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What can bring the concept of Commons into the labor movements?

Few words about Transform !:In transform ! As a european network, we try since 6 years to arrive that Common be a transversal concept and practice that may be use for alternative in any kind of field.We mix contribution of reasercher with contribution of actors in the field of water,territory, labor...

Now,maybe before trying to answer the question of my intervention ,*I will first define* the common as term, then to see the relation of this concept of the common with the labor movment.

- See what co-operatives are doing in this area, and then draw a few tracks so that the workplace in its center move towards more common,more social reappropriation of enterprises .

And finally I would say a few words about institutional issues

First how to define the Common ?

There are many terms about this question: the common good, the common, the common good of Humanity,comonnings,commoners....

I would try to define what the Common is and how it can be subversive and generalizable. Of course, it is not a question of ignoring the other terms. They are useful in the realization of the common process, but we must first try to have a vision, a clear emancipatory concept, before returning to the Details the meandres of reality.

The principle of the common is the principle according to which there is no common in itself, as we may think, when we speak of the common good of humanity like water. No good is common by essence :

In the case of water.Of course the raw water falls from the sky, but to achieve to be a common one it requires human work (construction of pipeline, recuperation of water, tap ... all these operations are the fruit of A social construction.

Through this example we can see that the Common is a social construction. It is based on a community that decidesin a democratic way, at a precise moment to unite to build a common benefit to all in this case access to drinking water for all.

The commons can be of variable size depending on the subject concerned.

If we consider that the Common is a social construction between peers that share the same project. Only a pooling practice can decide what is Common. **The common is a social process.**

-Another fundamental notion: the common is not managed by the right of ownership but by **the right of use**. This right of use expresses the subversive character of the Common. This right of use is not recognized either in capitalist private property or in public property

One parentheses about public property(of course it is more complex in public property but the state often does'nt choose between welfare state, and market state Often welfare state is an instrument to help capital regenerating its surplus value

1 - by relying on the state to invest

2-Without respecting democracy, which now deprives citizens of the primary objective of public services

3-Or still public service as in the Soviet Union, where the absence of democracy-dispossessed citizens and workers for the benefit of a supreme state which decided .We all know the failure of this model.

-It is not my intention to oppose public and common services, but rather to analyze what

can mislead, denature the public services and see on the other hand what could democratize them so that they become part of the constructions of the common, and not a structures which oscillate according to the balance of power between welfare state and market state

Then we arrive to our first questioning :What a contribution this concept of common can have in terms of enterprises and labor world ?T.

1-In the capitalist world we always speak of enterprise, whereas we should speak of a company of capital.

The enterprise in capitalist society has no legal existence and yet it is the heart of the work, why humans put together make society to realize an object.

In capitalist society it is the capital society that is legally recognized. It has the institutional and legal power.

From the out set the producers are dispossessed of their work for the benefit of the shareholders.

It is this distortion between production and those who possess that we have to break with the concept of the common.

-When there is a threat of business closure, the first reaction of the employees is not to take over the company, but rather to try to save the working tool within the framework of capitalist society. A certain apprehension, frightened employees to be able to hold the business only if the bosses remain in the company. The company governed by private property is fully recognized at first glance including the employees. We can speak of feelings of impotence or mental alienation with regard to capital, this alienation, is a deconditioning work to do in depth.

-When a company is taken over by the wage-earners and is part of a cooperative of labor, whose foundation is a man equal a voice, we can see that if at the outset this translates into defensive options to preserve employment . After a certain time of existence of other questions come to the agenda.

First of all, preserving one's job undermines the right to work for all.

Then we can see other issues that emerge

I take an example / Fralib cooperative of the south of France now become Coopti .

This company produced the Elephant brand tea.

Following a threat of closure the employees were able to maintain their working tools.

They were constituted in labor cooperative. It is a struggle that lasted 1336 days name they gave to their brand of tea (1336)

The questions that very quickly came in the construction of the cooperatives are:

-What do we use to produce ?-why.How to register our production in ecological production methods (the teas and tisane of the coopti are based on organic product, the region) ?

-the place of women ... change also relation between producer and consumers (one speaks of « consumactor »)

These cooperative enterprises give hope that another construction is possible than the capital company.

They change the relation of employees to one another (a man equals one vote). It breaks the apparent contradiction between the social question and ecology, revisits the consumer producer link, and democratizes it.

However, all employees often consider these cooperatives to be models at the margin, even if example of Mondragon group of cooperatives with 70000 persons may question them.

How can we work on the heart of labor movement by trying in the demands they make to move towards a common society diametrically opposed to the capital company?

Go to a society that opposes the unhappily famous Marguerite Thatcher's sentences "there is no alternative" (TNI)

My point is not to give lessons, I am aware that the situation is difficult in this crisis where it is imposed more austerity on all employees. The cost of labor is designated by capitalism as the factor Number one of the crisis.

It seems to me, however, that we should have some reflection on the demands we are making :

The problem of trade unions is often their defensive position back to the wall, which does not allow them to have a prospective view of the future. We can often see this when they are eager to sign agreements for good redundancy payments rather than To seek employment for all

We are, however, in a situation where the compromises between capital and wage-earners are less and less possible, as it was the case during the glorious 30 ... 1946-1975

We can distinguish three major axes going in the direction of the common, of the social reappropriation of enterprises:

1-All that can reduce the remuneration of capital for the benefit of employment is in the direction of suppressing the capital company for the benefit of a common society governed by the right of use.

In this context we could say that any claim on the reduction of working time paid at the same wage and employment for all moves the cursor in the right direction.

The issue of universal social security for all covering employment, health, unemployment, retirement, education. This issue of universal social security could, among other things, abolish the boundary between production and reproduction (non-remunerated work or Little remuneration and which leave women at the bottom of the social ladder.)

2-democracy in the company. We live in a society where democracy applies only to citizen rights. As a human passes the door of the enterprise it no longer depends on the democratic rights of his country, But is subject to the right of primacy of capital over the process of labor. We should break this dichotomy by asking to be full citizens in our enterprises

It is true that there was the creation of works councils (enterprises committee) in 1945 in France, for example, but if they have a real power over social questions, it is not the same for economic, **They have only an advisory role.**

Note that at the end of the war in 1945 this notion could not be desired by the unions themselves who did not want to be accused of the practice of collaboration of classes and left whole part of decision free for employers.

-3-The sense of work (close to this notion of democracy, but more precise in the distress felt today by the employees) Many employees no longer understand the interest of their work, the latter being dictated by a financial profitability rather than by the usefulness of production as such. Many employees want to restore meaning to their work.

The reappropriation of the meaning of their work to be useful to society is a crucial claim

that gives back its meaning to the community that constitutes the enterprise going beyond the company of capital. This notion of taking into account as essential claim the interest of the content of the work is very recent (burn out, suicides ...)

Unions are beginning to take this issue into account, not only from the point of view of the victim (harassment, burnout) but from the point of view of the content of the work

But from the point of view of the content of work. This problem is opposed to increasingly financialized firms where the content of work loses its meaning

Finally, this will be my last point, we can move towards a common society if we are making institutional changes

The question of the establishment of the institution of the Common is one main subject. Certainly the experiences of the common help to the construction of this institutional corpus.

However, we can not swallow the subject and think that this common will be imposed by quiet negotiations. The class struggle is at the very heart of the imposition of the institution of the common against the power of capitalist property.

If we broaden the point, we see that this question of new institutional rules is at the heart of the debate:

The citizens no longer feel represented by the political structures of past centuries, they want more democracy, more common in their civic and economic life. They also want to reconcile these two parts of a human being who are one. Capitalism having imposed the supremacy of the economic man on the citizen. They no longer want to play the comedy of a human being cut in half between his political functions and his economic functions where he has no right.

The contradiction is pushed to its paroxysm in the European Union where the inviolable rule is the free and not false concurrency to the detriment of the constituent peoples of Europe.

Hence also the importance of having a European reflection on the question of the Common. through the different social movements that build Europe but also within the European Parliament.

The Europe of the peoples is the Europe of the Common with institutions dethroning the inviolability of capitalist property to the benefit of what makes society what is "in common" between human.

If we want to give a perspective, a credible project we have to put the question of the Common as priority to each of our demands, construction, to give meaning to an alternative project of left