

Buy Your Own Job; Own Your Own Life

The term 'ownership' is a popular buzzword in contemporary management speak, in which usage it has no connection with genuine ownership but rather means a willingness amongst employees to pay lip-service to their corporate mission statement. Parallel to this rise in popularity of phoney ownership what we have actually seen is a loss of autonomy by employees over their work, and an increasing loss of control of their workplace to global financial interests. In this article I argue both for a regaining of physical control of the workplace through the expansion of cooperatives, and for a shaking off of the ideological dependence on work which provides such valuable support for capitalism as an economic system. These two arguments can be seen as addressing the two fundamental needs of a decent employment system: for job security and job satisfaction. The following sections propose some possible solutions: moving towards cooperative workplaces; reducing our dependence on the money economy and our standards; and changing our ideas about what we need to live a happy life.

Cracking the Values Code

For many in this late stage of capitalism, work is focused around a corporation whose ownership pattern is unclear and may change frequently. As the recent film, *The Corporation*, makes clear, this removes the need for any sense of personal responsibility between employer and employee. It also means that the people really pulling the strings are on neither end of that traditional relationship, but rather disconnected shareholders. Their involvement in the 'business' is purely and simply financial.

Globalisation is a process designed to minimise any remaining involvement with 'stuff' from the process of money-making. The simultaneous development of trade liberalization and financial liberalization was no coincidence. Globalisation is merely the latest and most blatantly profiteering phase of an economic system that is not called *capitalism* for nothing:

'The finance industry lies at the heart of globalisation. Of the total international transactions of a trillion or so dollars each day, 95 per cent are purely financial. Globalisation is not about trade; it is about money.'
[Hutchinson, F. Mellor, M. and Olsen, W, *The Politics of Money* (London: Pluto, 2002), p. 5.]

The consequences of this exclusive focus on money are disastrous for unprotected regional economies, or national economies operating without a powerful currency to back them up. In their account of the devastating effect of the quest for shareholder value on the regional economies of the UK, Martin and Minns identify finance as the key driver:

'the financial system now completely dominates the real economy of goods and services'. [Martin, R. and Minns, R., 'Undermining the Financial Basis of Regions: The Spatial Structure and Implications of the UK Pension Fund Industry', *Regional Studies*, 29 (1995): 129-44, p. 128.]

In this highly monetised economy businesses operate on debt, and the entrepreneur is more successful the greater his ability to take risks,

especially financial risks. This is how we arrive at the paradoxical situation where the most successful companies are those that sport the largest debts. Halliburton, with its \$998m. debt, was a shining example of the trend until it helpfully gained large contracts in post-war Iraq. Things were not always so cosy for the US administration's favourite corporation. With confidence shattered following the attacks on the Twin Towers, these risks appeared to be unsupportable. Two months later Enron's massive debts (estimates vary, but \$20 billion dollars seems a conservative one, backed by only \$2bn. of assets) came home to roost. The massive growth rates at Enron, from nowhere to the seventh largest corporation in the US in just fifteen years, are only possible on the basis of this sort of ungrounded, loan-based strategy. It was inevitably the largest collapse in US history—until the next one.

The next one might have been Halliburton, which had used the same technique of 'unbilled receivables' to inflate the profits it reported to shareholders and the stock-market. The two companies shared many similarities: their place in the energy sector, vast borrowing, and close political ties with the White House. Like Enron, Halliburton had postponed losses and counted money they had not even invoiced for as revenue, according to the pressure group Judicial Watch overstating profits to the value of \$445m during 1999 to 2001. Living on the accounting edge like this might have worked during the boom of the 1990s but was becoming impossible in the insecure new century, especially once the foundations of the corporate world were cracked by the World Trade Center attack and the fall of Enron.

So why is inflating the value of your company—'future value captured in the form of market capitalisation' as Anderson call it in the fraudsters' training manual (written by three Arthur Anderson partners [Libert, B. D., Samek, S. S. and Boulton, R. E. S. (2000), *Cracking the Value Code: How Successful Businesses are Creating Wealth in the New Economy* (New York: HarperBusiness))—so important? It is because when critics describe unregulated global capitalism as a giant casino they are not using an analogy. What determines the share value, and therefore the equity, of a globally traded corporation is its perceived value. So Halliburton is only worth what people think it is worth. This is why companies like Enron and Halliburton produced fraudulent accounts, because by doing this they could determine the actual value of the company. The real value of companies, in terms of the assets they possess and could sell on to creditors if they crashed, is a fraction of their nominal stock-market value. So investors, including the banks and insurance companies that invest the money we may have saved, are competing with each other to bid up the price of these companies. If confidence is lost the share value may plummet drastically.

This transformation of the stock-market into a casino has had devastating consequences on our regional economies. Andy Pike has carried out research into the loss of control of a family brewery on the river Wear in Sunderland. The Vaux Brewery was a key local employer that had been operating since 1837. But globalization, with its combination of consolidation and monetization, forced the Nicholson family, who had run the company for three generations, to float on the stock-market. The Nicholsons struggled to maintain control of the Brewery, but this became impossible in the face of 'Brewing's increasing capital and scale intensity [which] generated strong investment capital demand that could not be met by retained earnings or North East regional investors'. In his memoirs Nicholson identifies the culture clash between traditional and globalising

capitalists. Pike comments on his account that "The post-"Big Bang" political economy and culture of speculative short-termism, fee-seeking and deal-making by "plain spivs" was increasingly at odds with the Chairman's "gentlemanly capitalism". [Pike, A. J. (2004), "Shareholder Value" versus the Regions: the Closure of the Vaux Brewery in Sunderland', working paper, pp. 12, 19.]

Readers of this journal are unlikely to have much sympathy for the patriarchal capitalists of the pre-globalisation era, but the loss of security of employment and of the economy as a whole is clear from this example of the response to the pressure for shareholder value. Economic decisions are now being made by city dealers seeking only money, with a loss to all players in the economy who are not shareholders. It is not enough now just to make profits, a fund manager must now make more profits faster, and more profits faster than the fund manager next door. There is cut-throat competition for capital with success measured in terms of real or perceived shareholder value.

Readers are equally unlikely to have sympathy for Marks & Spencer, whose recent demise is a result of their refusing to play the latest corporate game, relying instead of an ethical commitment to preserve British suppliers and maintain high quality standards rather than competing on price alone. The City did not approve. Stock-market pressure has resulted in the transfer of M&S supply contracts to the Far East and Eastern Europe and away from suppliers like Dewhursts in the Welsh Valleys, which had previously been supported by M&S's 'buy British' policy. [Mellahi K, Jackson P, and Sparks L, 2002, "A study into the failure of Marks & Spencer" *British Journal of Management* 13/1, 15-29.] This pressure came in spite of an apparent turnaround in the company's fortunes as recently as late 2003, when announced profits had risen by 7 per cent to £311.5m for the six months to September. In the globalised economy shareholder pressure can make or break companies and executives are under increasing pressure to generate constantly increasing profits. As one commentator on M&S has it, their latest restructuring and de-internationalisation plans are 'driven by the need to satisfy international shareholders and the London Stock Exchange'. [Burt S.L., Mellahi, K., Jackson, T.P., Sparks, L. (2002), 'Retail internationalization and retail failure: issues from the case of Marks and Spencer' *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 12/2: 191-219, p. 215.]

Of course companies that are highly indebted are vulnerable not only to their shareholders but also to the banks who own their debt-equity, and hence to some extent own the companies themselves. The nature of this ownership by creditors is made clear when failing companies are offered 'debt-for-equity swaps'. This particular scheme was invented in the 1980s, as a neo-imperialist response to the inability of Latin American countries to pay their foreign debts. The collapse of whole countries would have destroyed the teetering financial system and hence the lenders had as much incentive to find a solution as the borrowers. In this case they found a solution which involved their taking ownership of national assets in return for cancelling some part of the debt. The countries would have been better advised to renege on the debt, as Argentina has done to find a way out of its latest financial crisis. Argentina's politicians appear to have learned from their bruising experience of the global financial markets. In January 2005 the country offered its foreign creditors 25 cents per dollar for the debts. This is effectively a default, but 700,000 bondholders may have to settle for it. The experience may offer a lesson to other indebted national economies around the world.

A revised version of the scheme is now being offered to companies whose risk-taking entrepreneurs have failed to convince shareholders that the company is good for the debt, leading to the threat of bankruptcy. At this point the bank can generously step in and agree to take on stock in the company to the value of its loan. While such 'corporate restructuring' is often seen as benign, at least preventing the loss of the company, in reality it represents a switch in the value from shareholders to banks, since the value at which the stock is exchanged is usually a fraction of its former value. In the case of Marconi, 'rescued' by the 'merciful hands of its bankers' in late 2002, the shareholders lost around 99% of their investment. [Guardian (2002), 'Marconi in the Merciful Hands of its Bankers', 22 Aug.]

Here is how the debt-for-equity swap at the tourist company My Travel looks from the perspective of the hedge-fund manager (in this case Roddy Campbell of Cross Asset Management), who is gambling on the value of different companies, and trading in their debt:

*Typically long/short funds are able to take advantage of debt-for-equity swaps, but in this case the complicated capital structure of the company was a deterrent, said Campbell. 'You needed to be a distressed fund prepared to take the equity risk...to really get it', he added. Cross bought My Travel bank debt at 82 in December. Bank debt holders are receiving 88% of the equity in the reorganized company, and the debt is now valued at approximately 180. The position accounts for around 5% of the \$180 million fund's total exposure, he added. Cross is not alone in having profited from My Travel recently; fellow London Titanium Capital also held a long bank debt position in the company. [Murray, R. (2005), 'Cross Gains Ground with Travel Company Debt', *European Hedge Fund Manager News*, 4 Mar.]*

If you work for a publicly traded company this may well be the extent of your job security: your whole life is at the whim of a city wideboy hustling in the relative values of other companies' debts.

In a highly monetized economy employment is the only source of security, hence my wish in this section to outline the insecurity of that relationship in the private sector. The public sector is similarly coming under ideological pressure, with critiques of its levels of efficiency and over the rates of the taxation that fund it. This pressure is coming particularly from Europe, where the Eurozone countries with their strong public sectors are facing a monetary squeeze, while the 'Lisbon agenda' with GATS at its heart is forcing competition from poor-quality rivals, paying low wages and operating with poorer employment conditions, into public sectors in all member states.

Work-Life Balance or Work-Profit Balance?

So much for job security; what about job satisfaction? Discussions about job satisfaction have been replaced in recent years by a concern for the work-life balance. This assumes immediately that there is a tension between work and life, that one is an unpleasant necessity from which one escapes to the other, the sanctuary of the life. I offer as evidence of the unsatisfactory nature of this debate an television advert for Thomson holidays during which we watch a lone, poolside sunbather repeatedly shifting his sun-lounger to catch every possible ray, while we are informed that 'for every afternoon in the sun you have to work three weeks and two days'. There are a number of

points about the image conveyed by this advert that are both symbolic and deeply troubling. First, *the man is on his own*. Are we to assume that he prefers spending his holidays alone, that his perfect escape is to a place where there is only his own company? Second, he is sitting by a swimming pool and yet *he never swims*. Like so many lives, the really enjoyable activity is missed because the central character, economic man, is distracted by the sun-lounger or his drink or the shadow, or whatever. But most importantly, he is enjoying not being at work *because he does not like his work*. His holiday represents an escape from his life, which is made unpleasant because of work he undertakes from pressure rather than from choice.

Marx was merely one of many economists to consider that work is an essential part of who we are as human beings, and that it is only work as structured within capitalism, a thin relationship between employee and employer where power and physical or mental exertion, and increasingly skill and autonomy too, are swapped for money, that is essentially unsatisfying. While it is not a new idea that work is essential to who we are as members of a social species, it does seem to have slipped policy-makers minds that if the workplace is dissatisfying, and particularly if we spend an increasing proportion of our lives there, we will be dissatisfied human beings. This dissatisfaction will show itself in a variety of different ways, ranging from anti-social behaviour and drunkenness to an epidemic of drug-taking.

It would seem that I am not the only commentator to have noticed that the disappearance of the homemaker is an indication that more work is being extracted from each household. True, we do now have the benefit of more gadgets around our homes to replace her, and the general quality of those homes has probably increased, but is this sufficient substitute for the fact that it now requires two incomes to maintain a household when a few decades ago only one was sufficient? From a Labour perspective this is a cause of celebration: more jobs than ever, more work than ever, more labour than ever. From a Marxist perspective it is unsurprising given the record profits being made by corporations such as HSBC, whose profits were the largest in corporate history last year at £9.6bn., and up 37% per cent on the previous year. With this degree of surplus value being extracted, of course we are having to run faster to keep the treadmill turning. From a human perspective, life has become ever more stressful and less satisfying. It seems fairly clear that as non-productive shareholders remove a larger slice of the economic pie, those of us who do work and produce will have to work ever harder to maintain our standing. The reason so many workers feel like they are running faster and faster just to stand still is that they are dragging a whole bunch of increasingly greedy shareholders along with them.

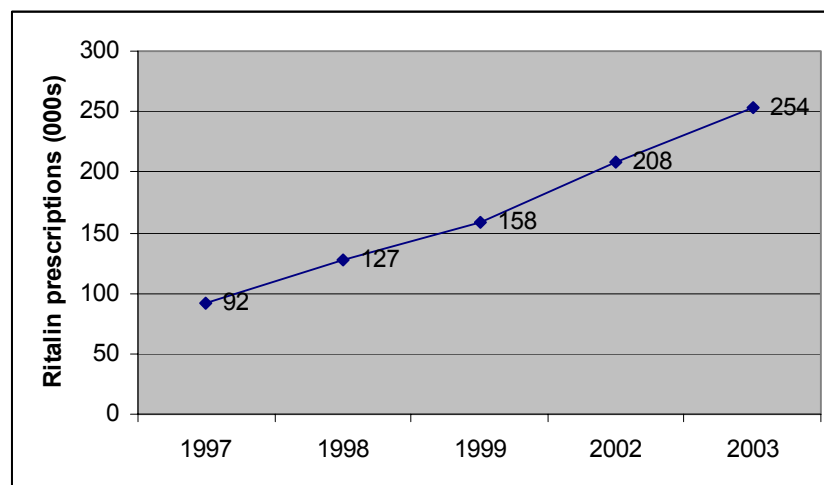
The often touted solution to the problem of the work-life balance is to increase the provision of childcare. Rather than questioning why there is more work, we find somebody to take the strain of our domestic work to enable us to continue our commitment to the capitalist economy. This person is probably a woman, and almost certainly poorly paid. The creation of her work, along with ours, increases GDP growth, and helps the Chancellor meet his targets, while doing nothing for our quality of life. The same can be said of the proliferation of labour-saving devices and products from tumble-dryers to TV dinners: where once we provided for ourselves now the market provides, with a corresponding loss to our self-sufficiency, our self-respect, and the planet, whose resources are used in the production of what we used to do for ourselves.

For the working parent, especially the mother, the consequence of this childcare strategy is guilt and an increase in working hours, as she crams

quality time with children and domestic chores into the sliver of life between the end of work and the beginning of sleep. The guilt is induced by her knowledge that the women she leaves her child with care less than she does and are paid less than she is. Why should they show the sort of love and care her child needs? The various hysterical exposés of poor childcare provision only add to this guilt. This is in no way to criticize child-care workers, who frequently do a splendid job. But for many women the guilt over their decision to arrange for their children to spend most of their lives with strangers cannot easily be assuaged. One solution may be to change the nature of the childcare relationship, as discussed in the section on cooperatives below.

What is the consequence of this system for the children? Jamie Oliver has recently drawn attention to the abysmal way we are nourishing our children's bodies, but this is only one part of the epidemic of dis-ease amongst our children and young people. Their mental health seems even more precarious. In 2003 140,000 children between the ages of 16 and 18 in full-time education had been prescribed an anti-depressant. Since 1996 the number of young people under 16 being given Prozac and the related SSRIs has risen from 76,000 to 110,000. Ritalin prescriptions have rocketed from 92,000 in 1997 to 254,000 in 2002, a 326 per cent increase in just six years. [Townsend, M. (2004a), 'Exam Fears Driving Teenagers to Prozac', *Observer*, 6 June.] There is no way of generating a plausible causal hypothesis linking this with the loss of time shared between parents and children, but the increase is evidence in itself of a frightening mental crisis amongst our young people which is largely being ignored. Other evidence suggests that a combination of loss of parental involvement because of longer working hours and an increase in certain types of TV viewing is leading to a rapid deterioration in our children's ability to speak [The National Literacy Trust is running a 'Talk to Your Baby' campaign which specifically identifies increased working hours by parents as a cause of poor communication skills amongst children. The evidence on the issue of TV viewing is more mixed, see R. Close (2004), *Television and language development in the early years: a review of the literature* (London: Literacy Trust)]. 'Hard-working families' is a popular electoral slogan; its consequences may be less engaging.

Figure 1. Department of Health figures for Ritalin prescriptions, 1997-2003



So here are the problems we need to address: a poor quality of life in the workplace, with loss of autonomy and skills, loss of security and loss of self-esteem, combined with increasing hours of work meaning that, while home life is valued, its quality is also declining, with little time or energy left to maintain vital human relationships. This discussion about work and life, and where the distinction should be drawn, has lain at the heart of green political economy from the outset and has a central influence on green politics. I will attempt to share some of its insights in the limited space available here. [The work of E. F. Schumacher and James Robertson is particularly influential; I have discussed the attitude of green political economists to work by reference to the work of emancipatory and guild socialists elsewhere. E. F. Schumacher, *Good Work* (London: Cape, 1979); Robertson, J. (1985), *Future Work: Jobs, Self-Employment and Leisure after the Industrial Age* (London: Gower); Scott Cato, M., Keenoy, T., Arthur, L. and Smith, R. (2005), 'Green and Red: An Exploration of the Cooperative Environmental Niche in Wales', to be presented to the Mondragon conference, 28 June].

Social and Environmental Sustainability

There are two concepts from green economics that have something to offer the project of rethinking the workplace in the 21st century: 'right livelihood' and 'self-provisioning'. If the central problem with capitalist expropriation is the increasing distance between producer and consumer, an obvious solution is to provide for your needs closer to home, ideally by your own hand. Once we reach the stage where you are providing yourself with the necessities of life we have achieved the self-sufficient ideal of self-provisioning. No intervention by market middlemen, no excessive production of CO₂ in pointless transportation of goods, no unnecessary dependence on complex distribution systems. This might seem like a voluntaristic and individualist approach, but in fact the Green Party's economic policies, especially those concerned with trade, would facilitate such a shift. The defining characteristic of a sustainable trading system would be 'trade subsidiarity', i.e. seeking supplies of each individual good or service as close to home as possible. [My forthcoming book, *Market, Schmarket* will include a chapter on green approaches to trade. There is also more detail available in *Trade Subsidiarity: Reducing the Movement of Goods for the Benefit of People and Planet* (Aberystwyth: Green Audit, 2004).] Policies to support such a principle would include the introduction of a tax to reflect the environmental cost of transporting goods, and site-here-to-sell-here policies, as well as the establishment of a General Agreement on Sustainable Trade to support fair trade initiatives.

In terms of self-provisioning at the personal level, a good starting point is brushing up your cooking skills rather than relying on supermarket ready-meals. As well as withdrawing your money from the globalised market system, making your own food has the added advantage of being satisfying and better for your health. You can extend this thinking into the sphere of home improvements. Since it is your involvement in the global market that is the problem, employing local tradesmen or using your local LETS scheme or furniture recycling centre whenever you can is a step in the right direction. Extending this thinking further you might think about employing a local craftsman carpenter to build you a shelf-unit rather than bringing a flat-pack back from MFI in the back of your car. This will keep more value in your local economy and support skilled, self-employed, and probably more

satisfied, workers. In terms of food production you might think about getting your hands dirty on your own allotment, or involving yourself in a box scheme, checking that as much of the produce in the box as possible is as local as possible.

Schumacher developed the concept of 'right livelihood', one of the requirements of the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhist teaching, to explain how our attitude to work might be in a green society. It defines a threefold purpose of work: to utilise and develop the faculties; to overcome our egocentric tendency by joining in a common task; and to produce goods and services that contribute to a 'becoming existence'. Clearly this might seem rather arcane for people working in a call-centre or ice-cream factory, but it can be helpful when making decisions about the sorts of directions our career paths might move as individuals, as well as guiding our policy-making to facilitate an economy that generates meaningful rather than soul-destroying employment. It would also suggest the need for the chance to pull back from the workplace and consider the direction one's life is taking, a process supported by the introduction of a Citizens' Income scheme that allows periodic breaks from the work treadmill.

Beyond these guiding concepts we must immediately acknowledge the most important principle in restructuring the economy: ownership matters. The cooperative structure offers an answer to the problem of ownership identified above. Research into the cooperative sector in Wales has shown that many of them have been created as a defensive response to globalization, as when international groups close parts of their businesses which are not making such large profits as other sections, although the business is valid and profitable in its own right. [Arthur, L., Cato, M. S., Keenoy, T. and Smith, R. (2004), *Audit of Welsh Cooperatives* (Cardiff: Wales Institute for Research into Cooperatives).] An example is Datrys Consulting which was a successful branch of a Dutch-owned firm of consulting engineers that learned of its demise as part of a company restructuring plan. With the support of Wales Cooperative Centre the employees bought the company, based in Caernarfon, as a going concern from the Dutch parent and they began trading as a cooperative in October 2002. The workforce continue to provide bilingual civil engineering services, maintaining the five well-paid and highly skilled jobs in a depressed rural economy, and increasing them now to eight.

In the Welsh context colleagues at the Wales Institute for Research into Cooperatives have also argued the advantage of cooperatives in terms of their ability to maintain value in the local economy, in contrast to the footloose nature of the global corporation. Worker-owners have actually bought their own job, so that as well as the value they generate staying the local economy, the job has too as well. This is a process we have called 'capital anchoring', and it is particularly relevant against the backdrop of the vast sums wasted in Wales paying East Asian corporations to bring low-skilled low-paid jobs that lasted only a few years and whose main legacy was further demoralization of the labour-force. [For more details see research listed on our website: www.uwic.ac.uk/research/wirc.]

In contrast to the increasingly diffuse and insecure employment relationships generated by globalization, Tower Colliery, the only employee-owned mine in the world and the last deep mine in South Wales, is a positive and life-affirming workplace. Employment and environmental standards are both high, there is a strong sense of camaraderie, and decisions about how much of the surplus from sales should be reinvested in the business and paid as bonuses are made by democratic meetings. On a smaller scale,

Sundance Renewables, a worker cooperative in the Amman Valley, has created five jobs in the growing renewable energy sector, including one as an apprentice. The business operates the country's first cooperative biodiesel recycling plant.

Cooperatives have also been proposed as a solution to the inadequacy of provision of childcare. A mutual solution in this market would offer many of the advantages offered by cooperatives wherever they operate. One might think particularly of the retention by local economies, often deprived local economies, of the full value of the work of local people, and of the increased participation in a richer relationship than the thin, market relationship, an aspect which may be particularly important to parents when it comes to care of their children. The cooperative can balance the needs of children, parents and employees, creating a full, trusting relationship that can fulfil all their needs.

An academic paper by Dunance and colleagues [Dunance, S., Edwards, R., Reynolds, T., and Alldred, P. (2004), 'Mothers and Child Care: Policies, Values and Theories', *Children & Society*, 18/4: 254-65.] found that mothers are far more concerned about a whole range of hands-on issues about the kind of care their children receive than national policies acknowledge. The cooperative model, with parents owning and being closely involved in the management of, the nursery where their children spend time, is likely to allow them the flexibility they want to create a childcare setting that suits their needs. The data demonstrate that this model for childcare is by no means marginal. The cooperative model for childcare provision represents around two-thirds of the overall provision, which is by cooperatives either owned by the parents or by the employees. [Cooperatives-UK (2004), *Delivering Cooperative Childcare: Briefing Document*]

The green response to apparently intractable policy problems is often one of withdrawal and voluntarism. With Gandhi I see this as a positive and empowered move, but it fails to take account of people's different inheritances of social and educational capital, and their different levels of spiritual development. It appears almost as a contradiction in terms to suggest macro-level policies to encourage developments which are inherently locally based. But there are ways in which the policy framework could facilitate diverse local economic responses and perhaps especially constrain the crushing power of the market in all areas of life. The Citizens' Income scheme, building confidence in economic security and allowing creativity to flourish is an obvious first step. Beyond that we need to challenge the state aid rules of the European Union which prevent even the smallest sums of money being made available as grants to develop local enterprises. Not content with leveraging money out of local economies, corporations have also lobbied to make it impossible to invest public money in non-public-sector enterprises, even when these are unquestionably in the public interest. Policies to reinternalise the externalities created by the global trading system, primarily the introduction of a carbon tax would instantly change the relative prices of locally produced vs. globally traded goods, enabling the expansion of self-provisioning.

And how are we to deal with the long-hours culture? I would suggest the most important response is to readjust our judgement about what is important and what brings us happiness in life, a judgement which has been distorted by the need for the market and its advertising industry to create unfulfilled desires for goods and services. The market system thrives on the 'ethic of scarcity', encouraging us to see the glass as half empty to encourage us back onto the treadmill. We are more dissatisfied than our primitive

ancestors, whose societies have been called the original affluent societies and whose approach to production and exchange is described in terms of 'stone age economics':

*There are two possible courses to affluence. Wants may be 'easily satisfied' either by producing much or desiring little. The familiar conception, the Galbraithian way, makes assumptions peculiarly appropriate to market economies: that man's wants are great, not to say infinite, whereas his means are limited, although improvable: thus, the gap between means and ends can be narrowed by industrial productivity, at least to the point that 'urgent goods' become plentiful. But there is also a Zen road to affluence, departing from premises somewhat different from our own: that human material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate. Adopting the Zen strategy, a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty—with a low standard of living. [Sahlins, M., *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1972), p. 2.]*

This conclusion is based on ethnographic observation of hunter-gatherer societies, whose people are always well provided with food and who spend far more time in group activities which we might characterize as leisure-based or cultural, and far less in work than members of industrialized societies. A group of native Australians from fish creek spent an average of five hours per day gathering and preparing food (their 'work') while the Hadza of Tanzania, who have not been pushed into more marginal land, spend only less than two hours per day on average on this activity.

Pre-capitalist employment systems have much to recommend them and were hotly defended during the rise of the wage-labour system, as described in *The Making of the English Working Class*. In spite of our preconception that life was 'nasty brutish and short' in the middle ages we find that days were defined not by the absence of work, as we define with our 'bank holidays', but rather by the absence of a religious festival, the *dies non festivus*, which was a day when you unfortunately had to work. [Epstein, S. A., *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991)] Thompson describes the difficulty the early capitalists found in organizing their workforces to obey the clock and to abandon Saint Monday, the day spent recovering from the excesses of the weekend rather than working. [Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).]

Of course I am not suggesting a return to either of these types of life: with our vastly increased technical ability and scientific knowledge we could ensure for ourselves a much higher standard of living with far less work effort expended and with far less pressure on the planet. To achieve this we need to change our attitudes as individuals. We need to reappraise what we really value, as distinct from what has a market or monetary value. We need to learn to live within the ethic of plenty and with a sense of gratitude for the planet that provides us with that plenty. And finally, we need to reject the competitive ethos of capitalism with its undermining of the relationships of trust that have always made human societies what they are. Creating cooperative workplaces and rebuilding the mutualist approach to solving social problems are important parts of that process.

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