

WORKERS' SELF-MANAGEMENT IN SCIENCE
(A conference organised by the British Society
for Social Responsibility in Science)

A SELF-MANAGED CONFERENCE: a conference on workers' self-management must not itself be a manipulated affair. This programme is provisional. What happens in the conference is for the participants to decide.
SATURDAY MARCH 11:

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| 11am - 1pm | Why self-management?
The roles of science in society. |
| 2.30pm - 4pm | Mental and manual labour.
"Scientific" expertise and deference. |
| 4.30pm - 7pm | Militant struggle in industry.
Self-management in practice. |

SUNDAY MARCH 12:

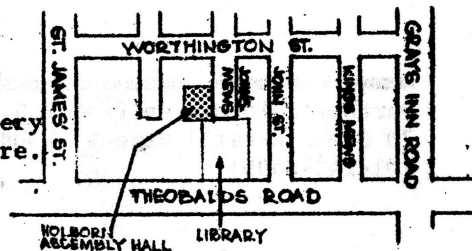
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| 11am - 1pm | Working groups to discuss tactics. |
| 2pm - 5pm | Working groups (contd.)
Final session to coordinate future activities. |

The conference itself must decide its procedures. Costs are expected to amount to about £100. The conference will have to decide how these should be met.

Cheap and simple food will be available for lunch on both days. It is hoped to arrange a party for Saturday night. We hope London participants will offer some sleeping accommodation.

HOW TO GET THERE:

Buses: 5, 18, 19, 38,
45, 172, 243, 259.
Tubes: Holborn, Chancery
Lane, Russell Square.



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the terrible
printing.



**HOLBORN ASSEMBLY HALL,
JONES NEWS, LONDON WC1
SATURDAY & SUNDAY, 11-12 MARCH**

STATEMENT

This statement explains why the conference was convened but imposes no final definitions.

The aim of this conference is to bring together scientific workers from universities, research institutes and science-based industry,

1) to analyse the role of science and technology in reinforcing the values, priorities and structure of the existing society;

2) to discuss the control of science by the people;

3) to act collectively to change the structure of scientific work as part of our aim of fundamentally changing society.

Workers' self-management means what it says - that people should have control over their own lives.

People who work together should manage themselves, not be managed by others. How they work, who does what, what they do, and why they do it should be decided collectively by everyone who does the work.

The mystique and exercise of expertise are central to the anti-democratic structure of our society. In modern society science underpins the authority of 'experts'. The struggle for workers' self-management in science can therefore contribute to breaking down deference to specialised knowledge. By altering the structure of decision-making in the crucial science-based institutions, we have the opportunity to challenge the economic and psychological bases of power.

Alienated Work and Alienated Life.

People feel powerless in society. We have no control over the decisions which affect our lives. We are controlled and manipulated at work and in other areas of life. Things happen to us. Jobs change; firms close. Neighbourhoods are demolished; our living conditions are assaulted. We are told how and when to work, what to believe, what to consume, how to enjoy ourselves.

Traditional politics offers no way out of this alienation. Politicians - local and national, Left

• The Need for Solidarity

We cannot have a movement for scientists only. We must fight alongside other working people. We must work together to achieve workers' self-management in science and throughout society. Science is used as a source of domination by some over others. This domination is perceived by the dominated as 'natural' and 'inevitable'. Science, as expertise, encourages deference. Scientific and technological rationality are used to limit our individual and political choices. We must reverse this process both by action and by helping people to see through the mystique of science.

There are therefore two sides to our situation, and to the problem of workers' self-management in science. There is the question of management at our place of work, which is something we have to seize; and there is the question of power in society at large, which has to be shared by all. We must manage neither our own alienation nor anyone else's: our movement must be part of a general movement, or it will be in opposition to the interests of the people as a whole.

Theory is Completed in Practice

We must come together with people from other scientific and science-based institutions, to discuss both the theoretical and practical aspects of our task. That is what this conference is for.

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One of the central contradictions of the scientist's position is that in seeking to achieve self-management, he is in danger of acting against the interests of other workers. A self-managed society would not allow these conflicts, because work would not be dominated by the values of the market place. In self-managed institutions the barriers between the 'knowledgeable' and 'expert' on the one hand and the 'pairs of hands' on the other would be deliberately eliminated. The socialisation of knowledge is a prerequisite of an egalitarian society.

Science as the Ideology of Power

We have talked about the central place of science and technology in hierarchical societies. We now want to argue that the 'rationality' of science and technology also plays an important part in how people think about themselves and about society. Science is central to social domination not only by being directly employed in the techniques of control, but by the fear of pretentious 'expertise' which it inspires throughout society. There is a veritable religion of science, which becomes the model for 'rationality' in society. It is misused to justify the current organisation and structure of work and also to explain redundancies, evictions and exclusions from power. We 'blind with science'. The manipulative approach to nature sanctions a manipulative approach to people. What is now meant by 'man's power over nature' is a power exerted by some men over others with a knowledge of nature as their instrument. These excuses are not only used at the place of work but also in addressing the general problems of society. We are told that 'scientific experts' must in the end make political decisions. Therefore, both at the place of work and in the running of society, science is used as an ideology to rob us of the power to make the decisions which affect our lives.

As scientists we can demystify people about the irrational basis of the power of scientific and technological 'rationality' over them. We can contribute to the breaking of the equation that 'specialist knowledge (and its control) must equal power'.

and Right - presume to make our decisions for us and are an integral part of bureaucratic society. Apathy and withdrawal are perfectly understandable reactions to a society in which all institutions reinforce our sense of powerlessness. This is true of all work in the existing framework of society - in factories, offices, and in the home.

If we are to gain power over our lives, we must transform the whole nature and organisation of work. The first step in this process is to criticise the 'work ethic' - the belief that alienated work is somehow necessary and even good; that work is one thing and leisure another; that in leisure we recover or relax from work. We must find ways of changing life so that all work becomes creative and meaningful and ceases to be something alien and separated from the rest of life. Our approach to self-management is to make fundamental changes at the place of work a first step towards transforming life and society.

Why Workers' Self-Management?

Work is a crucial activity, but our work now dominates us. Relations at work largely determine the character and pattern of our lives. As things now stand, the requirements of production - whether of commodities, services or knowledge - determine the relations between people. Those who control the resources use those who possess the expertise to tell others what to do. This is often done in the name of 'efficiency'. The relations between things determine the relations between people. People are treated as things.

We must therefore attack the existing relations of production at the place of production. The oppressive nature of work will only be eliminated when the authority of management is eliminated. Since managers are the embodiment of economic power, the challenge at the place of work will contribute directly to the achievement of a socialist society.

Our goal is simple: no work gets done unless everyone has an equal voice in every decision affecting what he does. The first change must there-

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fore be in the structure of decision-making; this leads directly to who does what, what is to be done, and why.

Why Workers' Self-Management in Science?

The first answer is that self-management should apply in scientific institutions just as it should in any other place of work. But scientists - even radical ones - tend to divorce their politics from their work. They may feel 'concerned' and 'responsible' about the funding and the uses of science but consider their work to be the discovery of objective facts and processes and the formulation of theories which advance knowledge and can benefit mankind. This 'apolitical' attitude to their work is harder to sustain in technology and in science-based industry, where the integration of research with the values of the market place is more obvious. But we argue that neither science nor technology is neutral. The priorities and structures of scientific and technological work stem from and reinforce the existing order of society. Politics is therefore not a stale state sauce added to the scientific meat: as scientists we are automatically involved in politics, although there are various ways of disguising and evading this fact.

Science and technology must be put at the service of the people. To do this they must gain control of the production and use of scientific and technological knowledge. They must control the organisation of work and the sources of data. We must place the control of the sources of funding for research and the objectives of our work in the hands of the people. We are increasingly realising that we must socialise knowledge just as we must socialise property. Neither process alone can achieve an egalitarian society.

Mental Work and Manual Work

The distinction between mental work and manual work is at the centre of the hierarchical organisation of society: 'intellect shall direct labour'. Our conference is part of a challenge to this concept. Scientists are out of touch with manual workers, and manual workers are rightly suspicious of mental workers who - whatever their beliefs - play an important role

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in dominating other workers. Although we do not ourselves govern the system, we function as an elite and are a mediation to other workers of the authority of the system that rules their lives. We have succeeded in an educational system which has defeated them; we use the ideas and techniques they have learned to hate.

Scientists and technologists must become more critical about this objective role. But they must also see that they are themselves workers. A thousand illusions prevent the highly-educated from seeing themselves as workers: they are even allowed a distorted form of self-management so long as it is called 'professional autonomy'. Because there is no foreman at his elbow with a stopwatch, the mental worker can imagine himself to be in charge of his own time. Because he carries certain necessary instruments of production in his head, it does not occur to him that he can only use them inasmuch as they are useful to the material productive process. Outside these limits he will be deprived of funds, neglected and censored. Other necessary tools of his trade are only available to him by courtesy of his employer. He must sell his mental labour power, and can do so only if someone is prepared to buy it.

He has little or no control over what his mental product is used for. There is therefore no ivory tower: only ivory tower attitudes that disguise the relations of mental work to society. The mental worker is in many respects a member of the working class, though with unique characteristics and privileges. It is the uniqueness which creates his illusion (like other members of the 'aristocracy of labour') that he is not involved in class conflict. Since mental work requires long education, the skills can be injected simultaneously with illusions about their function. The strength of the illusion is, of course, that they contain grains of truth. But they overlook other important aspects. Just as manual workers are reduced to being adjuncts of machines, so scientists and other mental workers are no more than adjuncts to the system which controls those machines.