



Workers? control and the fight against business secrecy

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The system of capitalist exploitation requires that the bosses control every aspect of the production process. The search for higher productivity and profits endangers safety, erodes health and intensifies exploitation. Increasingly, therefore, the working class is obliged to counter capitalist control with workers? control so that even basic and partial demands are met. In essence, this means a fight to veto the plans and actions of the bosses wherever they harm the interests of workers.

Workers? control must not be confused with ?workers? self-management?, ?workers? participation? or co-determination (the European works council system). This seeks ? often by legal compulsion ? to incorporate working class representatives into co-responsibility for the success and profitability of the capitalist business, observance of business secrecy. In times of prosperity, this ensures production uninterrupted by strikes and, in times of crisis, trade union consent to job losses, real wages cuts, productivity drives and an end to job demarcation.

But workers? control at the workplace level must always be incomplete. The capitalists keep their plans and accounts a closely guarded secret from their workers. Against business secrecy, therefore, we fight for the opening of all enterprise bank accounts, account books and computers, to the inspection of the workers themselves. If such investigation reveals genuine bankruptcy then we demand socialisation of the enterprise under workers? control and enforce it by occupation. The abolition of business secrecy is designed to expose the bankruptcy of the capitalist system as a whole, its corruption, dishonesty and the mismanagement of the economy, its parasitism, its tendency to squander the wealth that workers create, and its grossly inequitable methods of distributing that wealth.

The greatly increased application of science and technology to production demands other forms of workers? control. Because the introduction of new technologies is subordinated to capital, its consequences are more and more concealed from the workers. They get to know about them only through rationalisation, work hazards, intensification of work or through environmental disasters. This means that workers? control committees, based on the factory floor workers, must win the support and cooperation of technical and scientific workers.

The best form of organisation for conducting the struggle for workers? control is the factory or workplace committee. By organising all the workers in a workplace regardless of trade, shop, union affiliation or membership, the factory committee is able to unite the whole workforce, direct it towards a daily struggle for control and challenge the power of the boardroom. Moreover, it can play a role in the struggle to transform the unions themselves into class struggle industrial unions. The factory committee must be based on direct democracy, with delegates who are recallable, in daily contact with the workers and elected by shop and mass meetings.

Such bodies establish a regime of dual power in the workplace and their presence demands an answer to the question ? who rules here, the workers or the bosses? As such they are characteristic of intense periods of class warfare. And, just as dual power in society cannot last for a protracted period without being resolved in favour of one of the contending classes, nor can it in the factory. The factory committee is compelled to advance, ever more audaciously, in the fight for workers? control. If it does not, it risks either disintegration or incorporation. Workers? control must be a launching pad for a struggle of the workers to assert their rule not just in one factory or office, but across society as a whole.