloes were for some Indians. Out of buffaloes they made their tents and shoes and their bowstrings and buffaloes were what they ate.

"And this fact means that 'you' and 'we,' that is 'you' Ecologists and Anti-consumer people, and 'we' New Work people, must be partners. For the last twenty years we have been arguing that the job-system is the all-including fact, and for the last twenty years we have tried to change it. Any effort to reduce consumption, or to save a piece of forest or a species of fish is utterly doomed, is radical waste, if it does not start from the interlockedness of the job-system. Who doesn't want clean rivers and safe air? But once you threaten their jobs the people will be against you.

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"So far Environmentalism and the Labor Movement have been very far apart. Fundamentally both believed that they were a threat to each other. Labor, naturally, has wanted growth and Environmentalism of course did not. So the conflict could not have been more head-on. But my most encompassing point has been that we are all helpless in the grip of the job-system, and that

Environmentalism has no chance of making any serious difference unless that system is changed. That, I propose, is our common purpose and our common cause.

"I am quite prepared to put this as provocatively as I can: To make efforts to protect the environment while leaving the job-system in place is like putting your hand over the exhaust pipe of a car while the engine is still running. It will give you the satisfaction of having tried, but it will have made no difference as soon as you pull your hand away. In that way, we from New Work come at you in dead earnest: if you are not satisfied with gestures and good intentions, but if you mean to accomplish deep and lasting differences, both for the environment and in the area of consumption, then make common cause with us: then help us to change the job-system.

"I know that, on first hearing this, it may sound strange and puzzling, so let me explain. In the framework of New Work that we have been developing and applying for the last twenty years, the concept of the "job-system" is one central pivot around which a great deal of our analysis has turned. The foundational fact for us is that the vast majority of people have only worked in jobs for approximately two hundred years. Prior to that, the prevailing "work system," was agricultural, and it was wholly different from the job-system which we have had since then: people did not punch time-clocks, did not get hired and fired, did not receive weekly or monthly checks, and if they were small farmers, they did not have a boss but worked for themselves. The entire job-system is, therefore, in historical terms a relatively recent invention. It came into being together with the Industrial Revolution. What is more, right from the beginning, many different people were quick to point out that it brought with it all manner of flaws and potential problems. We, in fact, speak routinely of the "pathology" of the job-system. And in the end, that is the cardinal point: we see the job-system as one possible arrangement. It was problematic from the start, and in the last two hundred years the configuration of problems have gradually but painfully grown worse. So, now may be the time to phase in cautiously and with care a New Work system! That system will be the successor, (if you like, the 21st century successor) of the job-system, and it will be as different from it, as the job-system was different from the agricultural one that preceded it.

"We do not envision an abrupt change, and certainly not one let loose upon the world by a conspiratorial group out of small hidden cellars. Far from that. The dynamic which is already pushing in the direction of New Work is vast, and enormously complex, and it is very much already under way. For the last twenty years we have been working in and with these economic and political forces. More specifically, we have been fostering two forms of work that are both explicitly different and indeed juxtaposed to job-work. Both of these forms of work are now in

the process of rapid growth. In our view, the chances are excellent that these, and of course other forms of work, can be developed further, and that this evolution to some extent also can be steered till a critical mass is achieved. Like with ever so many other developments what was formerly mainstream at some point becomes marginal. Other forms of work will gradually wax, and the now dominant form of work, job-work will recede until a new gestalt, a new complexion, a new system will have congealed or emerged.

"Let me explain these two forms of work, but understand that they are only pieces: A dramatically different relationship to the environment and to consumption will be achieved only in the configuration in which these pieces interact, or in the coherent whole which could arise from them.

"Our name for the first form of New Work is High-Tech-Self-Providing. As the name implies, it is a form of providing directly for oneself, which means right away that it is not working for a boss - (there you already have the key distinction from jobs) - and it is also not working for a market, but immediately for one's own consumption. One can talk for half an hour about what it has in common with farming, but it is also at the same time by miles removed from the labor of haying or of shoveling manure, just as it is not the same thing as growing one's own parsley or making one's own home-cooked jam. Most people already practice various stepping stones to High-Tech-Self-Providing. The most common, banal and ubiquitous of these is the pumping of one's own gas in service stations. It is in some sense high-tech, since it became possible only when the pumps were controlled by computers, and it is clearly doing something for oneself; providing a service that was formerly rendered by others, who came running as soon as one turned off one's car. Getting cash at a bank out of one's own account is another by now equally humdrum example, not yet of Hi-Tech-Self-Providing, but of the bridge that could bring us there. So, too, are vending machines, computerized forms of payment, and so forth. I think most of us know that all of these taken together are a mere nothing in comparison to the very much larger realm of services that we by now perform for ourselves, not mainly in the public sphere, but instead right in our own home, in the bedroom corner in which we keep our own private PC.

"I put it this way intentionally, because the formulation suggests a deeper principle of quite singular and so far ill-understood importance: namely the gradual emergence, or even the revelation of a second new face which technology is able to wear. The associations most of us have, especially with computers run in the direction of the impersonal, more than that, of the anonymous, of that which is hostile to the emotional, the subjective, the private life. It is the inversion of this that is now just beginning to appear: namely (paradoxically) very "Hi-", advanced

technology that is not in the service of the big market, or the Goliath-corporations, but the reverse! It is technology which is a counterforce toward the inward, the personal, the domestic, the emotional and the humane. To recognize that possible development, that conceivable future (and to help foster and steer it) is very much what we propose.

"The small minority who have begun to make active use of the Internet are, I think, just at the juncture where they have begun to develop a feel for this. There was somewhere far in the past, the emancipation from something as mundane as somebody else's typing (i.e. from the secretary who possessed this skill). By now there is far too much to exhaustively list: from planning vacations, to servicing one's own bank account, to the not just ordering but increasingly also the printing of articles and books, to finding information about diseases and disabilities one incurs, to teaching and educating oneself in virtually limitless ways. A good many of us have started to practice Hi-Tech-Self-Providing in all of these areas in an almost somnambulistic way. But it may be socially, culturally and politically even more explosive and revolutionary than we have so far allowed ourselves to dream. (And that in spite of the deluge of hype about it.)

"Let me suggest three plausible further developments of this thrust: First: make clear to yourself, forcefully and with red ink, that using a computer to merely drive a printer may some day be held up as an example of just how doltish and hidebound we were. A printer is only one of a myriad of possible machines which a computer can guide and control. (If you want to get an impression of this, then walk through a car-factory, and you will see.) Since the gamut of such other machines are becoming cheaper, but above all far more flexible and far more 'intelligent,' the idea of connecting our computers to machines that can not only print information but that can instead make things (clothes, shoes, watches, jewelry, cell-phones) is not far-fetched, but on the contrary, may be around the next corner.

"Second: To carry on this making of things in the space of one's own private home, would cramp it, would put ten kinds of restraints on it. These machines will still be far too expensive for individual private possession. By contrast, working together with others in one space, would obviously have a string of advantages beyond the sheer cost, from having somebody else's assistance to simply having the fun of working together instead of alone. So, locating these machines in a neighborhood Center for New Work, which people would visit and use like they now visit a library or a copy-shop, could very easily be a next, or a simultaneous development. And that should begin to suggest some of the political and social implications at which I hinted before: Very flatly put, the result would be that great numbers of people could make use of these computers, and of these machines, and of the Internet--and could thus, for instance, buy goods

much cheaper over the Internet. Very much the kind of people who now have neither the skills, nor the computers to do this. (Differently put, among the great number of functions performed by neighborhood Centers for New Work would be their providing bridges across what some now are calling the digital divide; i.e. bridges on which the approximately 80% that are so far excluded could cross over.)

"Third: "Cheaper" is the term around which this issue will turn: So far the internet is very much contested territory--an Indian wrestling match between Goliath corporations who want to extend the control they already have to this new domain, and a large and motley crowd of micro entrepreneurs who are sometimes musicians, poets, or video artists, but to whom a great array of more conventional small business ventures belong, and who all pull in the direction of fulfilling the democratic, or populist vision that from the beginning was a hope attached to the internet. The winning of this battle may be cardinally important, and ironically the small people, the poor, the Davids may win it through their use of "free enterprise." In a nutshell: right now books ordered from the notorious amazon.com are not cheaper than those ordered from Borders. But this fact is a scandal, for savings are possible if one does not use a store or employees. Conceivably, enough small entrepreneurs, coming up from the bottom, could use the Internet to underbid the large companies and thus bring the prices down. (That small Internet outfits sometimes have the capacity to underbid large companies, has been shown in enough cases so that it might be the Molotov Cocktail which the internet has presented to the 'Wretched of the Earth.')

"Just these three developments, joined and working together, would even by themselves have a sizeable effect on the environment and on our patterns of consumption. Clearly, if something like 60 or 70% of services and goods are not transported 3000 miles, but are instead created (through the use of Hi-Tech) in the neighborhood, then the exhaust fumes from trucks will be reduced. Similarly, the enormous waste involved in the processes of mass-production would be lessened: there would not be the piles of excess, from clothes to shoes to cars that haplessly did not connect with a buyer. Still, there is a fourth development which helps to bring the other three into sharper focus and thereby gives one a far more vivid sense of just how big the difference would be.

"It comes to this: The customary prognosis of what the factory of the future will look like may turn out to have been a mistake. We have come to take it more or less for granted that there will be gigantic halls, with mile-long rows of robots that all bend forwards like tall birds, with hardly any people interspersed between them. One person in a white coat with a clipboard every quarter of a mile is the fantasy we have. At this point it seems likely - not certain, but possible - that events will take a different turn - and basically because of a quantum leap in technological

sophistication. Simply put: Robots that perform only a single task represent a low level of intelligence. Of these low I.Q. robots one needed numbers of long rows. But that is not true of the next generation. These will be by orders of magnitude more flexible, adjustable and above all more intelligent. One of these robots will be able to perform the sum of the segmented discrete tasks that so far required the proverbial "line." So, factories with long lines may soon belong to the past.

"The conception that has been evolving during the last few years is radically different from what many thought: The actual manufacturing of all the parts - for anything, whether it be a car, a refrigerator, furniture or cell-phones - may in the future occur in extraordinarily small shops. There will be no more than one or two of these next generation robots in any one shop. The most startling and from our perspective most telling change is that this in some sense will be all that is needed!

"Large assembling facilities are fearfully expensive and in the near future one may abandon them, just as one has "outsourced" so much else. If one remembers that this outsourcing included levels of hierarchies, large segments of management, and also much that dealt with distribution, one can begin to see how the whole tends towards a coherent development that is now close to reaching a goal: that goal could be small, decentralized, highly sophisticated neighborhood plants, which would naturally be connected through computers. Any order, for whatever one is buying, would go from one's own computer to the relevant network of small plants. The parts arrive and could be assembled in one's own home or garage, or better yet in the next neighborhood center.

"Clearly, this scheme eliminates large chunks of the "manufacturing system" to which we have become accustomed. The very landscape would have a different look: not only would the giant factories be gone, but also the high-rise administrative, beaurocratic buildings, and as well much of the architecture that houses the showrooms for sales and for spare-parts and repairs. Most of us realize that the last mentioned are already in a sharp process of contraction.

"To grasp the full impact this could have, you must combine this new system of 'digital' manufacturing with the conception of neighborhood centers for Hi-Tech-Self-Providing. In other words, add to the disappearance of the just described architecture, the fact that a great variety of services but also the making of a vast array of things (from Christmas cards to cloths, to furniture, to jewelry) could happen in these centers. Then ask yourself what the effect on the environment and on consumption conceivably could be.

"Still, this is only one of the forms of New Work that we see emerging. Let me describe the second, wholly different form: If you have heard anything at all about us - i.e. about New Work - if you have read some piece in a newspaper, or heard a radio-interview, then the one sentence you probably have run across is that 'people should do work that they really, really want to do. Well, our name for that form is "Paid Calling," and it is far from a footnote, it is actually a good half of the structure of the whole of New Work. Right now let me only say this much: That species of work again has its foundation in the mud of the everyday, namely, in the fact that very many people experience their work like a mild disease – it will pass, it's Wednesday already, and I'll make it to Friday somehow. The idea of making it possible for everyone, not just an elite, to at least part of the time do work that constitutes a Paid Calling was simply to set up the most pitched and pointed head-on contrast to this - i.e. in contrast to work as a mild disease. From the beginning and for the duration of the last twenty years we aimed at assisting people into work that was as juxtaposed to this as we could manage. Succinctly, to help them into work that would be the best, the optimum for them - appropriate to their talents, their world-view, fitted to their private lives, to their values, fitted above all to their desires, to what they really and seriously and deeply considered finally want. Not work that is a mild disease, but work that is far better than many therapies: that gives more strength, more vitality and more health.

"Let me emphasize one central point: namely, that the structure of this form of work is the mirrored opposite of that of job-work: in job-work I market myself to someone else, and hope that he can make use of me for his plans. The essence of a Paid Calling is that the origin and the impulse for the work arises from within me, and not on my surface, but as close to the core of me, as close to the place 'where I live' as can be achieved – that I work from the very heart and core of my soul.

"Naturally, we insisted that this kind of work was (at least often) separate from job-work, that as a category it was intended to represent an addition, a new and further species of work, and of course it was understood all along that for this form of work one would be paid, and indeed not miserly, but on the contrary, well. That it had to make an economic, a material difference was to us a self-understood precondition. (Exactly like in the case of High-Tech-Self-Providing.) Otherwise it plainly would not be important. It would be of no consequence. (That is part of what we mean when we say that we are attempting to phase in a different work-system: if it did not produce material and economic changes it would have no right to the word "system" - it would only be flimflam, wool pulled over tired people's eyes.)

"In an effort to drive this point deliberately to a clarifying extreme we consistently underscored

that there are ten, or if you like thirty-five ways in which paying for this species of work could be arranged. That was part of our larger, more basic stance: that what we were proposing was easy. Early on we suggested that a corporation like General Motors could pay (and maybe, even be made to pay) a sum for every workplace that is rationalized or re-engineered away. A sum that would allow one worker to perform work that she or he seriously wanted to do. Later we concentrated more on the analogy to foundations: why should only professors and artists receive fellowships? Why not anyone at all who has the capacity to perform valuable work? More recently we have been suggesting that there could be government programs that would not push people into picking up litter along the edges of highways, but that would assist people to perform the most creative and productive work that it is possible for them to achieve.

"The situation we aimed at from the start was that a premium be placed on the development of talents and the having of ideas. If someone indeed has an idea, a task that she or he seriously wants to perform, and if the person and the task meet some obvious required conditions - if it indeed "adds value" - though "value" broadly defined - then in a society with the barest minimum of sense such a person should be well paid. It is a matter of regaining some bare shreds of a sane perspective: we obviously pay millions to reams of people who do not produce anything of serious value. (Go through the halls of any number of corporate or government bureaucracies and you will see them doodling on their desks.) There also are the billions for the three weekly great mergers. And beyond that the legendary and much discussed trillions that multiply simply by wandering from one computer to another computer that happens to be half around the world. To pretend that a society such as ours cannot pay people for the most creative of all kinds of work is simply grotesque. It should be finally understood, that the claim to be paid for work is stronger than any other in the entire field; arguably even stronger than the claim to be assisted in a circumstance of ill health, or of old age.

"I hope you understand. Our basic idea is to gradually loosen the stranglehold of the job-system through the fostering and phasing in of these two forms of work that are clearly not job-work and not part of that system. If you allow me I will very quickly sketch a model so as to give you a simplified description of how these parts interact and form a new coherent whole - that could be the work-system of the 21. century.

"Imagine a splendid looking Buckminster Fuller-like glass-dome in the middle of a neighborhood. Among its many other functions this dome is also a greenhouse, and in it all manner of vegetables and flowers are grown in the most advanced, perma-culture ways. But in that dome are also several of the next generation robots I described. So the dome is also a manufacturing site. In

another corner are numerous computers staffed with trained assistants so that everyone and not just a few can Hi-Tech-Self-Provide themselves with a variety of services but also goods. Naturally, there is also a restaurant, space for performances and plays, and, needless to say, hosts of children, for this dome also is their school. In short a lively place. In its general appearance it is like an ultra modern Railway-station from which trains for a more cheerful future leave every hour round the clock.

"Every person living in this New Work neighborhood would participate in the three kinds of work I just described. Assume it to be two days each and people will spend two days Hi-Tech-Self-Providing, and two days doing job-work (for example, in the small sophisticated manufacturing plant) and two days they will pursue a "Paid Calling."

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"Let me try to give an overview of the more than 90 degree angle by which the whole thrust of consumption would be turned if we did manage to cross over into a New Work society and culture: Take first the ground floor of the structural economic changes: The provision of most services, but also the manufacturing of most goods from neighborhood centers would result in such immense simplifications, streamlinings and reductions of waste that the resistance to it will no doubt be great. Indeed, the reduction in job-work would be so very large that the pressure to introduce something like New Work, in order to offset these reductions would grow by leaps and bounds. In sheer magnitude the difference is as great as that between the old industry of Pittsburgh or Detroit and the new industry of the California coast. But with tenacious organized support it nonetheless could happen, simply because huge economic forces push that way: small plants with greatly more intelligent machines really are more economical and more competitive than the hulking dinosaurs that we still have now.

"Add to that the gamut of cultural changes that would also help to bring consumption down: First among these would be the dissipation of a specific kind of rage. What I mean is the fury of frustration about their work that builds up in many who serve in the job-system. I used to observe this in Flint. Workers coming out of the plants and going on buying sprees with the paycheck they had just received - out of the rage they felt about their work. They would buy to avenge themselves, to prove their superiority at least to things, to merchandise. They felt humiliated by the life they lead and by the work they had to do, and they got even by buying things ostentatiously and with contempt. The contempt showed for they would not even take their purchases inside

their homes: they would let them lie in the rain on their front lawns.

"A second such cultural change could be summarized through the analogy to a hydraulic system. In quite a number of recent films, the ultra-tough, young, high-up executive gets asked why he is climbing up on the money ladder from rung to rung. He (Michael Douglas) answers: "It's one way to keep score." That is close to accurate. Closer still would be: "It's the only way to keep score that still remains." The truth behind this is broad: we all know that work has drowned out much of what used to be the rest of life. As work covered more territory, it became also less satisfying - for all the multifarious reasons that get boiled down into the one word stress. So, what is a person to do? It is fearfully like a hydraulic system: as the area from which some pleasure or nurturance can be gotten constricts, the lust, the greed, goes exponentially up. Buying is not just the only measure; it is the only thing one can still do. One sits immobilized on the high flagpole of one's conspicuous consumption.

"The converse of this could be illustrated with anyone who passionately loves their work, and we could think typically of an artist, a scientist, or an inventor. Their passion for their work is often so intense that they become indifferent to the blandishments of the materialistic world. If more people had a chance to practice Hi-Tech-Self-Providing and could beyond this work for pay at something that was indeed their calling, then many of the goods which they now buy would pale by comparison. They would buy less, not from frugality, and even less from asceticism, but from discrimination - from having acquired a taste for "finer things."

"Consumerism is also a last resort. One buys with one's last breath. If there are other pleasures, particularly the gorgeous, sumptuous, enthralling pleasure of work that one seriously wants to do, then by comparison, the pleasures with which trinkets wave will feel like ashes on one's tongue.

"The third cultural change addresses our relationship to things: Of the vast majority of things we buy we ourselves say: "Easy come, and easy go." They are discarded as perfunctorily as they are acquired. This is awful from the perspective of the resources we waste, but it also means that we are unattached, adrift, like an astronaut whose tubes and wires have been cut. High-Tech-Self-Providing would change that. If we returned to a style of life were many things would again be made by ourselves, only this time with far less of the biblical sweat and with far more assistance from the most sophisticated and advanced technologies, we would give of ourselves to the things we make. They would embody our talents, our taste, a stretch of our time, they would be a piece of ourselves, and our relationship to them would be like a fragment of that to our children.

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"Try to visualize the landscape that is beginning to take shape: There are small decentralized, neighborhood manufacturing shops and nothing else, since all else has proved dispensable, uneconomical and a waste. And there are also neighborhood Centers for New Work in which people as a group advance, on the one side, towards greater self-reliance, and on the other side towards work they "really, really, want to do." Surely there is some hope in that, but there is still the monster problem, which brought me to this conference in the first place: the problem of forced growth.

"Remember that one of the modes of execution in the Middle Ages was to be dragged to death by horses. That is what is happening to us. We are on the ground, our wrists are tied together, and the panicked horses of the combined corporate-job system race with us through a field of stones. Of all evils, this is the most serious one, and New Work from its inception was intended to be a response to it.

"To see how, imagine a New Work neighborhood or community in economic straits. To make it concrete assume that they have some years of experience in High-Tech-Self-Providing, and that for several years many of them have been working, very much part-time, in the small local plant that makes components for electric batteries for mopeds. For one reason or another the market for their batteries has begun to sag and they are in economic trouble. How do they proceed?

"Most obviously and also most importantly: their Self-Providing is in place! Their dependence on their jobs is wholly different from the total dependence in which we live now. They are very like farmers used to be - when farmers were still farmers and not agribusinessmen. They could far more easily weather a dry period than someone who is fired over night. Their jobs represent only a fraction of their work, and the income they derive from it are only the equivalent of what farmers made of their cash-crops.

"But that is not all they have. They also have behind them years in which they developed their inventiveness, their ingeniousness in improvising. Hi-Tech-Self-Providing has thoroughly trained them in that. One of the first decisions they might therefore make is to compensate for the losses with a greater proportion of Self-Providing. Maybe they have so far not made their own shoes. So they do some research with the assistance of the Local Center for New Work, and find that this can be done. (Which at this writing is indeed the case.) This might not only reduce their expenses; it might at the same time be the seedling for the next enterprise they grow. For many of the

surrounding neighborhoods might have reached a similar point, and might, want to buy from them the software that one needs for making one's own shoes.

"That still leaves out of account the other side of New Work: Every one of them, the whole community has gone through several stages of finding out what kind of work they "really, really want" to do. That, too, has trained them in many skills and has strengthened their inventiveness. An obvious strategy would be to take stock of the great array of their past endeavors and to ask which of this variety could be put to an economic, or money-making use. Decisive here is that very little would go a long ways: if one is already at a level of 80% Self-Providing, then the equivalent of one additional job would be enough for five.

"And there is yet another side: they have all trained themselves in the gestation of ideas, and the presumption is that they live in a society in which valuable ideas are encouraged and supported in a colorful variety of ways: so any number of them might say that they will seek support for one of their "callings," and in exchange for that relinquish their claim to one of the currently endangered part-time jobs.

"The crux is that they can weigh and balance strategies against each other. That they are not automatically coerced into bribing a new entrepreneur to set them up another plant. This is the quintessential, cardinal-red pivotal point I wanted to make at the conference: the indispensable condition for any Economic Freedom is the freedom to say No to a new technology, No to a new line of products, No to a yet more concocted line of "services," No to Goliath-Corporations. Even when they dangle the promise of jobs.

"Do you begin to see how New Work would loosen the stranglehold that I have talked about from the beginning? You could run through the entire gamut of the illustrations I have given: maybe the big mouth of advertising could after all be muzzled, and maybe the consequent piling up of trinkets would not be a catastrophe that would send us screaming through the streets? Maybe we would face it with equanimity, and experience it as another step in our gradual liberation. If so, it would be proof that the force of what I have called the behemoth, i.e. of the combined corporate- and-job-system in the direction of more growth and more waste had begun to be tamed.

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Ooops! Eijei! More or less, just in time. They say we have been cleared for the final approach. So, fasten your seat belt now. Sorry, if this was not the restful flight you expected to have. One last sentence, if you permit. That consumption would be a totally, unrecognizably different thing if only people had something in which it was possible for them to believe, that you, and everybody already knows. But that is what New Work is for. If the immense ocean of marvelous human energy that is now being wasted would instead be put to some half-ways intelligent use, we would not only consume cataclysmically less, we could create, we could produce with that energy a from the ground up different culture. And you should work with us on that, on achieving a more humane, a more intelligent, more cheerful culture (the Marxists forgot about that), but also a culture that will be more sensuous and far more flamboyant. You know that we could have this--it's as close to us as we are right now to the ground--but I know. Enough! Good Bye. Good Bye. I will stop--and go back to the writing of my very long, very thick book.

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